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*Para Que Sepan Que Sabemos: Latin@ Parents Projecting Concientización Through the
Activation and Negotiation of their Mediation Tools.*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

by

Zuleyma Nayeli Carruba-Rogel

Committee in charge:

Professor Richard Durán, Chair

Professor Jin Sook Lee

Professor Mary Bucholtz

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The dissertation of Zuleyma Nayeli Carruba-Rogel is approved.

Mary Bucholtz

Jin Sook Lee

Richard Durán, Committee Chair

December 2016

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Zuleyma Nayeli Carruba-Rogel

Zuleyma.CarrubaRogel@amaisd.org

(806) 640-4967

Amarillo, Texas

Education

Ph.D., Education (2016) Concentration: Cultural Perspectives and Comparative Education. University of California, Santa Barbara Gevirtz Graduate School of Education.

Dissertation Title: *Para Que Sepan Que Sabemos: Latin@ Parents Projecting Concientización Through the Activation and Negotiation of their Mediational Tools.*

MA, Education (2013) Concentration: Cultural Perspectives and Comparative Education. University of California, Santa Barbara Gevirtz Graduate School of Education.

Thesis Title: *Padres Líderes Program Evaluation: Evolving from Service-Oriented Parental Involvement to advocacy-Oriented Parental Engagement*

BA, Political Science (2010): University of North Texas, Honors College

BA, Social Science (2010) concentration in history, sociology, and psychology: University of North Texas, Honors College

Spanish Minor (2007): Tecnológico de Monterrey in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

Graduate Fellowships

UC President's Yearlong Dissertation Fellowship	<i>Fall 2015-Spring 2016</i>
Gates Millennium Scholar	<i>Fall 2005- Spring 2015</i>
Crossroads Fellow	<i>Fall 2013-Spring 2014</i>
American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education Graduate Fellow	<i>Winter 2012</i>

Research Publications

In Preparation

Carruba-Rogel, Z. N. (2015). The complexities in *seguir avanzando*: Addressing incongruences across students' transformative linguistic ideologies and those of their *familia*. In Mary Bucholtz, Dolores Inés Casillas, and Jin Sook Lee, (Eds.), *Feeling It: Language, Race, and Emotion in Educating Latin@ Youth*.

Scholarly Presentations

Referred Conference Presentations

Rogel, Z. N. (2014, April). *Padres Líderes: Evolving from Service-Oriented Parental Involvement to Advocacy-Oriented Parental Engagement. American Education Research Association: Philadelphia, PA.*

Rogel, Z. N. (2014, March). *Padres Líderes: An Advocacy-Oriented Parental Engagement Program. Kidd Literacy Conference: Las Cruces, MN.*

Rogel, Z. N. (2013, April). Parents Crossing into the World of Education Policy Makers. *Alliance Families in Schools*: Sacramento, CA.

Durán, R. P., **Rogel, Z. N.** Simeón-Luna, A. (2013, February). Parents Crossing into the World of Education Policy Makers. *UC-Wide Immigration Conference*: Los Angeles, CA.

Rogel, Z. N. (2012, April). Immigrant Parents' Development of a Collective Voice in a Parent School Organization. *American Education Research Association*: Vancouver, CA.

Rogel, Z. N. (April, 2010) ¿Dónde están los padres? Where are the Parents? A Literature Review of Latino/Hispanic Parental Involvement in Education. *McNair Annual Research Conference*: Denton, TX.

Roundtable, Poster and Other Presentations

Carruba-Rogel, Z., Solis, B. (2016, April). Immigrant Parents' Participation in Local School District Implementation of California's Local Control and Accountability Plan. *American Education Research Association*: Washington, D.C.

Rogel, Z. N. (2012, May) Immigrant Parents' Development of a Collective Voice in a Parent School Organization. *Doing Good Work? Bridging Activism and Scholarship in Latina/o Immigrant Communities*: Santa Barbara, CA.

Rogel, Z. N. (2013, March). Immigrant Parents' Development of a Collective Voice in a Parent School Organization and Parents Crossing into the World of Education Policy Makers. *Guest presenter for Chicano Language in Public Education course*: University of California, Los Angeles.

Rogel, Z. N. Latino Parent Engagement: Cummins Empowerment Framework and Critical Pedagogy. *Guest presenter for Ed 124 course on Research on Teaching and Learning in Sociocultural Contexts*. University of California, Santa Barbara. (Presented twice annually from 2012-2014).

Rogel, Z. N. (2010, January) ¿Dónde están los padres? Where are the Parents? A Literature Review of Latino/Hispanic Parental Involvement in Education. *Poster Presentation at Scholars Day*: University of North Texas, Honors College.

Parent Engagement Experiences

Parent Engagement & Talent Acquisition Coordinator for Amarillo Independent School District
Fall, 2016-Present

- Supervise and support the engagement efforts of our parent liaisons across our 35 Title I sites.
- Oversee the research, design, and implementation of parent engagement programs, workshops, and events.
- Build community partnerships to foster and sustain a culture of parent engagement.

- Research, develop, and implement AISD’s Teacher diversity initiatives aimed at retaining and recruiting minority educators.

Assistant Program Coordinator: Padres Adelante parent leadership program. *This was a dual appointment through the Office of Education Partnerships at UCSB.*

Spring 2011-Spring 2015

- Partnered with educators to develop and deliver a culturally responsive parent engagement programs for Spanish-speaking, low-income, immigrant parents.
- Assisted with program recruitment, retention and logistics (e.g., coordinating food, classroom material, childcare, transportation and tutoring services).

Graduate Student Researcher-Evaluator: Office of Education Partnerships at UCSB

Fall 2010-Summer 2013

- Developed culturally responsive evaluation instruments for bilingual parents.
- Inputted, coded, analyzed data and wrote evaluation reports.
- Created a standard operating procedural manual that detailed the step-by-step processes needed to develop, implement, and sustain a *Padres Adelante* program.

Teaching and Mentoring Experience

Co-Instructor: School Kids Investigating Language in Life + Society (SKILLS) 12th grade dual-credit course at Santa Barbara High School for Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) students. *Winter 2014*

- Prepared first-generation, low-income students of color for higher education by facilitating their hands-on experience in studying language and culture through their implementation of various original research projects.
- Collaborated with the SKILLS team to create and deliver integrated lesson plans.
- Supervised the work of undergraduate research assistants and student mentors.

Teaching Assistant: Chicano Studies (CHST) 187 Language, Power & Learning *Fall 2013*

- Facilitated students’ critical reflection of sensitive topics addressed in lecture.
- Graded students’ assignments, which including over 138 written papers, open ended and multiple choice final course exams.
- Privately instructed students’ mastery of course material during my weekly office hours.

Qualitative Software Support: Information Technology Group *Spring 2015-Summer 2015*

- Provided qualitative software support to students and faculty.
- Developed and shared expertise in transcription programs (e.g., Transana, Express Scribe, NVivo, etc.).
- Designed, administer and analyzed survey instruments to gauge the software needs of students and faculty.

Academic Classroom Technology Specialist: Information Technology Group

Spring 2013-Summer 2013

- Acted as liaison between students, faculty and classroom, technology.

- Delivered technology support for professors and students.
- Executed classroom technology demonstrations and trainings.
- Produced collaborative online communities through the ITG wiki to support students and faculty through diverse platforms.

Research Manager: Undergraduate ED199 Students *Fall 2014-Spring 2015*

- Supervised a team of 10 undergraduate assistant researchers.
- Advised and trained students to collect, transcribe, code, and analyze data.
- Individually guided students on ways to pursue their own research interests and excel in college and beyond.

Graduate Student Mentor: Gevirtz Graduate School of education. *Fall 2013-Present*

- Counseled first and second year graduate students through the challenges of their MA/Ph.D. program.

Campus Base Leader: UCSB Gates Millennium Scholars *September 2010–Spring 2012*

- Pioneered UCSBs officially recognized Gates Millennium Scholars organization that serviced first-generation, low-income students of color.
- Actively connected Gates scholars with resources to advance their academic learning.
- Implemented a transitional leadership model to make the organization student-led.

External President: UCSB Gates Millennium Scholars Organization *Fall 2012-Spring 2015*

- Advised an average of 20 undergraduate Gates scholars through their college experience.
- Specifically provide Gates scholars with external resources to support their graduate school and/or career aspirations.

Undergraduate McNair Mentor: Academic Research Consortium (ARC) *Summer 2012*

- Exclusively advised an undergraduate McNair Scholar on her summer research project.
- Supported this scholar through her graduate school application processes.

Team Leader: Collegiate G-force AmeriCorps program *Fall 2009–Spring 2010*

- Oversaw a G-force centered that served fist-generation high school students through the college application process.
- Partnered students with mentor, structured our Go-Centers, and maintained historical records of our services.
- Assisted in directing college readiness workshops for parents.

Teaching Assistant, Travis Middle School *Summer 2010*

- Scaffold English Language Learners' (ELL) mastery of math subjects.
- Taught ELLs how to independently improve their English writing skills via computer software.
- Aided the lead teacher with classroom goals.

ABSTRACT

Para Que Sepan Que Sabemos: Latin@ Parents Projecting Concientización Through the Activation and Negotiation of their Mediational Tools.

by

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Employing an ethnographic participant-observer approach, this study examines how 21 Latin@ immigrant parents in the *Padres Líderes IV* (Parent Leaders) program drew from individual and collective funds of knowledge and forms of capital to negotiate, develop, and present letters to their local school board regarding a funding priority in response to California school districts' new Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). To comprehensively appreciate the parents' act of mediation, I adopted an embedded analysis approach by contextualizing their collaborative endeavors within the historical development of the program and the overarching political ecologies that led to this observed point in time. The *Padres Líderes IV* parents formed four groups, each addressing one of their LCAP budgetary priorities. These included: tutoring services, English Language Learner (ELL) reclassification, summer academic programs, and school safety. At the parent project level, I focus my analysis on one of the four groups (summer academic programs), due to its popularity with the parents and because it was facilitated by both an educator and parent-coordinator. Data collection included: ethnographic observations, fieldnotes, classroom reflections, gathered classroom artifacts, and collected video and audio recordings of the weekly coordinating meetings, program sessions, and post-session debriefs. Data collection extended for a period of four months.

Five activities constitute the dynamic and interactive work in which parents engaged

to construct letters representative of their group's concerns (e.g., identifying the problem, need, target audience and significance and drafts of their letter). I identify key themes, which were included in this group's final letter, and follow these themes throughout the length of the 12-week program to gauge *if* and *how* the program sessions influenced the parents' collaborative endeavors. In turn, I hone in on dynamic group interactions to identify the tools parents utilized and the skills they employed to collectively negotiate the thematic progression of their LCAP proposal. Three key themes emerged in the parents' letter to the school board: parents' multifaceted *concientización*, a sense of feeling heard, and joint-partnership. The data collected informs that parents drew from their funds of knowledge and forms of capital to negotiate these themes into the body of their letter.

First, in unprecedented ways, this ethnography illustrates *how* parents activate and enhance their vast mediational tools to collectively engage their local political ecologies. Second, this study highlights parents' critical and intellectual capital in-the-making. Third, it reveals that parents' *concientización* (or critical capital) is more than a critical state of awareness, but a formable and evolving type of capital that can be leveraged, personified, and utilized as a mediational tool. Fourth, I propose modifications to Barton et al.'s (2004) Ecologies of Parent Engagement (EPE) framework, as these alterations are intended to more comprehensively understand the work that families in parent engagement programs employ to mediate their political ecologies. Finally, this study uniquely elucidates the role of *affect* in parent empowerment and parents' possession of communicative capital. Overall, this ethnographic study demonstrates how, through collaborative efforts and participation in a school-community partnership program, otherwise marginalized parents assert themselves as agents of change by engaging their local political ecologies to address their schooling needs.

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Chapter 1: Background

I. Overview of the Dissertation

I begin this dissertation by situating this study within the corresponding literature. In chapter one I address growths in the U.S. Latin@ population and the state of the Latin@ student education crisis. I present on a common myth of the Latin@ family and expound why parental engagement is key in addressing equity in education. Next, I situate the parent engagement model used in this study within the body of the literature; this contextualization serves to recognize the strengths and uniqueness of the *Padres Líderes IV* program. I close chapter one by outlining the aims of the dissertation and the inquiries that guide the data analysis. Chapter two features the theoretical frameworks that inform how I approach this study; from this premise I build the case for the *embedded* Ecologies of Parent Engagement framework. In chapter three I disclose the historical events leading up to the *Padres Líderes IV* program and the contentious political climate that directly influenced the setting of this study. I also highlight various key elements of this program that help to illustrate the make-up of this space, and detail the data collection and analysis processes that I employed for this study. Chapters four and five provide analysis and discussion of three key themes that emerged in the parents' letter to the school board, including parents' multifaceted *concientización*, a sense of feeling heard and joint-partnership. I begin both of these chapters by displaying how these concepts were discussed throughout the program and how parents negotiated these themes in their letter to the school board. Chapter 6 presents an identification of patterns in the strategies that parents employed as they drew upon their funds of knowledge and forms of capital to address their district and school budgetary concerns. Chapter 7 provides an overview of the night of the school board public hearing,

revealing how the parents' group work transpired into an act of mediation. I conclude with chapter 8, in which I feature the significance of this dissertation and its key literary contributions; I also address the limitations of this study and offer my reflections.

II. The Role of Latin@s in the Changing Ethnic Portrait of America

At the turn of the 21st century Latin@s emerged as the largest and fastest growing minority group in America (Evans, Price, & Barron, 2001).¹ The U.S. Census data revealed that from 2000-2010 racial minorities alone were responsible for 91.7% of the nation's population growth; Hispanics chiefly contributed 56% of this growth (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011). According to Stepler and Brown (2016), Hispanics comprised of 17.3% (or 55.3 million) of the total U.S. population by 2014. And within this subgroup, a majority was categorized as native-born (67.7%) and of Mexican decent (at 64%). The exponential growth of the U.S. Latin@ immigrant population is not visibly met by their economic and educational success. In relation to other foreign- and native-born populations, Latin American and Caribbean natives were more likely to not have completed a high school diploma.² Overall they were least likely to have a bachelor's degree or medical insurance. Furthermore, they are more likely to have a larger family household and work a low-wage

¹In this dissertation the term *Latin@*, which is used interchangeably with Hispanic, is encompassing of individuals from varied gender identifications (e.g., male, female, transgender, bigender, cisgender, genderqueer, third gender, etc). This dissertation also adopts the U.S. Census Bureau definition to encapsulate people who classify themselves in the following categories listed on their questionnaires: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban and those that indicate they are *other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino* origin. See the following for more details (Evans, Price, & Barron, 2001).

² In this dissertation the term foreign-born and immigrant are used interchangeably. "The U.S. Census Bureau uses the term *foreign-born* to refer to anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth. This includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, temporary migrants (such as foreign students), humanitarian migrants (such as refugees), and undocumented migrants" (Grieco, et al., 2012, p. 1). In the United States Census Bureau *Latin America and the Caribbean* encapsulates people from countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean. For more information see Grieco, et al. (2012).

job (Grieco et al., 2012). Latin American and Caribbean natives across all age clusters (ages under 18, 18-64, 65 and older) had the highest poverty rates in comparison to other foreign- and native-born populations. Within this cluster, foreign-born Mexicans (who make up the majority of the Latin@ immigrant population) suffered from the highest poverty rates; about half (46.3%) of Mexican children under the age of 18 live in poverty (Grieco et al., 2012).

Changes in the U.S. ethnic portrait are visibly reflected within and across American classrooms where by 2013 one in four (or 25%) K-12 public school student was Latin@, a majority who tend to be of Mexican decent (Kena et al., 2016). In California, where this study was located, Latin@ K-12 students emerged as the majority and represented over half (at 53.7%) of the student population (Aud et al., 2012). Problematically the U.S. schools' changing demographics are not reflected in high school completion and college access for Latin@ students. Even though the high school dropout rates for 16-through 24-year-olds have declined for the four largest racial groups in America (e.g., Whites, Blacks, Asians, Latin@s), Latin@ students continue to suffer from the highest high school dropout rates. Moreover, foreign-born Latin@ students are 3.1 times more likely than native-born Latin@s to drop out of high school (Aud et al., 2012).

In summary, Latin@s in the U.S. has reached significant population milestones pivotally contributing to the changing ethnic portrait of America. In light of these changes Latin@ students are moving towards becoming the majority across U.S. classrooms. These increases in the Latin@ students' population have not been met by their academic achievement. Research supports that the academic experience of Latin@ students, in comparison to their White and Asian counterparts are starkly different. Latin@ students are plagued with high poverty rates, come from families who possess lower levels of capital and

are overrepresented in underperforming schools. The following pages I address how the Latin@ education crisis *is* America's crisis.

III. **The Latin@ Student Education Crisis**

Research thoroughly documents inequality in U.S. schools mirrored in the ways they fail Latin@ students. Latin@ students oftentimes find themselves concentrated in impoverished, segregated, overcrowded schools with inadequate learning materials. They are more likely to be taught by less experienced teachers with high turnover rates (see Hill & Torres, 2010). Latin@ students are deterred from, and/or denied access to, college preparatory, honors, or advance placement courses, which derail them from a college pathway (see Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hill & Torres, 2010). Orfield and Lee (2007) found that “Latin@ students have become, by some measures, the most segregated group by both race and poverty and there are increasing patterns of multiple segregations—ethnicity, poverty and linguistic isolation” (p. 31). Orfield, Frankenberg, Ee, and Kuscera (2014) exposed that in 2011 a majority (at 55.4%) of Latin@ students in California were concentrated in schools that were 90-100% minority. These scholars compared states with high student segregation and uncovered that in California Latin@ students were the highest segregated minority from their White counterparts. On average only 16% of Latin@ students' classmates were White. As detailed in the methods chapter of this dissertation, the families and students in this study were a direct reflection of the ongoing segregation of Latin@s in education (for more details refer to chapter three). Overall Latin@'s college attainment pales in comparison to their White and Asian counterparts (Pew Research Center, 2013). The multi-level segregation of Latin@ students (by ethnicity, income and language) reduces their exposure to the various forms of capital (e.g., social, cultural, economical,

navigational, etc.) White and Asian students bring into schools that are instrumental for their academic success and college pathways (see Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998).

With consideration to structural inequality and the multitude of challenges Latin@ students face, Gándara and Contreras (2009) affirm that just graduating from high school is a testament to the fortitude of Latin@ students. Even for the brightest and most talented Latin@ students coming from low-income backgrounds “The stars must all be aligned to ensure that these promising, hard-working students are in fact able to beat the odds” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 246). The reality of the achievement gap reflects that the stars do not align for the majority of Latin@ students. The U.S. economy encumbers the uneducated, amplified by our current economic crisis. Research supports that a high school diploma is oftentimes fundamental for escaping poverty and that a bachelor degree is a prerequisite for entering middle class society (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hill & Torres, 2010). Yet Latin@ students are least likely to attain college degrees and more likely to dropout of high school. The children of dropouts are likely to also dropout perpetuating the cycle of poverty (see Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Therefore, Latin@ students are presented with many challenges in U.S. schools, especially with hidden curriculum that privileges Euro-American, middle-class, English-speaking students and is incompatible with Latin@ students’ economic, cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds (see Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001). Considering the Latin@ population growth, scholars forewarn that society as a whole *will be* and *is* impacted by how these students fare in school. Gándara and Contreras (2009) press that enabling Latin@ students to explore and capitalize on their potential by means of quality and higher education will allow them to contribute to

the friable U.S. economy, instead of being steered into a permanent underclass citizenry. These scholars reason that if Latin@s made up a small number of the American population their educational outcomes would be unfortunate, but not terribly consequential for society. In light of the changing U.S. demographics the outcomes of Latin@ students and their families in education *does* significantly impact the future of America. Closing the education gap for Latin@ students will require multiple efforts. These efforts include, but are not limited to political reform, increases in school resources, inclusive curriculum design, outreach efforts and a multitude of community collaborations. This dissertation focuses on the mediating role Latin@ parents employ by addressing their local political bodies in attempt to hold schools accountable for the equity and quality of their children's education. Understanding Latin@ parents' cultural beliefs in regards to their children's education is fundamental to this study. In this chapter I address a common myth about the Latin@ family that posits Latin@ parents' *low* aspirations as the reason for their student's underperformance. Then, I explore the role of Latin@ parents' aspirations and expectations in their children's educational attainment.³ These bodies of literature are noteworthy as they help to understand how the *Padres Líderes IV* program assist the parents in mediating their political ecologies so that they can take active roles in actualizing their aspirations for their children's education.

IV. A Myth About the Latin@ Family

Research strongly indicates that one of the common myths about the Latin@ family is that they do not care about their children's education (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; De Gaetano, 2007; Hill & Torres, 2010; Mayo, Candela, Mausov, & Smith, 2008; Quiocho &

³ Aspirations refer to what academic attainment parents' *hope* that their children will attain while expectations refer to what parents perceive that their children will likely reach.

Daoud, 2006; Tinkler, 2002; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). This divisive misconception infers that Latin@ parents' apathy results in low aspirations and expectations for their children's academic attainment, which they then relay to their children. In essence Latin@ students perform poorly because their parents do not value education. Drawing from the literature I discuss Latin@ parents' (oftentimes interwoven) perceptions towards the value of education and their aspirations and expectations for their children's academic attainment.

Scholars substantiate that immigrant Latin@ parents strongly believe in the realization of the American dream.⁴ They consider education a vehicle for upward mobility, trust in the quality of American schools and aspire for their children the highest academic attainment possible; all the while inculcating in them a belief in the opportunities and value of an American education (see Glick & White, 2004; Goldenberg et al., 2001; Hill & Torres, 2010). In fact, both native- and foreign-born Latin@ parents' value schooling as a tool for upward mobility annulling the notion that their children perform poorly due to their lack of caring.

Research furthermore denotes that students' educational aspirations serve as one of the best predictors of student academic achievement and dropping out of school (Kao & Tienda, 1998). Qian and Blair (1999) substantiate that Latin@ parents play a significant role in affecting their children's aspirations. Researchers have utilized various methods and samples to establish that Latin@ parents not only value education, but also hold high aspirations for their children's academic attainment (see Behnke, Piercy, & Diversi, 2004; Goldenberg et al., 2001; Spera, Wentzel, & Matto, 2009). Spera, Wentzel and Matto (2009) established that White, African American, Asian American and Hispanic parents *all* held

⁴Hill & Torres (2010) defined the American Dream as "the premise that one can achieve success and prosperity through determination, hard work, and courage—an open system for mobility" (p. 95).

relatively high educational aspirations for their children's attainment of a college level degree.⁵ Parents' ethnicity did not play a role in predicting parental aspirations. However, parents' academic desires for their children increased in relation to their own levels of education; the more schooling parents attained the more they aspired for their children (see Spera et al., 2009). When controlling for parents own levels of education, these scholars reveal that Hispanic parents, in comparison to Asian and Whites, held higher levels of aspirations. Problematically, Latin@ parents' and students' high aspirations do not translate into high expectations or the realization of their aspirations as they do for their White and Asian families. Spera et al. reported that 94.7% of Hispanic parents desired for their children to attend college; however, research affirms that Latin@ students dropout of high school at a higher rate than White, Asian, and African American students (see Archer, 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Essentially, Latin@ parents' aspirations for their children's higher education are optimistic, yet painfully unrealistic. Incongruences typically exists between what one hopes will happen and realistically expects to happen. In the following I address the role of external and internal factors on Latin@ parents' expectations, with a particular focus on the role of parents' capital.

V. The Role of Capital in Latin@ Parents' Expectations

As aforementioned Latin@ parents' hopes for their children's academic attainment remain relatively high. The case is not the same for their expectations, which are lower than their aspirations (see Goldenberg et al., 2001; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998). The literature on Latin@ parents' educational expectations point to

⁵ Spera et al. (2009) utilized the Parent Satisfaction Survey (PSS) to yield a sample (N=13,577) of middle and high school parents from a suburban school in a mid-Atlantic state. The parent participant sample consisted of 67.2% were Caucasian, 9.4% were African American, 11.3% were Asian American, and 6.7% were Hispanic. Their Hispanic sample was not segregated by immigrant status or place of origin.

numerous factors that alter what they anticipate their children will likely obtain. These factors fall under two umbrellas: external and internal factors. By external factors, I refer to outside influences that alter what academic level parents expect their children to attain. These include student's academic performance (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998; Zhang, Haddad, Torres, & Chen, 2011) 2), apparent motivation and interest in school (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998), and environmental factors (Goldenberg et al., 2001). These external factors *influence* Latin@ parents' levels of expectation, however they do *not* affect student academic achievement unlike internal factors. By internal factors, I refer to Latin@ parents' own forms of capital that encapsulate their understanding of how the U.S. education system works and what it values (cultural capital), networks and access to resources for supporting their children's academic development (social capital) their financial means (economic capital), academic attainment, experience and resources derived from their schooling (academic capital), and their ability to communicate in an English structured society (language capital). For the purpose of this dissertation, I focus on the relationship Latin@ parents' capital has on their expectations and capability to help their children realize their educational aspirations.

Gándara and Contreras (2009) underscored that parent's academic capital can predict students' performance, primarily because education is tied with class, and class privilege is tied to socio-cultural capital.⁶ This capital yields access, power, networks, knowledge of what the system values and how it works, and safety nets not available to students whose parents have low socio-cultural capital. Correspondingly, Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998)

⁶ Academic capital is not limited to the level of an individual's schooling, it also encompasses other forms of capital that are simultaneously developed through out an individuals' educational experience. For this dissertation I utilize St. John, Hu, & Fisher's (2011) definition of academic capital as the "social processes that underlie family knowledge of educational options, strategies to pursue them, and career goals that require a college education" (pg. xiii).

revealed that parents' higher level of schooling corresponded with higher incomes and parent/student expectations (and vice versa), which indirectly affected student achievement. Cheng and Starks (2002) found that Asian American students (followed by Whites) displayed better school performance and had parents with higher incomes and levels of education, in comparison to their Hispanic and African-American peers. They highlighted that for "Hispanic and African American students' (but not Asian American students') educational expectations are partially suppressed by their family SES backgrounds" (Cheng & Starks, 2002, p. 316). Moreover, parents are not equally endowed with economic resources, skills, experience and knowledge essential for helping their children actualize their aspirations. This is especially true for the children of Latin@ immigrants who tend to work low-wage jobs, live in poverty, possess low levels of education, and lack the type of socio-cultural capital that is central to how middle-class White and Asian parents support their children's academic attainment (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Goldenberg et al., 2001).

In terms of linguistic capital Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) reported that student's English proficiency did not directly affect Latin@ parent's levels of expectation. However, I argue that linguistic capital has an indirect effect on parent/student anticipations. In support Behnke, Piercy and Diversi, (2004) constituted that immigrant Latin@ parents believed that their children could actualize their high aspirations because they *knew* English. However, these same students were mainly tracked as English language learners (ELLs) and identified their self-perceived limited English proficiency as a barrier in achieving their own academic aspirations. It is probable that students' language skills do not directly affect Latin@ parents' expectations because parents own limited English proficiency led them to believe

that their children are *fluent* English speakers. This growing linguistic/cultural divide affected other elements of parent/student relationship. For instance, Behnke et al. revealed that Latin@ parents were unaware of their youth's academic desires. Furthermore, parents attributed their unfamiliarity to the growing linguistic and cultural barrier that existed between them and their children; this divide widens as their children become English dominant and acculturated to U.S. culture. Furthermore, research supports that students who come from English-speaking homes academically performed better in school and have parents with higher levels of education (Fuligni, 1997). Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) discovered that native English speakers have higher expectations than non-native English speakers. Therefore, the greater levels of English proficiency for non-native English students, the greater their academic expectations. On this note Latin@ immigrant families primarily speak their heritage language (Spanish), which they retain for long periods of time (see Fuligni, 1997; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). This does not imply that Spanish causes Latin@ students to perform below their Asian and White peers; the implications are quite the contrary, Spanish language retention promotes academic achievement for Latin@ students (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). However, English spoken as the primary language in an immigrant's home reflects possession of social, cultural, and linguistic capital essential for supporting their children's academic success. Although English proficiency does not have a direct effect on Latin@ parents' expectations, it does impact the way they become involved in schools, in society and in their children's learning process which indirectly contributes to lower expectations and educational outcomes.

In regards to social capital, Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) explored the effect within- and between-family social capital has on parent/student expectations and student

achievement. Within-family capital refers to parent-child relationships and between-family capital refers to family-community relationships. In this study parent-child relationships included: 1) involvement in child's academic learning in the home, 2) taking the child to extracurricular activities and classes, and 3) parent involvement in other learning activities. It is important to note that the measures utilized to identify what counts as parent-child interactions were not culturally sensitive to Latin@ families and failed to account for the ways they interact and support their children's education (this will be addressed in greater detail later in this chapter). Instead these sanctioned parent-child practices chiefly reflected the cultural capital of middle-class families (e.g., discussing school programs, assisting/checking homework, participating in organizations, extracurricular activities, attending concerts and performances, etc.). Hao and Bonstead-Bruns asserted that greater levels of parent-children interactions led to higher expectations for both parent/child and an increase in student achievement. They warranted that when parents directly interact in their child's learning they transmit and reinforce academic expectations. These interactions help reduce the distance between parent/child expectations thus enhancing student achievement. Latin@ immigrant parents' (particularly of Mexican decent) low levels of education and English-proficiency affect their capability to directly help their children with learning matters, especially as they advance in grades. Unsurprisingly, Hao and Bonstead-Bruns found that immigrant Latin@ parents had the lowest levels of parent-child interactions in relation to their Asian and White counterparts. Furthermore, parents' and students' linguistic capital aggrandizes the distance between their hopes and expectancies. As previously discussed, the growing linguistic/cultural divide between Latin@ parents and their assimilating children make it difficult for them to stay involved in their children's academic

development. Although immigrant status increased Latin@ parents' aspirations/expectations, the disagreements between parent/child expectancies reduced this advantage leading to unrealized aspirations (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). In sum, parents' ability to engage in these sanctioned parent-child relationships expounds on the different immigrant experiences within and across Latin@ and Asian populations. Parental involvement in the home, particularly surrounding learning interactions, is not simply about parents' *desire*, but also their capability afforded to them through multiple forms of capital.

Social capital expands beyond parent-child interactions to include between-family networks that influence parent/student expectations and the realization of their educational aspirations (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). Between-family social capital reciprocally impacts within-family social capital because it provides the family with access to salient resources utile in developing, sustaining and actualizing their aspirations for high achievement. These forms of social capital are likewise influenced by immigrant parents' education, income level, occupations and knowledge of what the U.S. education system values and how it works. Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) constituted that immigrant status has a greater positive effect on between-family social capital for Asians than it does for Latin@ parents. The community isolation of Latin@ families, as opposed to the integration of Asian families, impacts the social capital from which they can draw from to promote their children's access to higher education. Latin@ immigrant parents, particularly those native to Mexico, live in migrant ethnic communities with other adults that have low-skilled and/or seasonal jobs (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). Their living environments are representative of low-income communities permeated with gang influences, violence, drugs, and teen-age pregnancies (see Goldenberg et al., 2001). The social-cultural capital available to low-

income Latin@ families does not yield strong support systems to aid in their children's academic development, college pathways or upward mobility. Goldenberg et al. (2001) derived that Latin@ immigrant parents with a limited family history of higher education were "painfully aware of the gap likely to exist between what they want and what they will be able to provide for their children" (Goldenberg et al., 2001, p. 557). These parents voiced insecurity in their capability to support their children's education. Unsurprisingly scholars feature that Latin@ parents, in comparison to their White peers, expressed less confidence in their ability to help their children succeed in U.S. schools (Okagaki & Frensch, 1998). Research overall underscores that Latin@ immigrant parents have limited knowledge, access, and experience with the U.S. education system needed to negotiate and facilitate their children's higher levels of formal schooling. These families have high hopes for their children's educational attainment but, the mismatch in their internal capital affects how they can help materialize their high aspirations. Researchers argue that parent engagement programs designed to support parents' capital development are especially important for low-achieving immigrant ethnic parents (see Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Jeynes, 2003); hence, Latin@ families are positioned to greatly benefit from this type of programming support.⁷ In light of the important role family capital has on student achievement, it is salient to consider how parental engagement and parent programs can help parents navigate and mediate academic spaces.

In the following I elucidate why parental engagement is an important component for mitigating the Latin@ education crisis. Subsequently, I expose the socio-cultural disconnect that exists between the Latin@ culture and American schools. Lastly, I present different

⁷ A *low-achieving* immigrant ethnic parent refers to adults that have low levels of formal educational attainment and economic capital.

models of parent programs that serve Latin@ parents by helping them to build various forms of capital. By providing a general landscape of these different programs, I contextualize how the program addressed in this dissertation fits within the literature.

VI. Addressing the Latin@ Education Crisis Requires Addressing Parent Engagement

As aforementioned, the way Latin@ students fare in the U.S. education system has national consequences. Scholars argue that the U.S. will progressively weaken if it continues to fail its largest and fast growing minority population (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gibson, 2002). America cannot afford to continue marginalizing Latin@ families. America gains if Latin@ students gain genuine access to quality and higher education. Research supports that parental engagement in education has a positive relationship with students' achievement and increases students' educational outcomes despite economic, racial, or cultural backgrounds (see Jeynes, 2003; Marschall, 2006). Although studies thoroughly document correlations between parental engagement and student achievement, Gándara and Contreras (2009) attested that American schools generally remain unsuccessful at involving Latin@ parents. They also argue that research and experience underscore the need to engage Latin@ parents in meaningful ways in order to address their children's educational disparities. Research supports that a socio-cultural disconnects exist between U.S. schools and the Latin@ family that lead to misunderstandings. In light of the impact the Latin@ education crisis presents, these misconstructions cannot be reduced to inconsequential misunderstandings. In the following pages I unpack what these social-cultural disconnects reveal themselves.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, a common held myth about the Latin@ family suggests that parents do not care about their children's education. This myth is fueled by the

belief that Latin@ parents are not involved in their children's schooling. Research supports that parents *are* involved and care deeply about their children's education. However, schools neither acknowledge nor value the ways in which Latin@ parents partake in their children's education. Evidence features that there are different cultural constructs held by U.S. schools and Latin@ parents regarding what parental involvement entails (see Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). It is important to note that the very meaning of 'education' varies between the Latin@ families and U.S. schools. Valdés (1996) stated "what English speakers call *education* relates to school or book learning. However, what Spanish speakers call "*educación*" encapsulates a broader meaning that includes both manners and learning" (quotation marks and italics as appear in text) (p. 125). Latin@ parents and schools show dissimilar conceptions of what education/*educación* entails, which result in inconsistent perceptions and expectations for parental involvement (also see Goldenberg et al., 2001; Hill & Torres; 2010). Zarate (2007) indicated that parental involvement for Latin@ parents embraces a holistic approach to *educación*, encompassing both academic involvement and life participation.⁸ Latin@ parents' life participation—considered involvement in their children's *educación*—entails providing nurturing advice, inculcating morals and respect, protecting them from dangers, providing for their needs, volunteering in schools, and the monitoring or awareness of their children's life, peer groups, school attendance, and their aspirations, and motivations in life (Zarate, 2007). Zarate argued that educators often identify parental involvement along the lines of U.S. schools' traditional modes of participation. Examples include: volunteering in schools, participating

⁸ Zarate explains, "Academic involvement was understood to encompass activities associated with homework, educational enrichment, and academic performance; life participation characterized ways that parents provided life education and were holistically integrated into their children's lives in school, as well as away from it" (2007, p.8).

in committees, attending parent-teacher conferences and staff events, practicing authoritative parenting, helping with homework, being cognizant of students' academic progress.

Similar to the concept of *educación* scholars argue that educators and Latin@ parents hold separate constructs regarding what involvement entails. These differences in beliefs lead to culture-clashes and misunderstandings that contribute to the marginalization of Latin@ parents and their children within U.S. schools (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Goldenberg et al., 2001; Hill & Torres; 2010; Valdés, 1996; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Zarate, 2007). An example of a culture clash includes Latin@ parents' concept of *respeto* (respect). Research supports that Latin@ parents hold teachers in high regard and believe that schools are justly providing their children with a quality education. Entering a classroom or school setting is culturally deemed as disrespectful and a challenge to the educators' authority. On the other hand, educators interpret the physical absence of Latin@ parents at school functions as apathy towards their children's education (see Hill & Torres, 2010; Marschall, 2006; Tinkler, 2002; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Scholars reveal that schools meet Latin@ parents with resistance oftentimes viewing them through deficit perspectives that depict them as inactive, incompetent, and unable to support their children's education (Cummins, 2001; Mayo et al., 2008; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). These cultural misunderstandings result in missed opportunities for both schools and Latin@ families.

Latin@ parents face additional challenges that discourage their traditional forms of involvement in schools. Barriers include: communication (e.g., lack of effective and culturally sensitive communicative mediums between parents and schools), lack of accommodation for parents' diversity (e.g., Latin@ parents' linguistic and cultural backgrounds mismatch with schools' training), parents' cultural perceptions of their

jurisdiction (e.g., reluctance to question schools and teachers), lack of social and cultural capital related to schools (e.g., unawareness of how the U.S. education system works and what it values, and access to important academic resources), and logistical challenges (e.g., lack of reliable transportation, juggling multiple jobs, childcare needs, etc.) (See Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Johnson, Anguiano, & Ruben, 2004; Mayo et al., 2008; Tinkler, 2002; Zarate, 2007). These barriers, coupled with an unwelcoming school system, make it arduous for Latin@ parents to mediate school ecologies in ways that both schools expected them to and that their children necessitate in order to succeed academically.

Hill and Torres (2010) maintained that schools fail to recognize and tap into the rich cultural practices of Latin@ parents by sanctioning and dismissing practices of parental involvement that are incongruent with the beliefs and knowledge possessed by Latin@ parents. Delgado-Gaitan (2004) emphasized that this cultural disconnect will not be bridged by simply translating documents from English to Spanish or by a token invitation to a school festival. On the contrary, she urged schools to systematically reach out to Latin@ families in culturally responsive ways to integrate Latin@ parents into schools in meaningful ways. Traditional modes of parental engagement are closed off to Latin@ parents because they oftentimes lack the socio-cultural capital to navigate formal academic spaces. Yet parental engagement should not be treated as a privilege afforded to parents of specific ethnic backgrounds, language abilities, and socio-cultural, economic and educational capital. Therefore, it is essential to provide Latin@ parents with resources to help them develop the traditional forms of capital that are central to how middle-class White and Asian parents support their children's education. Adhering to federal policies, schools *are* responsible for providing avenues to engage parents in their children's education (Henderson, 2002).

Latin@ parental engagement alone will not dismantle the pervasive and systematic ways Latin@ students are failed. However, parental engagement *is* a valuable tool through which Latin@ parents can help and hold schools accountable for their children by working in collaboration to improve the educational outcomes of their students. Considering the positive relationship that parental involvement has on student achievement both U.S. schools and society have much to benefit from reciprocal partnerships with Latin@ parents. On this note, I argue for a needed shift from parental involvement to *engagement*. More specifically, I address the importance of culturally additive program models that result in parent empowerment and advocacy instead of subtractive models that focus on assimilation.

VII. Moving From Involvement Towards Engagement: An Argument for Dual-Model Parent Programs

Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis and George (2004), found that the discourse that surrounded high-poverty urban communities depicted parental involvement through deficit perspectives. Parents' level of involvement focused on what they did (or failed to do) and how that mapped onto (or deflected from) school sanctioned parental involvement practices. Discourse on parental involvement did not position parents as equal partners, mediators, or decision makers. Instead, parents were addressed as receivers and helpers of schools conventional and prescribed forms of involvement. To move away from this deficit-oriented discourse, Barton et al. (2004) proposed their Ecologies of Parental Engagement (EPE) framework. EPE shifts from parental involvement towards *engagement* by framing parents as authors, mediators and agents of change who author and position themselves within school ecologies to advocate for their children's education. Parental engagement features parents as critically conscious and empowered agents of change in their children's education.

Barton et al.'s (2004) distinction between parental involvement and engagement parallels Arias and Morillo-Campbell's (2008) stance on the merging of traditional (involvement) and non-traditional (engagement) parent program models. The authors reasoned that xenophobic anti-immigration sentiments across the U.S. have created oppressive spaces for English Language Learners (ELLs) and their families.⁹ From this premise they advocated for the importance of parent programs that bridge *both* traditional and non-traditional models in order to adequately serve families of ELLs. Considering that the majority of ELLs in K-12 are native Spanish speakers from Latin American countries, this suggested approach is utile for broadly understanding Latin@ parent engagement programs. Traditional parent involvement typologies are strongly influenced by Epstein's model, which primarily focuses on ways that schools can help parents partake in their student's educational development. Epstein's parent engagement model emphasizes: (1) *Assisting* families with parenting and childrearing skills; (2) *Communicating* with families about students progress and school programs; (3) *Recruiting parents as volunteers* within school ecologies; (4) *Facilitating learning at home* through activities and homework; (5) *Including families as participants in decision making* roles within school governance, committees and parent organizations; and (6) *Collaborating with the community* by reaching out to community groups to organize resources and services that can strengthen school programs (see Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Traditional approaches to parent involvement predominantly view parents as participants, recipients, and volunteers of schools conventional and prescribed forms of involvement (e.g., helping with homework,

⁹ These sentiments are reflected in national and state policies. Examples include Proposition 227 (in California, 1998) and Proposition 203 (in Arizona, 2003), which, once implemented, have severely marginalized the role that languages apart from English, for the purpose of educating ELLs, are legally allowed to enjoy in classrooms (see Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

volunteering at school, participating in school committees, promoting home-learning, etc.). Although traditional forms of involvement are of value, they do not readily propel marginalized Latin@ parents' ability to address the systematic ways that their children are failed. On the contrary, they seek to involve parents as *supporters* of schools that overwhelmingly fail Latin@ students. Non-traditional approaches underline reciprocal understanding between schools and parents, creating opportunity for both the schools and parents to learn from and with one another. This removes the expectation for Latin@ parents to assimilate by learning to fit into the schools. This approach digresses from deficit perspectives by advocating for a *funds of knowledge* approach that centralizes the families' cultural and linguistic backgrounds promoting inclusiveness, effective communication, and interactive/experiential teaching. Funds of knowledge refer to the accumulated and evolving socio-cultural knowledge, experience and skills that individuals bring and draw from for meaning making. A 'funds of knowledge' approach recognizes that individuals (in this case Latin@ parents) are not blank slates ready to be filled. On the contrary, Latin@ parents bring with them their funds of knowledge that educators are to honor, respect, and capitalize on, for meaningful engagement and learning opportunities (see González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). Most importantly, non-traditional forms of parental involvement include a parent education component that aims to help parents understand how the education system works and/or fails to. Dual-model programs—that bridge both traditional and non-traditional approaches—strive to not only help build parents' traditional forms of capital, but to engage and empower them to shift the power differential by changing how schools work, so that they too work for Latin@ students. The literature within the past decade documents the implementation of parent involvement/engagement

programs developed to serve the Latin@ population. These parent programs vary in implementation models, have different goals and yield different outcomes. For the most part, these programs are not school independent initiatives; instead they result from collaboration with multiple actors who help form partnership (e.g., community organizations, university outreach offices, county offices, school districts, local/national outreach programs, etc.). Next, I discuss different parent program models present in the literature designed to *serve* Latin@ parents. These programs range from full on traditional models to exemplary dual-model programs with some depicting traces of both. Addressing these various models provides a general landscape of where the *Padres Líderes* (Parent Leaders) program, which is the foci of this dissertation, fits within the current body of the literature; this contextualization puts into perspective both the scholarly contributions of this program and dissertation study.

VIII. Traditional and Non-Traditional Latin@ Parent Involvement/Engagement Models

The Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) is one of the largest and widely known parent programs across the nation. PIQE is reflective of what Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) classify as a traditional program model that strives to assimilate parents into the culture of American schools. Since its inception in the late 1980s, PIQE has graduated almost half a million parents across multiple states in 16 different languages.¹⁰ PIQE was designed with the intent to help bridge the cultural disconnect that exists between Latin@ parents and U.S. schools, particularly by focusing on building collaborations between Latin@ parents and teachers (see Parent Institute for Quality Education, n.d.). Consisting of

¹⁰ PIQE programs are implemented by official representatives and must be formally solicited from the organization petitioning for a program.

eight 90-minute sessions, PIQE focuses on educating parents on how to create a thriving educational environment for their children within their home and school setting. PIQE is indeed a valuable program that has aided thousands of Latin@ immigrant parents. However, PIQE utilizes a prescribed curriculum that assumes what parents *need* and *should* know. This program focuses on *educating* parents on the ways that they can foster positive educational outcomes for their children striving to change parents, but not the school. Through PIQE, the cultural divide that research supports exist between the Latin@ community and schools is *merged* by building the capacity of Latin@ parents to diminish these divides. PIQE does not openly provide a venue to support parent leadership, advocacy, and empowerment to help parents engage schools in ways where they can address the structural inequalities that perpetuate the Latin@ education crisis (see Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Parent Institute for Quality Education, n.d.). Research studies on the PIQE model reveal that this program helps develop parents' social-cultural and educational capital. Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) conducted a mix-method study on PIQE programs implemented in two Californian elementary schools in 1999. Each site enrolled approximately 100 Latin@ immigrant Spanish-speaking parents. The researchers exposed that PIQE helped parent participants expand how they define their role and perceive their place in their children's education. Parents acquire new knowledge, vocabulary, and strategies to assist them in monitoring their children's academic progress and in helping them negotiate information with their child's teachers. Furthermore, Chrispeels and González (2004) conducted an evaluation of 1,156 Latin@ immigrant Spanish-speaking PIQE parents. They concluded that increases in parents' knowledge of *how* to be involved had a significant effect on parents' motivation to be involved at both elementary and secondary levels. In

sum, PIQE reflects what Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) identify as a traditional parent involvement program model, which is not in essence *bad* but incomplete. Parent programs must do more than *educate* parents to adopt traditional forms of involvement, they must help foster non-traditional forms of engagement that empower parents to make systemic changes in education. The following parent programs are mainly reflective of traditional involvement models with some qualities of non-traditional parent engagement.

Behnke and Kelly (2011) presented a program evaluation of two parent engagement programs established to serve Latin@ parents in North Carolina. These include the Latin@ Parent and Family Advocacy and Support Training (LPFAST) and its sister program *Juntos Para Una Mejor Educación* (Together for a Better Education).¹¹ Over the course of three years the LPFAST program served 212 Latin@ parents of K- 8th grade students while *Juntos Para Una Mejor Educación* served 450 6th-12th grade Latin@ students and their parents. LPFAST primarily focused on providing parents with information that would help them better support their children's education.¹² *Juntos Para Una Mejor Educación* adopted similar topics while emphasizing academic success, and college readiness and enrollment. These programs placed at the forefront the linguistic/cultural needs of Latin@ parents and their children. For example, the program's curriculum was developed *in* Spanish to focally serve Latin@ families, instead of in English and later translated to *accommodate* for Spanish-speakers.¹³ All in all, these programs strived to increase parents' understanding and skills for

¹¹ The LPFAST program resulted from an initiative by Strengthening Families Coalition of Durham (SFC). *Juntos Para Una Mejor Educación* developed through collaborative efforts between North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension and 14 school districts in NC.

¹² Topics included: parent involvement and advocacy, school communication, effectively communicating with your school, standards and testing, exceptional children, and moving to action.

¹³ The programs' curriculum consisted of six two-hour sessions.

helping their children succeed academically (which *are* laudable goals); however neither programs focused on developing parents' critical understanding of the U.S. education system by addressing issues of power and inequality. Both programs supported parent leadership by *encouraging* parents to take part in advocate roles within the community and school; they even offered a leadership-training program outside of the course for interested parents that wanted to take part in advocacy-oriented roles. Even though these programs supported leadership and empowerment, they were not actual objectives of the programs. These two programs are mainly reflective of traditional involvement models because they do not strive to help empower parents by supporting their leadership development to collectively and individually question, address and challenge the barriers Latin@ students face. On the contrary, these programs are helping parents assimilate into school systems that disproportionately fail Latin@ students. Unlike PIQE, LPFAST and *Juntos Para Una Mejor Educación*, the upcoming parent model was a product of parent empowerment all the while reflective of a traditional involvement design.

Downs et al. (2008) defined Parents Teaching Parents (PTP) as a career and college knowledge program, which was implemented twice during the 2005-2006 academic year in rural Washington State. This program was developed in collaboration by researchers at Central Washington University GEAR UP and Highland School District parent volunteers. This program faced significant resistance for school sites for over a year until they were finally able to establish collaboration with their respective school site. With the help and leadership of parent volunteers, this program proposed to be a parent-led effective, efficient and sustainable career college knowledge program. This 6-week program served 45 students and 24 families, majority of which were Spanish-speakers of Mexican decent. PTP

positioned parent volunteers as the designers and subsequent owners of the curriculum, which was jointly created and not simply imparted upon them. PTP was a *product* of parent empowerment, but it did not strive to empower parent participants by helping develop their critical awareness of the inequalities minoritized students and families face in the education system. Similar to PIQE, LPFAST, and *Juntos Para Una Mejor Educación*, PTP focused on delivering information to parents that they were *lacking* in order to better support their children's college education only in this case the implementers were the parents themselves. Therefore, the PTP program is also a reflection of traditional parent involvement models with some hints of non-traditional approaches to engagement. The following model differs from the previous programs discussed as it provides a venue for parents to critically understand structured inequality as it was manifested in their children's education.

Futures & Families (F&F) comprised the parent component of a program that served students through their 10th-12th grade years at a diverse high school in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Auerbach (2004) details that this program resulted from an ongoing K-16 school-university partnership with the University of California, Los Angeles. F&F's mission aimed to foster a college-going culture for students and families of color by making information on college-related topics accessible to parents.¹⁴ F&F served an average of 45 primarily Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrant parents of low-income or working-class. Over the course of three years, parents met 25 times; meetings focused on helping parents acquire information and develop strategies to support their student's 4-year college pathways. F&F was parent-centered and strived to make information culturally/linguistically accessible to parents. Similar to the previously discussed program models, F&F focused on promoting

¹⁴ This college-going information included understanding college requirements, searching for scholarships, demystifying academic transcripts, college cost, and SAT/ACT information.

college-relevant social and cultural capital. However a notable distinction of this program was their emphasis on *critical capital*. Auerbach draws from the work of Morrell and Rogers (2002) to define critical capital as the “development of a critical understanding of educational inequality and social reproduction that leads to social action to rectify these conditions” (p. 128). Auerbach noted that unlike other parent engagement programs, F&F provided a space where parents could discuss issues of inequality, racism, discrimination, class, power, etc. as reflected in their student’s academic environments (e.g., tracking, lack of AP/honors classes, test bias, dropout rates, etc.). Although F&F facilitated frank discussions about issues of power and inequality that helped develop parents’ critical capital, F&F did not lend itself to empower parent leaders who could help change the systemic problems they were becoming aware of. Although some parents felt empowered to advocate for their children, the program model itself did not emphasize nor provide a venue for parent leadership. F&F’s main goal and capacity resided in *informing* and *educating* parents about college-going information. Thus, the F&F program model is primarily reflective of traditional parent involvement with some elements of non-traditional forms of engagement. The last program discussed in this chapter is the embodiment of a dual traditional and non-traditional parent engagement model; this program is likewise the focus of my dissertation.

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) is the nations leading Latin@ legal civil rights organization. Since the late 1990s MALDEF’s Parent School Partnership (PSP) program has served thousands of parents by helping them to develop their capacity as leaders, advocates, and agents of change equipped to improve the educational outcomes of their children, schools and communities. The current PSP curriculum consists of 12 sessions that address various topics intended to help parents

understand how to navigate the U.S. education system and improve the educational outcomes of their children by underscoring their legal rights and responsibilities. The second half of the PSP curriculum encourages parents to identify areas of high-need in their school and/or community and collectively develop an action plan to address these needs. Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011) conducted a case study on two elementary schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District that implemented the PSP program to examine if and how parents' social and intellectual capital developed through their participation.¹⁵ Pedagogically, these PSP programs did not strive to minimally *educate* parents by *transmitting* them with information, so that they could better help their children. Instead, by bridging both traditional and non-traditional models, the PSP program encouraged parents to engage, contribute, and act within their school and community ecologies. These researchers revealed that the PSP created conditions that cultivated parents' social and intellectual capital that supported enhanced relationships, social ties and access to resources that empowered them to improve the educational outcomes of their children and schools. For this study, intellectual capital refers to the "knowledge and capabilities of a collective with potential for collaborative joint action" (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 11). Parents engaged in collective action projects that focused on: addressing pirate vans and speeding cars in a school zone, addressing sanctions imposed by student tardiness, collaborating to create a school computer center for parents, and hosting a parent and teacher meeting to address limited and poor communication among teachers and parents (for details on these projects see Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011). Furthermore, Bolívar and Chrispeels found that previous program

¹⁵ At these separate sites, the PSP programs enrolled 24 and 33 parents, each graduating 15 mothers of Mexican origin that spoke Spanish as their first language. In addition to these two sites, Bolívar and Chrispeels conducted focus group interviews with 28 PSP graduates in the greater Los Angeles region to explore actions taken by parents after their program completion.

graduates remained active several years after their participation, supporting that parents' activism is likely to extend beyond their participation in the PSP. These scholars expounded that Latin@ immigrant parents can individually and collectively make changes when given the opportunity to recognize their own power, possibilities, and responsibility to bring about change. This study establishes that when schools stop blaming Latin@ parents and instead develop authentic opportunities to engage them, Latin@ parents reflect active forms of collaboration in the educational system. Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011) stated, "school policies, practices, and resources can be altered to better meet the needs of low-income communities as well as benefit students, schools, and parents" (p. 33). The PSP parents were not only able to enhance the educational opportunities for their children but through their individual and collective actions effected change in their schools and community.

As argued in this chapter, Latin@ parents value their children's *educación*; they hold high unwavering academic aspirations and *are* involved. However, their expectations fluctuate depending on external and internal factors that are directly tied to parents own forms of capital that are central to how middle-class White and Asian parents support their children's academic attainment. Hence, Latin@ parents' incomes, low levels of academic attainment, and lack of experience and understanding of the U.S. educational system have direct implications on the capital available to support and question their children's educational progress, opportunities, and access to higher education. Creating opportunities for meaningful engagement among the Latin@ population *is* vital for parents and schools to work together in improving the educational outcomes of the culturally and linguistically diverse students that they serve. In light of the Latin@ education crisis, parental engagement cannot be reserved for parents whose capital matches onto schools sanctioned ways of being.

Research and experience indicates the need to engage Latin@ parents directly in education in order to effectively address educational disparities. Within the past decade parent programs designed to bridge the socio-cultural disconnect between the Latin@ family and schools have emerged. Many of these have shown to build parents social, cultural, and educational capital (Behnke & Kelly, 2011; Chrispeels & González, 2004; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Downs et al., 2008). Some have gone as far as promoting spaces in which critical capital is fostered (Auerbach, 2004; Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011). The PSP model –which is the focus of this dissertation– not only increased parents social, cultural, educational and critical capital, but it also rendered a space where empowered parents could individually and collectively work to improve the educational outcomes of their children and schools (intellectual capital). The PSP program curriculum embodies the traditional (involvement) and non-traditional (engagement) dual-model that Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) pressed as necessary to adequately served culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

It would be naïve to think that a dual-model parent engagement program can *fix* our education system, especially when considering that they have been around since the late 1980s. Yet, programs such as the PSP demonstrate that when marginalized parents recognize their own power and are assisted in developing various forms of capital, they *can* yield change. Parental engagement alone will not, and should not be expected to, remedy the systemic ways schools fail minority, low-income, and their ELL student population. However, it is a tool through which engaged and empowered parents can shift the power differential by altering how schools work, so that they too work for Latin@ students. The concept of Latin@ parents' capital development through parent engagement programs is largely understudied. For example, the field in parental engagement has yet to understand

what the development of intellectual capital looks like in-the-making for disenfranchised populations. Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011) study made a significant contribution to the field of parental engagement. However this study was largely outcome based and did not address *how* the parents' capital developed; their data was derived from classroom observations, documents and focus groups of both current and previous graduates.¹⁶ Their approach limited their ability to analyze *how* parents negotiate their voice to collectively implement their action projects, a gap that I address through this study.

IX. Aims of the Dissertation

Employing an ethnographic participant-observer approach, this study examines how 21 Latin@ immigrant parents in the *Padres Líderes IV* (Parent Leaders) program drew from individual and collective funds of knowledge and forms of capital to negotiate, develop, and present letters to their local school board regarding a funding priority in response to California's school districts' new Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). Five activities constitute the dynamic and interactive work that parents engaged in to construct letters representative of their group's concerns (e.g., identifying the problem, need, target audience, significance, working on their drafts). I start by localizing these socio-cultural and historical activities within the state, district, school, program and project level. This embedded approach aids in considering how the state and district political ecologies impacted parents' group work and how parents—through their collective efforts—strived to impact and not just be impacted by these ecologies. The *Padres Líderes IV* parents formed four groups, each to focus their efforts on one of their identified areas of high-need, these

¹⁶ Almost all classes were observed at one site followed by three at the second site; altogether only 3 classes were videotaped. The focus groups were intended to delve deeper into the parents' experiences and perspective on the program (see Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011).

include: English Language Learner (ELL) reclassification, tutoring, summer academic programs and school safety. At the parent project level, I focus my analysis on one of the four groups (summer academic programs), due to its popularity with the parents and because it was facilitated by both an educator and parent-coordinator. I identify key themes whose inclusion were negotiated in this group's final letter, and follow these themes throughout the length of the 12-week program to gauge *if* and *how* the program sessions influenced the parents' collaborative endeavors. In turn, I hone in on dynamic group interactions to identify the tools parents utilized and the skills they employed to collectively negotiate the thematic progression of their letters. In this study I address the following guiding questions:

1. How did this collective group of parents negotiate and introduce key themes discussed throughout the program into the body of their letter?
2. How did these parents utilize their individual and collective forms of capital and/or funds of knowledge to mediate the thematic progression of their letter?

Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks

Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis and George's (2004), *Ecologies of Parental Engagement (EPE)* is a framework designed to investigate engagement in urban schools; EPE is the fundamental theoretical framework guiding this dissertation. In the following I explain the design of EPE and how it helps to inform this study, most importantly I detail its limitations and offer modifications that expand this framework's applicability to the study of parent engagement programs.

EPE sharply distinguishes between parental involvement and engagement. The former is mainly defined by the participatory role of parents in school-sanctioned forms of

involvement (e.g., attending back-to-school night, PTA meetings, etc.). Barton et al. (2004) alternatively frame parental engagement as the mediation between space and capital through which parents *author* and *position* themselves as agents of change. By *positioning* themselves, rather than being *positioned* by others, parents exercise influence, power, and control within school ecologies. This moves parents away from being passive participants to being parents as critical thinkers, who through their activation of capital have the ability to mediate institutional spaces. EPE postulates parental engagement as more than an object of study (e.g., attending a meeting, parent night, etc.), or an outcome (e.g., increase/decrease in attendance at events), and rather as a set of complex relationships tied to actions that operate within and across social and institutional spaces. EPE is a theoretical framework that helps in documenting the *processes* that make up parent engagement; this new approach moves away from a general outcome-based approach to parent involvement that largely dismisses parents' integrated ways of *knowing, being* and *doing*.

As a framework, EPE merges critical race theory (CRT) and cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) to develop a conceptual framework for studying parental engagement through an ecological perspective, or a focus on the system as a whole. CRT in education expounds on the historically oppressive orientations of society and how schools, through policy, theory and practice, sustain them (Yosso, 2005). It maintains that racism is embedded in the fabric of our American society and requires diligent work to identify, expose, and combat it in order to promote social justice. As a framework, CRT recognizes that racism is oftentimes a lived experience; therefore it utilizes experiential knowledge as an analytical tool (e.g., storytelling, narratives, scenarios, family history, biographies, etc.) (See Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2005). CRT's support for experiential knowledge

compliments ethnographic methodologies because in both the lived experiences of People of Color are not disassociated from their socio-cultural and historical selves. CRT is of particular importance to this dissertation because it provides constructs for recognizing and grasping how People of Color come to understand and resist oppression. By employing an ethnographic approach, I present rich data that allows for the observation of Latin@ parents' resistance in their own voice and through their own individual and collective endeavors. This ethnographic approach aids me in honoring, recognizing and appreciating the parents' complex efforts to resist, engage, and mediate their local political ecologies.

In addition to CRT, EPE fundamentally draws from a cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), which allows for the examination of parental engagement as the mediation between space and capital. EPE regards these spaces (or activity systems) as school based academic, school based non-academic, and community/home bases, which are all marked by distinct social, cultural, historical, and political boundaries. These social spaces consist of subjects (parent participants and parent-coordinators) who come together in a social cultural and historical context in the *Padres Líderes IV* program. Here they utilize their current and developing mental/physical tools and artifacts of mediation to achieve their individual and collective goals in a manner that evolves and adapts over time through their development of new knowledge and agency to create their LCAP proposal (see Cole, 1996; Durán, 2011; Fernandez, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978; Wink, 2011). EPE is attentive to the ever-changing relationships parents have with educators, school staff, other parents, etc., and how they influence each other and their actions within and across school spaces. This focus is instrumental to this study because it propels the consideration of how the dynamic interactions that these different actors had with one another influenced the way that they

collectively strived to achieve their goals. Furthermore, this dissertation presents the examination of an additional space that EPE failed to consider: school-oriented political ecologies. The parents in this study collectively negotiated their proposals to their school board in attempt to mediate their local political ecologies and advocate for the needs of their students, school and community. This dissertation adds to EPE by propositioning that parent engagement does not only take place in school base academic, school base non-academic, community/home base, but also in school-oriented political ecologies.

A limitation of EPE is its dismissal to consider how activity systems are embedded within other systems. Barton et al. define parent engagement as the mediation between space and capital, however, the relevant *spaces* where mediation takes place operates within various activity systems that can influence and even constrain the type of activities that parents engage in. For example at a state-level, California adopted the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) policy that created contentious political spaces at a district, school and program level. At the program project-level, the parents in this study collectively developed letters to their school board to negotiate the inclusion of four areas in their district's Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) that they felt would directly affect their children and schools in negative ways. Through their collective efforts, the parents in this study strived to mediate the actions that their district would adopt knowing that their decisions would trickle down and directly impact them in their day-to-day lives. The collective activities that took place within the *Padres Líderes* program (or space) were directly impacted by school, district and state ecologies. These systems, through policy interpretation and implementation, impacted *how* parents could participate in the LCAP decision-making process and what changes they could negotiate. For example, each district

was required to hold public hearings where parents, community leaders, and school members could present their case outlining what they felt the LCAP should prioritize. Characterizing engagement requires acknowledging the embeddedness within activity systems. Not doing so overlooks the interactive spaces in which engagement happens and how they influence one another. Most importantly, it disregards how parents work to politically challenge the hierarchal structural powers that create the inequality they mediate day-in-and-day-out. In sum, EPE recognizes that systems are all marked by distinct social, cultural, historical, and political boundaries, however as a framework it fails to consider the multi-layered influences across and within ecologies that multi-directionally influence and/or try to influence one another. Therefore, I propose an *embedded* EPE framework that allows us to understand how the parents in this dissertation study worked collectively at a program and group project level to collectively influence their local political ecologies in an effort to advocate for their children, school and community. As aforementioned, Barton et al. define parent engagement as the mediation between space and *capital*; in the following I elucidate how this definition overlooks the dynamic and informal ways that People of Color engage school ecologies. To address this limitation, I propose for engagement to be studied as the mediation between space and parents' capital and funds of knowledge.

By drawing from CHAT, EPE helps researchers to appreciate how parents develop and utilize various mental/physical tools and artifacts of mediation to accomplish their goals. These meditational tools consist of various forms of capital. But what is capital and most importantly, what does it take for something to be *considered* a form of capital and who or what grants this recognition? Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, and Moll (2011) traced back the work of Karl Marx to sustain that in its traditional definition capital is wealth that is

utilized to produce more wealth. This classical theory indicates that capital can be understood of as surplus value (or profit) generated by capitalists when resources (typically money) are applied to yield production (see Lin, 1999; Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011). Thus capitalists have the capability to make investments and receive the profits of their investments. Rios-Aguilar et al. explain that neo-capitalist differ from classicalists in that capital is both an investment and the profit of the investment. They explain that when an individual invests in developing relationships with professionals (social capital) they expect for those networks to transpire into better job opportunities (profit). This characterization further differs from classical theorists in that the possession and production of capital is not reserved for capitalists nor is it strictly limited to financial resources. Pierre Bourdieu is one of the most influential neo-capitalist. He challenged the notion of capital as purely economics-based by presenting other forms of capital that people develop and utilize to mediate various spaces, including human, social, cultural, financial and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Although in theory everyone has resources that can be converted or transformed into capital to create profit, these processes are bounded by social cultural and historical spaces that impact whose *resources* convert into which forms of capital to receive what types of profits.

As previously discussed in the background chapter, immigrant Latin@ parents oftentimes lack the type of social and cultural capital that is central to how middle-class parents support their children's academic attainment. This does not imply that Latin@ parents lack social and cultural capital in and of itself. What it does reveal however is that what makes up capital for them is oftentimes inconsistent with what American schools recognize as capital. When schools decide what counts as involvement, they simultaneously

decide which parents' resources, skills and knowledge have value and can therefore be converted into capital that more seamlessly promotes their students' academic success. For example, Latin@ parents use *consejos* (or homilies) to deter their children from *malas compañías* (bad influences), they utilize these *informal* practices to foster in their children a positive educational identity that translates into forming beneficial social networks (see Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). These tactics are reflective of their social and cultural capital. For parents in American schools, *formal* forms of social capital include knowing who is who within school ecologies and possessing the ability to develop relationships with these varied individuals. These networks then translate into better access for their children (e.g., school counselors, educators, college coordinators, administrators, etc.). In order to develop these types of relationships, a parent must first know that this is part of American school culture; understanding this expectation is itself a reflection of cultural capital. Therefore, parents' *knowing, being, and doing* are largely contingent upon how an individual is socialized. Evidently parents' accumulation of social and cultural capital is heavily dependent upon their lived experiences that take place within socio-cultural and historical settings. Latin@ immigrant parents develop the forms of capital that are applicable to the spaces they lived in. When these parents immigrate to America in pursuit of better opportunities, what makes up their forms of capital is incongruent with what counts as capital in the new educational systems that as families they find themselves in. Schools are cultural sites and what counts as capital is dependent upon whose competencies and resources directly translate into profit within the socio-cultural and historical setting(s) that parents are striving to mediate.

As detailed in the background chapter, there is a socio-cultural disconnect between what schools expect from Latin@ parents and what they themselves consider as appropriate

engagement behavior. This cultural disconnect dismisses the dynamic ways that Latin@ parents support their children's education, fueling the deficit perspectives that schools sustain towards these families. As researchers and practitioners, we must be vigilant of the social, cultural and historical spaces that *capital* operates in. Most importantly, we need to distinguish between *formal* and *informal* forms of capital and critique how this formality is made to take place. Barton et al. missed an opportunity to problematize what counts as *capital* and who/what sets those parameters. This must not be overlooked, considering that mediation is the negotiation of power. As previously noted, EPE defines engagement as the mediation between space and capital. Barton et al. drew mainly from Bourdieu's neo-capitalist work to conceptualize capital as taking the form of human, social, and material resources that parents have access to or activate to achieve their goals. I argue, however, that the adoption of these traditional forms of capital overlooks the many ways that Latin@ families support their children's education and engage school ecologies. To address this limitation, I propose that EPE must expand its conceptualization of capital to include the formal and informal forms of capital that People of Color utilize to mediate school ecologies: these include traditionally unrecognized and unacknowledged forms of capital and parents' funds of knowledge.

Over the past years, various scholars have contributed to the literature by expanding our understanding of capital beyond human, social, and material resources. These works have pushed researchers to be more cognizant and inclusive of the dynamic ways that individuals from various walks of life mediate spaces. For example, Yosso (2005) challenged the traditional interpretation of capital and the deficit perspectives that People of Color are viewed through by bringing recognition to the unacknowledged forms of capital

that these members utilize to mediate various ecologies. These include aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance capital (see Yosso, 2005). In Table 1 I outline various forms of capital as they pertain to parent engagement in education. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all forms advocated for in the literature; instead it provides an overview of various forms of capital as they relate to parent engagement. In order for EPE to better understand how parents engage school ecologies, they need to expand their definition of capital and consider how these previously set parameters dismiss the many ways in which families of color work to mediate school ecologies. From this premise, I propose that a *funds of knowledge* framework strengthens EPE by considering the *informal* support systems that immigrant Latin@ parents draw from to support their children's education.

Luis Moll and colleagues' *funds of knowledge* framework was developed to combat the deficit perspectives/ideologies that are common depictions of low-income students and families of color. This framework documents and brings recognition to the historically accumulated and evolving socio-cultural knowledge, experience, skills, competencies and resources that families and students bring and draw from for household or individual functioning and well-being (see González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). Returning to the example of *consejos*, a funds of knowledge approach recognizes this resource as a skillful practice that helps Latin@ parents to impart their value for education while fostering a positive educational identity (Kiyama, 2010). This framework demonstrates that low-income Latin@ families are not capital-less by providing a lens that helps to appreciate the *informal* ways that these families support and nurture

positive educational ideologies. Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) resolve that, “‘Funds of knowledge’ has become the accepted term for describing capital in lower income and immigrant communities” (p. 179). What is deemed as the capital and/or funds of knowledge of parents is clearly based on the social-cultural, historical and class settings that make up the spaces that these families operate in, which renders their support systems as formal (capital) or informal (funds of knowledge). As previously noted in the background chapter, parent engagement programs designed to support parents’ capital development are especially important for low-achieving immigrant ethnic parents. Although we know that Latin@ parents care deeply about their children’s education, their high aspirations and informal types of support (funds of knowledge) do not readily translate into gains for these families (as made evident by the Latin@ student education crisis). Hence, simply recognizing the vast richness in the skills and resources that Latin@ students and families bring and draw from to advance their well being is *not* sufficient. These families need the opportunity to recognize and convert their funds of knowledge into forms of capital and to activate/mobilized these combined resources to negotiate school ecologies. As scholars, we must move forward by drawing from both frameworks to more comprehensively understand how families engage school ecologies and how their efforts can be better supported.

As expounded, both parents’ forms of capital and funds of knowledge are instrumental to understanding engagement in a culturally responsive way. However each of these frameworks has noteworthy limitations. Research that strictly operates through a *capital* perspective adopts a standpoint that privileges the dominant classes, while those that solely focus on *funds of knowledge* dismiss structural issues of power. Rios-Aguilar et al. sustain

Table 1

Forms of Capital in Relation to Parent Engagement

Name	Definition
Cultural Capital	Cultural capital refers to parents' understanding of how the American education system operates and what it values, which transpires into their enhanced abilities to promote their children's academic success (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Lee & Bowen, 2006).
Social Capital	Social capital encompasses parents' possession and/or ability to develop networks that grant them access to resources pertinent to supporting their children's academic development (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Gándara & Contreras; Yosso, 2005).
Intellectual Capital	Intellectual capital refers to the "knowledge and capabilities of a collective with potential for collaborative joint action (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 11).
Critical Capital	Critical capital consists of an individuals' "development of a critical understanding of educational inequality and social reproduction that leads to social action to rectify these conditions" (Morrell & Rogers, 2002 as cited in Auerbach, 2004, p. 128). Critical capital is similar to Yosso's (2005) resistant capital, which relates to "those knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (p. 80).
Economic Capital	For this study, economic capital relates to parents personal and/or access to financial means that enable them to financially support their children's educational pursuits.
Academic Capital	Academic capital consists of parents' academic attainment, experience and resources derived from their own schooling involvements (St. John, Hu, & Fisher, 2011).
Linguistic Capital	Linguistic capital underscores parents' intellectual and social skills to communicate in an English structured society (Yosso, 2005).
Aspirational Capital	Aspirational capital relates to parents "ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).
Navigational Capital	Navigational capital pertains to parents' abilities to navigate through social institutions (Yosso, 2005).
Political Capital	Political capital embodies parents' understanding of how political processes operate and their ability to influence political outcomes (Delgado & Humm-Delgado, 2013; Pitre, 2009).

that a limitation of funds of knowledge is that scholars over emphasis on recognizing the rich practices, tools, and resources that underrepresented students and their families utilize to survive, all the while failing to address issues of power within educational settings that rendered these skills as *informal* support systems. To address the limitations of these frameworks, Rios-Aguilar et al. propose approaching funds of knowledge from a capital perspective; they theorize that such a method would enable researchers to understand the educational opportunities and experiences of students and their families, as well as issues of power within educational systems. Analytically, a combined methodology would allow for the documentation of how students' and families' funds of knowledge are transmitted and/or converted into forms of capital and activated/mobilized to mediate their school ecologies. As aforementioned, Barton et al.'s (2004) EPE theoretical framework draws heavily from Bourdieu's depiction of capital by focusing on the human, social, and material resources that parents access to achieve their goals. This platform clearly overlooks the many ways that Latin@ families formally and informally support their children's education beyond the limited parameter of forms of capital. I argue that in order for EPE to fully appreciate the engagement of families of color within school ecologies, they need to conceptualize engagement as the *mediation between space and parents' capital/funds of knowledge*. This combined theoretical approach will allow me to distinguish how parents converted key information discussed throughout the *Padres Líderes* program into their individual and collective funds of knowledge and forms of capital.

This study will further our understanding of the valuable role that engagement programs have in capital (formal and informal) development and parent' empowerment in

ways that current scholarship has failed to do. For example, Graciela Fernandez (2010) found that parents in a program that adopted the MALDEF PSP curriculum (likewise adopted by the *Padres Líderes* program) dynamically drew from their funds of knowledge, skills, and resources to understand how the U.S. educational system functions. Although of great value, Fernandez's study had its limitations. Her work mainly focused on *what* tools parents draw from to generate understanding, and did not attempt to show what parents *do* with that knowledge and *how* they utilize it to author school spaces. Understanding how parents apply their funds of knowledge to address real-life situations is imperative to identifying ways that educators, scholars, and activists can help parents to advocate for their individual and collective needs in ways that are relatable to them. This dissertation study addresses this gap in the literature by revealing how parents utilize their combined funds of knowledge and forms of capital to mediate school ecologies. This study will furthermore expound our understanding of intellectual and critical capital; the former consists of parents' capability for collaborative joint action while the latter alludes to their awareness of inequality and the agency to bring about change. Largely understudied, both intellectual and critical capital are key to understanding parents' advocacy, empowerment, and engagement. Next I discuss these forms of capital and expound on how this study helps understand engagement in more dynamic ways.

Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011) ascertain that a characteristic of middle-class parents is their ability to access social and intellectual capital, which they can leverage to accomplish their school related goals. They defined intellectual capital as the knowledge and capabilities of a collective that has potential for collaborative joint action. Influenced by the work of Lin, Cook and Burt (2001), they identified social capital as the "resources (power and

information) present in a bounded community's social relationships that can be used to leverage additional resources" (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 9). These scholars argued that middle-class parents' willingness and ability to take collective action, or the threat therefore of, mediates their capacity to secure and negotiate school resources. They stress that in order for parents to take collective-action, they must have access to social capital and the opportunity for collaboration; as they gather and work towards their collective goals they generate intellectual capital. Intellectual capital is generally absent in immigrant and low-income families, which affects their ability to successfully negotiate power and resources within school spaces. Bolívar and Chrispeels conducted a case study on two elementary schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District that implemented the MALDEF PSP program. Through mainly classroom observations and focus groups, they examined if and how parents' social and intellectual capital developed through their participation in these leadership programs. Bolívar & Chrispeels found that these PSP chapters created conditions that built Latin@ parents' social and intellectual capital, which supported enhanced relationships, social ties, and access to resources that empowered them to improve the educational outcomes of their children and schools.¹⁷ This study advanced the literature on Latin@ parental engagement by revealing that parent programs can lead to developments in parents' capital, which are essential to how middle-class parents negotiate school spaces and maintain their status quo. Notably, the type of data collected for this study (observations, focus groups, and only 3 video recorded sessions out of a possible 24) limited the researchers to an outcome-base approach. They were able to inform that capital was developed, but not

¹⁷ For example, parents in this study collectively engaged in various action-projects at the school, community and district level where they focused on: addressing pirate vans and speeding cars in a school zone, addressing sanctions imposed by student tardiness, collaborating to create a school computer center for parents, and hosting a parents and teachers meeting to address limited and poor communication between these two parties.

how it came to be. Through the use of an ethnographic approach, my study seeks to address this gap by unveiling how intellectual capital looks like in-the-making. This research approach allows me to document how parents, part of the *Padres Líderes* program, utilized their collective knowledge, skills, and capabilities to jointly engage their local political ecologies.

Auerbach (2004) found that the F&F parent program's discussions on inequality created conditions that fostered parents' development of critical capital. Influenced by the work of Morrell and Rogers (2002), Auerbach defines critical capital as parents' "understanding of educational inequality and social reproduction that leads to social action to rectify these conditions" (Auerbach, 2004, p. 128). This publication made notable contributions to the literature by revealing that parent programs *can* foster parents' development of critical capital. Although F&F facilitated frank discussions about issues of power and inequality, this program did not lend itself to empower parent leaders that could help change the systemic problems that they were becoming aware of. Parent advocacy was not a direct component of F&F, but an indirect consequence exercised by some parents who felt empowered enough to challenge systems of inequality. Unlike F&F, the PSP curriculum adopted by the *Padres Líderes* program is rooted in parent advocacy and empowerment. This dissertation study furthers our understanding of critical capital by revealing how parents' develop it in-the-making and most importantly, how parents come to think of their own consciousness, and how they use it to accomplish their collective goals. Critical capital is similar to Barton et al.'s (2004) EPE concept of *orientation to action* that is often dismissed in parental engagement studies that adopt deficit perspectives. Orientation to action refers to parents' developing awareness of the quality and equity (or therefore lack of)

that exists within school ecologies. Barton et al. found that parents' awareness of their children and their own positioning within schools influenced their decisions to make their *presence* known within these spaces by being present, observant, and willing to advocate for their children's education. These scholars sustained that parent's orientation-to-action is as important as action itself because it is reflective of the experiences that motivated parents to position and author academic spaces. Parents' *orientation to action* resonates with Freire's notion of *concientización*, which alludes to an individuals' deeply rooted critical consciousness of their social positioning (see Durán, 2011; Wink 2011). In this dissertation, I utilize the term *critical capital*, *concientización*, and *orientation to action* interchangeably. This approach permits me to understand *how* parents developed their critical awareness of their political spaces and *how* they consciously used the projection of their awareness as a tool for mediation.

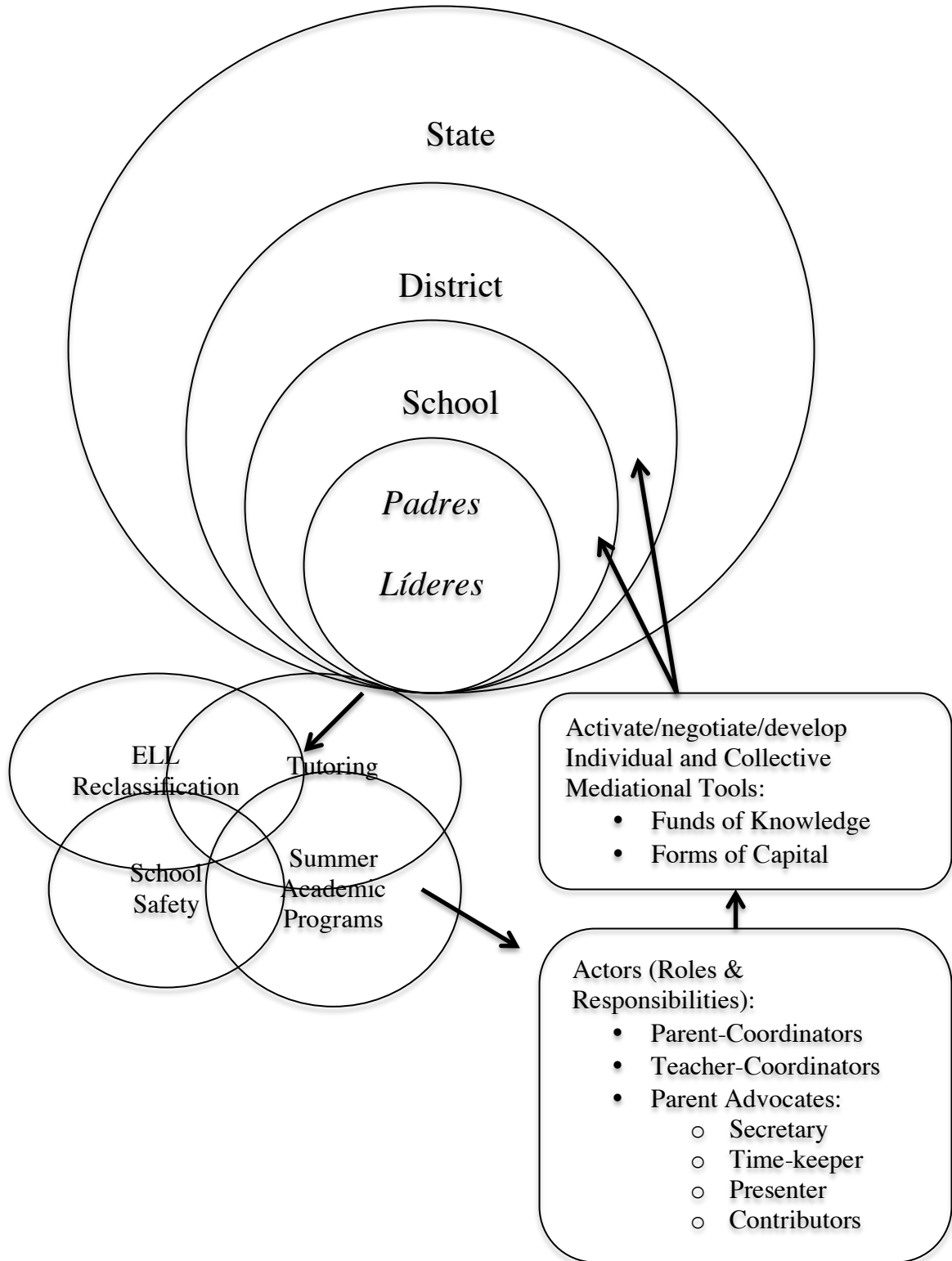
In summary, for this dissertation I draw heavily from Barton et al.'s Ecologies of Parent Engagement. As presented in this chapter, this theory is useful for informing mediation in parent programs; however, EPE has some clear limitations that need to be addressed to more justly understand the labor that families of color put forth to mediate academic spaces. EPE draws from CHAT to theorize the concept of *space*; it limited their parameters to school base academic, school base non-academic, and community/home base. I made the case that EPE needs to include school-oriented political ecologies in order to discern how parents come to understand and resist inequality within political spaces; this inclusion compliments a CRT framework. I likewise advocate for an *embedded* EPE approach arguing that in order to value engagement we need to situate it within the multi-layered and multi-directionally ecologies that impact and/or try to influence one another.

This added analysis allows researchers to consider how activity systems influence and even constrain the type of activities that parents engage in and how parents, through their collective mediation, are not at the mercy of these structures. I furthermore challenge that in order to rightly document the engagement of families of color within school ecologies, EPE must conceptualize engagement as the mediation between space and *parents' capital/funds of knowledge*. EPE's traditional depiction of capital clearly dismisses the many ways that immigrants and families of color formally and informally support their children's education. To address this inadequacy I assert that additional forms of capital, such as funds of knowledge, need to be considered when studying parent engagement. Particularly, I build the case for intellectual and critical capital for its key role in helping us to understand how parents collectively negotiate school ecologies to advocate for their children, school and community. This emphasis helps us to understand parent empowerment and advocacy *in-vivo* in ways that research has overwhelmingly failed to do.

The following Figure 1 I illustrate how this modified *embedded* EPE framework informs this study. In Figure 1 the *Padres Líderes IV* program, as an activity system, is embedded within their school, district, and state ecology. At the program project level, all four-parent groups interacted and supported one another in various ways, hence the overarching circles. These parents (or actors) assumed various roles and responsibilities to support one another in mediating their local political ecologies. For example, after all four groups finished writing the first draft of their letter, each of their designated reporters read their group's proposal to the class. The parents offered their feedback in aims of helping one another strengthen their letters. At a group level, parents activated and developed individual and collective mediational tools to methodically negotiate the thematic progression of their

letter. The parents advocated for their proposals during a public hearing in order to mediate the contents in their district's LCAP, which would directly affect their school ecologies and hence the education and futures of their children.

Figure 1. *Padres Líderes Embedded Ecologies of Parent Engagement*



Chapter 3: Methods

I begin this chapter by disclosing the historical events that led up to the *Padres Líderes IV* program and the contentious political climate that directly influenced the setting of this study. I then detail the various key elements of the program that help to contextualize the make-up of this space (or, activity system), including coordinating team profiles, description of the research setting, evolution of the program project, and the demographic information of the parents that advocated for summer academic programs. Finally, I disclose the data collection and analysis processes I employed for this study.

I. *Padres Líderes* Historical Development

The *Padres Líderes IV* program is observed as an activity system marked by distinct social, cultural, historical, and political boundaries. This program adopts the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) Parent School Partnership (PSP) curriculum for instructional design. In order to appreciate the parents' mediation of their local political ecologies we must contextualize their collaborative actions within the historical development of the program and its surrounding systems leading to this observed point in time. In the following, I present the key chronological events and actors that led to the design of *Padres Líderes IV* (see Table 2). In turn, I introduce the coordinating team profiles and the statewide policy that prompted a contentious political climate. For a comprehensive list of the actors, organizations, and institutions presented in this dissertation refer to Appendix A. Note, *All* names utilized in this study are pseudonyms; the names chosen were inspired by my own lived experiences. For confidentiality purposes, all presented images of the research participants are cartoonize using emojis (small digital

images utilized to express emotions). Instead of blurring their faces, I opted to use emojis because these digital images enable me to capture the emotions of the parents without compromising their identities.

i. *Padres Líderes I*

The College Pathways Office (CPO), located at Palo Duro University, provides numerous programs and services to low-income, first-generation and other underrepresented students and families of color in the Coastland School District in Coastland, California. CPO

Table 2						
<i>Padres Líderes I-IV Program Development Timeline</i>						
	<i>Padres Líderes I</i>		<i>Padres Líderes II</i>		<i>Padres Líderes III</i>	<i>Padres Líderes IV</i>
School Site	Travis	Forest Hill	Travis	Forest Hill	Forest Hill (open invitation to Travis parents).	Dual-Site model: Forest Hill and Travis
Length of Program	16 weeks	16 weeks	16 weeks	6 weeks	12 weeks	12 weeks
School Year	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13	2013-14
Principal	Janice	Pablo	Janice left in February (succeeded by Akim).	Pablo was appointed elementary superintendent in May (succeeded by Leslie).	Akim started in July (succeeded by Shonda Leslie in November).	Shonda Leslie
CPO Director	Margarita		Margarita left in June (succeeded by Jairo).		Jairo	Jairo
Coordinating Team	Ali	Sandra & myself.	Erendira	Sandra, Ms. Ibarra & myself.	Sandra, Ms. Ibarra, Isabel & myself.	Isabel, Natalia, Ms. Ibarra & Mrs. Perez.

aims to promote their patrons’ academic success and leadership skills to increase their college going attendance. In view of their mission to support students and families CPO created the *Padres Líderes* (Parent Leaders) program. Through these programs CPO strived to primarily serve Spanish-speaking, low-income, immigrant parents with information,

strategies and skills to help them to realize their roles as school and community leaders. In the spring semester of the 2010-11 academic year, CPO worked in collaboration with the principals at Travis and Forest Hill Elementary School to bring two independent *Padres Líderes* programs to their respective sites.

The *Padres Líderes* I parent leadership program hosted at Travis Elementary was coordinated and implemented by Ali, a Latino master's student in the college of education at Palo Duro University. CPO provided evaluation support to the Travis site, apart from this support the program was rather autonomous. Natalia, one of the parent-coordinators for *Padres Líderes IV*, participated in the first Travis cohort and continued to remain active in subsequent years. Mrs. Perez, the Travis teacher-coordinator for *Padres Líderes IV*, was invited to present and prepare parents for their upcoming parent-teacher conferences. It was through this initial arrangement that she and Natalia became acquainted with one another. For their parent project the participants decided to host a *Cinco de Mayo* event. The parents detailed all of the needed components to execute the event (e.g., location, time, entertainment, recruitment, food, etc.) and dived up the responsibilities. Numerous parents, educators and community members attended this event; it drew so much attention that the local newspaper covered it.

The *Padres Líderes* program at Forest Hill elementary ran concurrently with the Travis site. Sandra and I implemented this program. Sandra had previously worked as a program coordinator and counselor for CPO. She had years of experience in working with Latin@ families and students. At this time, I served as the program evaluator and assistant coordinator. As opposed to Sandra, I was new to the *Padres Líderes* program and its design. As a MA/PhD student in education at Palo Duro University my research focused on Latin@

parental engagement; both my research interests and personal upbringing familiarized me with the issues facing Latin@ families. Sandra mainly led content delivery while I worked closely with parents to address their concerns with classroom material; this approach compelled them to have *confianza* (trust) in me. Parents often reached out to me outside of the program to get one-on-one support and advice in addressing issues affecting their children (e.g., bullying, academic struggles, selecting schools, etc.). Parents continued to contact me years after they graduated the program while others invited me into their homes to help motivate their children to pursue a college pathway.

Towards the beginning of the *Padres Líderes I* program, Ms. Ibarra, the teacher representing Forest Hill in *Padres Líderes IV*, joined our team. Ms. Ibarra taught first grade and was recognized by parents as an advocate. She was the teacher-in-charge (similar to a vice-principal position) and one of the very few Latin@ educators in an overwhelmingly Latin@ school. The Forest Hill principal invited Ms. Ibarra to work with the *Padres Líderes* team, a volunteered position that she accepted. During this first cohort Ms. Ibarra mainly observed the classes and shared her insights, however, she did not take on a formal teaching role or participate in the weekly coordinating meetings. Isabel, one of the parent-coordinators for *Padres Líderes IV*, participated in the first cohort at Forest Hill. She was an active participant who readily voiced her concerns. The program curriculum for both of the *Padres Líderes I* sites extended for 16 sessions. The Forest Hill *Padres Líderes* participants decided that for their action project they would take it upon themselves to ensure that the program existed for future parent cohorts. They worked collectively with Ms. Ibarra and Sandra over the summer and fall semester to secure funding for the program and Sandra's coordinator position. The team suffered an 80% budget cut and was force to reduce the

program from 16 to 6 sessions. Yet, they collectively manage to secure CPO's partnership and their respective site to implement *Padres Líderes II* in the spring of 2012. Following the conclusion of both *Padres Líderes* programs, MALDEF invited one parent and one instructor on an expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. Sandra and a Forest Hill parent joined a larger group of statewide PSP graduates. Once in the national capital, they visited their state and regional representatives to advocate for bills that directly impacted education. MALDEF continued sponsoring these legislative visits during subsequent years.

ii. *Padres Líderes II*

During the 2011-12 academic year, *Padres Líderes II* took place independently at both school sites. Travis started their program in November and extended until April, this program consisted of 16 weeks of instruction. Erendira, a Latina community advocate for a state organization that assisted immigrant and migrant families, facilitated the program. This was her first time teaching the PSP curriculum and in working with parent engagement programs. CPO provided the Travis site with evaluation services and consultation support, both of which I administered. Ali, the previous *Padres Líderes* coordinator, secured a program director position at Travis; one of his new responsibilities included overseeing this program. Ali reached out to Natalia and asked her to help Erendira coordinate the program; he characterized Natalia as a mother with strong leadership skills due to her previous involvement with *Padres Líderes I* and her management role in the *Cinco de Mayo* event. This cohort of participants focused their parent project on hosting the second annual *Cinco de Mayo* event. Natalia vitally helped Erendira and the new parent cohort run this event. Similar to the previous year, Mrs. Perez presented the *Padres Líderes* session on parent-teacher conferences.

Through the summer and subsequent academic year the members of the *Padres Líderes I* Forest Hill cohort worked in collaboration with Sandra and Ms. Ibarra to ensure that the program existed for future groups of parents. In response to the 80% budget cut, the *Padres Líderes II* program was reduced to 6 sessions or 6 weeks. This program took place during mid-march and extended until late April of the 2011-12 academic year. The *veteran* parents selected the topics they wanted delivered during this shortened period, opting for sessions that focused on helping parents understand how the U.S. education system works and how to advocate for their children's schooling (e.g., parents' rights and responsibilities, parent-teacher conferences, structure of the school and school district, politics in education, pathways to the university, etc.).¹⁸ The *Padres Líderes II* coordinating team included Sandra, Ms. Ibarra and myself. Sandra served as lead program coordinator, while I continued to provide evaluation support and serve as assistant coordinator. Ms. Ibarra moved from her previous observer role to helping teach course material. We were joined weekly to discuss the upcoming classroom agenda by 4-6 veteran parents from *Padres Líderes I*. Each week these veteran parents selected topics that they felt comfortable teaching, they also helped with recruitment, set-up, tear down and childcare services. During *Padres Líderes II*, Isabel's leadership and teaching skills became evident. She informally became the veteran parent-liaison and had a visible role in helping teach program material. Considering the brevity of *Padres Líderes II* the parents did not work on an action project.

Concluding both *Padres Líderes II* programs, MALDEF invited four parent participants on an expenses-paid trip to the state capitol in Sacramento, California. Natalia and Isabel, along with two additional Forest Hill parents, joined a larger group of PSP

¹⁸ *Veteran* parent is a term the coordinating team coined to refer to parent leaders who previously took the course and remained involved in its future developments.

graduates. These mothers met with their state representatives and senators to advocate for key issues pertaining to education, labor and immigrant rights.

During 2012, several changes in leadership occurred among the *Padres Líderes* program key players; these included the second half of the 2011-12 and first half of the 2012-13 academic years. These adjustments reached both of the elementary school principal positions and the director of the CPO program. In February 2012, Janice, the Travis principal, left her position of seven years for a new administrative job in a neighboring school district. Her position was temporary filled by an interim director until the new principal Akim, an African American male fluent in Spanish, was officially hired before the start of the 2012-13 academic year. A few months into his position he stepped down and was replaced by vice principal Shonda. Shonda, an African American woman fluent in Spanish, officially secured the position in the summer 2013.

Near the end of the fall 2012 semester Pablo, the Forest Hill principal, was promoted to elementary superintendent for the Coastland School District. The Forest Hill school community, who valued his leadership and support of critical parental engagement, received his advancement as a loss. Leslie, a white bilingual teacher of 26 years from a nearby elementary school, filled Pablo's position. Similarly, the CPO program director, Margarita, received a promotion in June 2012; Jairo filled her position. Jairo had led a program within the CPO umbrella, thus he was aware of the *Padres Líderes* program. These accrued changes in leadership overall affected the *Padres Líderes* momentum and contributed to a transformation in the programs' models. I was afraid that as these key players adjusted to their new positions they would overlook this program. I purposely advocated for its

continuation building the case of its importance and impact in the Coastland community. The model was negotiated to meet the objectives and vision of the new leaders in charge.

One of the main contributing factors that altered the *Padres Líderes* program model was Jairo's communicated belief that parental engagement programs should be the prime responsibility of the Coastland School District and its participating schools, rather than that of the CPO umbrella. He foresaw his office shifting towards a supportive role rather than the backbone and responsible party of the *Padres Líderes* programs. As Jairo envisioned CPO's diminishing charge in the *Padres Líderes* management processes, he likewise sought for the district and independent school hosts to champion the sustainability and implementation of the *Padres Líderes* programs. In short, he wanted to relocate *Padres Líderes* from the university to the district and school sites. Apart from evaluation and consultation support, the Travis *Padres Líderes* program operated rather independently of CPO. The Forest Hill site however was heavily dependent on CPO, which lead almost all program logistics (e.g., creating a budget, securing funding, background and Tuberculosis tests for employees, evaluation services, food purchase orders, classroom supplies, program binders, graduation expenses, university trip expenses, etc.). Both Forest Hill and CPO contributed financially to the program's budget, however, CPO primarily managed these funds; employing the coordinators, evaluators and childcare providers needed to sustain and implement this program. In configuration with his vision for *Padres Líderes*, Jairo rolled out a two-year plan. Year 1 (2012-13) was to focus on developing the infrastructure for a transitional leadership model that would build parents' capacity to start emerging as the lead coordinators and implementers of the program, changes which were expected to take fold in year 2 (2013-14).

iii. *Padres Líderes III*

In response to the aforementioned leadership changes, *Padres Líderes III* consisted of a single site program hosted at Forest Hill with open enrollment to five Travis parents. The unforeseeable leadership instability affected Travis's viability of hosting their third independent *Padres Líderes* program. As to not completely interrupt their accessibility to this program, CPO encouraged Forest Hill to open their program enrollment to Travis parents. At this point, CPO had not officially established a relationship with Shonda given the initial uncertainty of her interim principal position. Sandra instead led recruitment efforts at Travis. For several years she taught a child development parent program at this site and was therefore closely connected to the parent body. Among the recruited parents was Natalia, who later became one of two parent-coordinators for the *Padres Líderes IV* program.

The *Padres Líderes III* implementation team consisted of Sandra, Ms. Ibarra, Isabel and myself. Sandra served as the lead program coordinator while I served as assistant coordinator and program evaluator. Ms. Ibarra once again volunteered her time to help with the implementation of the program. In alignment with CPO's transitional-leadership vision, Isabel joined the *Padres Líderes* coordinating team as a veteran parent volunteer. This group of Latinas met each week to discuss the upcoming classroom agenda and decide how to divide and present classroom material. Through these meetings, Sandra exposed Isabel to the program logistics while scaffolding her through course delivery. Before and throughout the program, Isabel expressed her anxiety and fear in helping teach the new cohort of parents; she was mainly concerned about sharing erroneous information. The team assured Isabel that they were there to support one another; as Isabel felt more comfortable she incrementally taught more material.

Prior to the beginning of *Padres Líderes* III, MALDEF modified the PSP curriculum and reduced it from 16 to 12 sessions. This updated curriculum was utilized for *Padres Líderes* III rendering it a 12-week program. This was the first year that Mrs. Perez did not present on parent-teacher conferences; instead Ms. Ibarra led this conversation at the Forest Hill site. *Padres Líderes* III had the added responsibility of developing and identifying future parent leaders that could transition into coordinator roles. Midway through the program, MALDEF invited three parents to participate in their yearly legislative advocacy trip to the state capital in Sacramento, California. Parents were selected based on their perceived ability to play a pivotal leadership role in the future of *Padres Líderes*; the elected participants included Isabel, Natalia and another mother from Travis. CPO sponsored the participation of Ms. Ibarra and myself. As part of a larger group, we met with our local representatives to advocate for key legislative policies that directly impacted Latin@ families in our communities (e.g., employee rights, driver license for undocumented immigrants, pesticide control from farm workers, common core preparation for teachers, etc.). This advocacy trip served as the first time that Natalia, Isabel and Ms. Ibarra worked together as representatives of *Padres Líderes*, it also helped to identify Natalia as a readied parent-coordinator for upcoming years. For the action project, the *Padres Líderes* III parent cohort expressed concerns over four areas: school cleanliness, reinstating a school uniform, breakfast quality control, and continual support for the *Padres Líderes* programs. Apart from discussing these areas of high need and proposing an action plan, their parent projects were not publicly addressed or implemented within the scope of the program. The program concluded towards the end of the academic year, which made it challenging for parents and facilitators to follow through on these action projects over the summer break.

iv. Developments leading towards *Padres Líderes* IV

After *Padres Líderes* III concluded, CPO championed the creation of a standard operating procedural (SOP) manual that detailed the step-by-step processes needed to create and implement a *Padres Líderes* program; I took the lead in creating this vast document. The SOP covered all known program procedures (e.g., recruitment strategies, processes for hiring childcare providers, list of equipment and supplies, program budget, food purchase orders, graduation ceremony check list, etc.). This manual was intended to serve as a supplemental tool for parent leaders who were transitioning into coordinator roles.

At the end of the 2012-13 academic year, Sandra no longer worked for the Coastland School District. Her departure further underscored the need to prepare parent leaders to take instrumental roles in the program. I also stepped down from my position, as a paid program evaluator and assistant coordinator, for a volunteered research role in the *Padres Líderes* program that would allow me to focus on collecting the data used for this dissertation study. My evaluator position was filled by Uciel, a Latino graduate student at Palo Duro University in education with ample experience in evaluation. Uciel not only provided evaluation services, he also documented the SOP usage and oversaw tutoring and childcare. Uciel was not involved in the delivery of course materials; he did however attend the weekly coordinating meetings. Considering these internal changes to the *Padres Líderes* coordinating team several meetings took place, with varying key present, to discuss the future of this program. The term *key core players* refer to the individuals that played a fundamental role in the possibility of implementing this program, these included the CPO director (Jairo), CPO senior evaluator (Cristina), principal investigator (Pedro), principals from Forest Hill (Leslie) and Travis (Shonda), Community Excellence Foundation

representative (Reyna), elementary superintendent (Emilio), and myself. At the end of 2012-13 academic year Shonda was officially appointed principal of Travis. Given the presumed stability of her position, Pablo and Jairo reached out to Shonda to inform her of *Padres Líderes* previous involvement with Travis and to discuss the opportunity for future collaboration, a partnership that she accepted. Through these streams of meetings CPO reiterated their desire to stay involved with *Padres Líderes*, while relinquishing their ownership of the program. They also addressed the importance of distinguishing *Padres Líderes* from other active parent organizations that also assumed the *Padres Líderes* brand. Collectively the key core players discussed the design and components that would make-up *Padres Líderes IV*, while selecting the coordinating team that would implement the program. Discussion of these negotiations will follow recognition of how the *Padres Líderes* brand was *appropriated* and how the push for differentiation played a role in the mission of *Padres Líderes IV*.

CPO annually hosted the MALDEF PSP director who provided a district-wide training on program curriculum. School and community organization representatives attended this training to review the PSP and garner ideas and support to create their own local programs. These trainings helped to spew numerous independent parent programs that adopted the PSP model. A local program informally started utilizing the *Padres Líderes* brand for their PSP chapter; they were rather successful at securing funding and providing multiple programs within and across the Coastland School District. These programs, although using the same name, had varying goals, staff, and approaches to program implementation. CPO underscored the need to distinguish these differences by supporting the *Padres Líderes IV* participants' production of tangible and visible parent projects. As

previously disclosed, only *Padres Líderes* I had a notable parent project, whereas subsequent cohorts discussed ideas and action plans that were not publicly presented or locally implemented. This support towards formal parent projects helped to encourage parents' collaborative efforts to write letters to their school board in response to changing state and local policies.

Furthermore, through these meetings Reyna was formally introduced and recognized as a *Padres Líderes* key core player. Reyna served as the district representative who oversaw grants from Community Excellence, a local non-profit organization who funded parent education support programs. Through these gatherings it became clear to all key core players that the funding the school sites had been utilizing to help support their *Padres Líderes* initiatives were derived from the Community Excellence organization. Reyna communicated the invaluable role the CPO's program evaluation had in securing previous and future *Padres Líderes* funding. Jairo agreed to continue supporting *Padres Líderes* by filling the recently vacant evaluator position with Uciel. The amount allocated by Community Excellence was not sufficient for either school sites to have their independent *Padres Líderes* program. Considering their financial constraints, the key core players decided to formally host a dual-site program that made it possible for both sites to successfully participate. They agreed to hold the first half of the program at Forest Hill and the second half at Travis. In order to facilitate attendance across both sites they offered transportation services to enrolled families. As in previous years, dinner, child-care and tutoring services were provided. This time however, both school sites contributed child-care providers from their respective schools. This allowed the CPO undergraduate students, who annually provided childcare services, to focus their interactions with students on tutoring and college readiness.

Considering the changes in the coordinating team and CPO's vision for the program's autonomy, the key core players agreed to professionally support two parent-coordinators representative of each school site. The respective principals selected Isabel and Natalia in observation of these mothers' history and familiarity with the *Padres Líderes* curriculum, goals, and program logistics. These two *parent-coordinators* expressed feeling uncomfortable independently teaching the program and voiced their need for further support. In response two elementary teachers joined these mothers, Ms. Ibarra from Forest Hill and Mrs. Perez from Travis elementary; both educators had notable involvement with *Padres Líderes*.

Both the *Padres Líderes* key core players and the newly appointed coordinating team met for the first time three weeks before the *Padres Líderes* starting date. Those present included Jairo and Cristina from CPO, Shonda, Mrs. Perez and Natalia from Travis, Leslie, Ms. Ibarra and Isabel from Forest Hill, Reyna from Community Excellence, and myself. Items of discussion included program expectations, logistics and any changes in the roles and responsibilities of those present. For example, Reyna explained that she would now be the point-person for any of the program's expenses, whereas in the past CPO administered the program's funds. All those present were officially informed that I would serve as a researcher and would be assisted by a team of two undergraduate students. The key players further explained that each member of the coordinating team would receive a stipend. This became the first time in the history of the program that either parents or educators received financial compensation for their involvement in *Padres Líderes*. Leslie made it a point to explain that they would each receive *equivalent* monetary allocations, as reflective of their uniform contribution and command over the program. *Equality* across each of the

coordinator's role was in theory a good idea, but in practice it raised a lot of challenges that these women had to address (e.g., dividing up work, meeting and developing expectations, communicating constructive criticism, etc.). As the program developed they all expressed their preference for a designated leader to help delegate tasks. The coordinating team was also informed that Pablo, the superintendent for elementary schools, was treating *Padres Líderes IV* as a pilot program to determine if its collaborative approach could prove to be the most effective PSP model to endorse and expand across the district. As this meeting concluded the key players officially gave the coordinating team the *green light* to move forward with the implementation of the program. This was the last time that this group met; *Padres Líderes IV* was now the responsibility of the coordinating team. Both principals suggested a post-program reflection meeting to discuss what worked and what did not. This suggested reunion did not come into fruition as both Shonda and Leslie stepped down from their director post towards the end of the 2013-14 academic year.

v. Political climate

During the 2013-14 academic year California implemented the new statewide Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). The LCFF altered the way Californian schools receive funding by increasing the financial resources awarded to schools for their *high-need* students; these included low-income, ELLs, and foster-care students. The LCFF required that all Californian school districts develop a Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) detailing how each school district plans to utilize the incoming funding to meet the needs of their high-need students. The LCAP is a three-year plan and must be updated every year on or before July 1st. The LCAP funding allocations must fall within eight approved areas: 1) student academic achievement, 2) implementation of Common Core State Standards, 3) access to

college and career readiness coursework, 4) basic educational services, 5) student engagement, 6) school climate, 7) parental involvement, and 8) other student outcomes. Between March and June of 2014 school districts were required to involve parents and community members in developing an LCAP that reflected their community's needs. By law the governing school board was required to hold one public hearing to solicit recommendations and comments from community members and a second hearing to adopt the LCAP. The Coastland School District provided multiple venues for community members to contribute to the discourse surrounding the design of the LCAP. These included six community meetings, three public hearings held by the superintendent and two open hearings during the school board meetings in April and May. All Californian school districts were required to submit their final draft of the LCAP by the first of July. Both of the parent-coordinators, Natalia and Isabel, held leadership roles in the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) sub-committee. Here they worked with other educators, parents and community members to propose and negotiate items on their district's plan, which they then presented to the LCAP committee. Isabel was elected to serve as the only parent representative on the chief committee, which took the responsibility of drafting, approving and implementing the LCAP. In this position Isabel worked alongside of the superintendents, principals, teachers, program directors and other highly influential educators on the LCAP. Both mothers' involvement in these district wide LCAP committees is particularly important for this study because their leadership roles provided them with an insider's understanding of the developments and complexity of their district's plan, which they displayed when facilitating their parent-groups.

II. Key Elements of the *Padres Líderes* IV Program

i. The coordinating team profiles and their multifaceted relationships

Outside of their direct involvement in *Padres Líderes*, the two selected mothers and educators had worked with one another in varying capacities. These complex relationships are noteworthy because they impacted how each member related to one another and the capital/funds of knowledge that they brought into the program. In the following pages I provide a profile of each coordinator, while addressing their multifaceted interconnectedness and how it related to the program.

Ms. Ibarra was a first-generation Latina educator local to the Coastland School District; both of her parents were immigrants of Mexican decent. She was one of very few Latin@ teachers at Forest Hill elementary, which like Travis enrolled an overwhelmingly Latin@ student body that was majority low-income and ELLs. Mrs. Perez was a first-generation immigrant of Mexican decent; she was raised locally and completed all of her schooling within the Coastland School District. She was also one of few Latin@ educators at her school and the only one that was fluent in Spanish. Prior to working at their respective sites, Ms. Ibarra and Mrs. Perez each taught for four years at Dolores Huerta Charter School, which shut down after failing to make adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind. While at this school they worked together on cross-grade level planning and became good friends. They even marched and picketed together, alongside of parents, community members and educators, to save their school. Dolores Huerta Charter School had a *Padres Líderes* chapter; this program uniquely welcomed different teachers to present on topics of expertise. It was through this collaboration that Ms. Ibarra and Mrs. Perez became acquainted with the *Padres Líderes* model. Given the instable climate at their sites, both

teachers left their posts for positions at Travis and Forest Hill. During the 2010-11 academic year Pablo, the principal at Forest Hill, was made aware of Ms. Ibarra's familiarity with the *Padres Líderes* model. He encouraged her to participate in their site's program, a commitment she maintained for several cohorts. When planning for *Padres Líderes IV*, the key core players wanted the coordinating team to have equal parent and teacher representation. Given the longevity of Ms. Ibarra's involvement with *Padres Líderes*, it became a natural transition for her to serve as Forest Hill's teacher-coordinator. Ms. Ibarra recommended Mrs. Perez for the Travis educator position, influenced by their previous involvement with *Padres Líderes* at Dolores Huerta. Shonda readily accepted her advice and offered Mrs. Perez the post.

Similar to the teacher-coordinators, Natalia and Isabel were selected as the parent-coordinators based on their professed commitment to serving parents and the *Padres Líderes* program. These mothers had complex work schedules and family responsibilities; they were nonetheless avidly involved in their school and communities. Both mothers were immigrants of Mexican descent. Natalia had four children, one attended the neighboring community college, another was in high school and two were students at Travis Elementary School. In Mexico she attained her high school diploma. While in the U.S., Natalia enrolled in continuing education classes to learn English, computation, and bookkeeping skills. During *Padres Líderes IV* she worked part-time at a dentist's office where she archived documents. Maribel attained her high school diploma in Mexico. She had two daughters, one in her last year at Forest Hill elementary and another in middle school. She had a home cleaning business and worked full-time. These mothers' already busy schedules speak volumes of their commitment to serve their fellow parents by accepting a coordinator position.

Prior to and during *Padres Líderes IV*, Isabel, Natalia, Ms. Ibarra and Mrs. Perez worked with one another in various ways. For the 2010-11 academic year, Isabel served as president for the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) committee at Forest Hill; she maintained her leadership position through out the end of the 2013-14 academic year. Throughout this period Ms. Ibarra also served on the PTA executive board; these years of extended collaboration contributed to their successful parent-teacher working relationship. During the 2013-14 academic year Natalia's youngest son was a student in Mrs. Perez's kindergarten class. Natalia served as a parent-volunteer by assisting in Mrs. Perez's classroom every Thursday. This allowed them to become familiar with one another prior to the initiation of *Padres Líderes* the upcoming spring academic semester. Both mothers also had experience in working with one another. During the 2013-14 academic year, Isabel and Natalia served as co-presidents for the District Language Advisory Committee. They jointly advocated for the education and rights of English Language Learners (ELL) across their district. Isabel, Natalia and Ms. Ibarra were also members of the Language Reclassification Committee; here they concentrated their efforts on addressing issues that impeded ELLs from reclassifying as English proficient. In sum, all four members of the *Padres Líderes* coordinating team had or were working with one another in varying capacities, which helped them to facilitate their collaborative implementation of the program. In addition to these involvements, Natalia and Isabel were deeply engaged with the Local Control Accountability Plan developments in their district.

With the exception of Mrs. Perez, I also had experiences in working with these women. During *Padres Líderes I*, I served as the program co-coordinator and evaluator. Isabel was what we identified as our *star* parent. Her leadership and passion to serve others

was irrefutable. At the end of our third session she approached me and told me that it was her dream for her daughters to one day serve Latin@ parents in the capacity that I was serving them by helping make the program possible. Her reverence left an impression on me. When the plans for *Padres Líderes IV* began to evolve, I was confident that Isabel would make an ideal parent-coordinator, especially given her engagement with all of the program cohorts. Isabel was initially nervous at the thought of formally teaching other parents. I reminded her of the comment she made to me several years back and affirmed that she did not have to wait for her daughters to do something that she was well capable of doing. She appreciated the vote of confidence and accepted the position. During *Padres Líderes II*, Natalia and Isabel attended the advocacy trip to Sacramento. As part of a separate research study, I interviewed them to gauge their experiences. This was the first time that Natalia and I formally met. The following year, she served as a student of *Padres Líderes III*, which I helped to coordinate. Her knowledge of the program material and leadership skills were distinct, she was a natural fit for *Padres Líderes IV*. Ms. Ibarra and I started working together since her first involvements with *Padres Líderes I*. She had invaluable knowledge that she accumulated from her years of teaching. Both Sandra and I constantly consulted her expertise in order to adapt the program to the parents' day-to-day needs. During *Padres Líderes IV* Natalia, Isabel, Ms. Ibarra and myself attended the MALDEF Advocacy Day fieldtrip in Sacramento, CA. This legislative visit allowed us to bond with one another; it furthermore helped to distinguish both Natalia and Isabel as readied parent-coordinators (see Figure 2).

For the first time since I started working with *Padres Líderes* I aimed to take a step back from coordinating, implementing and evaluation tasks to simply be a *fly on the wall* and

observe the program dynamics. However, the coordinating team saw a different need for me and negotiated my role accordingly. As a group they were all well aware of my familiarities with the program, prompting them to seek my expertise as a consultant and deliverer of *bad*

Figure 2. MALDEF Advocacy Day Fieldtrip to Sacramento, California



Figure 2. Standing outside of the California state capitol, this group of advocates are representing the *Padres Líderes III* program and speaking on behalf of the needs of their Coastland School District. From left to right: Natalia, parent advocate, Zuleyma (the researcher), Isabel and Ms. Ibarra.

news. For example Natalia did not have prior experience, as did the other coordinators, with teaching the program curriculum. When she first began presenting information she oftentimes stuttered, shared erroneous material and became tense. The team wanted to address her teaching skills after it became noticeable that some parents were not responding well to her. However, they were unsure as to how to help her improve her teaching without offending her. I was approached to speak to her because as a researcher, I was perceived as

being *neutral* and my expertise qualified me to provide constructive criticism. Most importantly, as the *deliverer*, the message could be communicated without affecting the power dynamics of the group. I did not want to have this conversation, but as a participant action researcher, my commitment to serving these families was not abandon for my research agenda. I often had private conversations with members of the coordinating team about concerns that they had with one another that they wanted me to communicate. This does not imply that they did not want to lead these conversations themselves; however, they felt unable to because of how their roles were proposed. As previously mentioned, each coordinator was equally compensated as they were all thought of as each other's equal; however, this approach made it difficult for team members to negotiate tasks or feel capable of offering their constructive criticism. At one point or another, they all expressed a want for someone to be the official leader of the group.

Thus far I addressed the historical events that led to *Padres Líderes IV*, the state and local policies that created a contentious climate, and various key elements of the program that help to illustrate the complexity of this activity system. Next, I discuss the research setting, recruitment strategies and the participants' demographics.

ii. Research setting, recruitment and the participants' demographics

The *Padres Líderes IV* parent leadership program was located in the southern coastlands in California. In 2014, *Padres Líderes* was in its fourth year at Forest Hill Elementary and for the previous two years had collaborated with Travis Elementary School to bring together parents from both sites into a collective program.¹⁹ This program was made possible through a partnership between the principals at the two participating schools, members from

¹⁹ This study focuses on the fourth cohort of this program, which is referred to as *Padres Líderes IV*.

their respective school district and Pathways to College (a college preparatory office at a neighboring university). The representatives from these partnering institutions are referred to as the *core players*. Both Forest Hill and Travis Elementary School were reflective of highly segregated schools; 98% and 94% of their students were Latin@, 94% and 88% were economically disadvantaged and 82% and 76% of students were classified as English Language Learners (ELLs), respectively. These sites depicted what Orfield and Lee (2007) identify as increasing patterns of multiple segregations for Latin@ students by ethnicity, poverty and linguistic isolation.

Over a two-week period the coordinating team led recruitment efforts. They attended school meetings and events to invite parents to the program (e.g., school site council meetings, English Language Advisory Committee meetings, coffee with the principal, etc.). Ms. Ibarra created flyers that were sent home with all children and also displayed around school sites. Both parent-coordinators and teachers recruited at their respective campus before and after school hours. Automated phone calls were made to parents' homes informing them about the program. Parents who registered prior to the first class were called and reminded about the program logistics (e.g., time, place, duration, etc.).

Padres Líderes IV enrolled a total of 26 Latin@ parents. The majority of these parents (92%) were native-born to Mexico while only two were U.S. born. The majority of these parents (at 62%) did not complete a high school equivalent education; only one parent had a college degree. Regarding linguistic capital, 65% of parents identified as able to speak or read *some* English, while only 19% identified as fluent English users. An overwhelming majority of these families (89%) primarily spoke Spanish in their homes. According to state and federal guidelines lines, 84% of these parents lived below poverty. Almost half (46%) of

the participants worked full-time and 19% worked part-time. The parents' employment obligations speak volumes of their commitment to participate in an evening program that extended over three months. Parents were required to miss no less than three classes in order to formally graduate from the program. All together a total of 21 parents graduated from the class.

iii. Program structure and curriculum

Padres Líderes IV extended through out the course of 12 weeks. The first half of the program was hosted at Forest Hill and the second half at Travis elementary. The program formally concluded with a graduation ceremony that was hosted at Forest Hill due to space accommodations (e.g., it had a formal auditorium). Parents met on Wednesday nights from 5-8. During each weekly meeting (including the school board event) families were provided with dinner, childcare, and transportation. A learning center was established to provide their children with homework assistance; undergraduate students from the Pathways to College office provided tutoring. The school board public hearing was held the Tuesday following the parents' graduation. This meeting was not scheduled on the usual Wednesday evening and it lasted significantly longer than a typical class; consequently, not all parents that wanted to appear were able to. A total of 12 parents, out of 21 that graduated the program, were able to attend this public hearing as representatives of their groups.

Padres Líderes adopted the MALDEF Parent School Partnership (PSP) curriculum for instructional design, consisting of 12 sessions that unpack various topics to help parents understand how to navigate the U.S. education system and advocate for the children, school and community. The PSP emphasizes parent, school, and community partnership as key. The first half of the curriculum is primarily information based and reflects what Arias and

Morillo-Campbell (2008) define as ‘traditional forms of involvement’.²⁰ As a team, we reviewed each weekly session and modified the material so that it met the needs of our district and school sites. The second half of the PSP curriculum exhibits ‘non-traditional forms of parental engagement’; these sessions aim to foster and develop parents’ leadership, empowerment and advocacy through the development of their own undertakings.²¹ Sessions consisted of PowerPoint presentations and various activities to help scaffold the participants’ ownership of discussed classroom material (e.g., role-plays, letter-writing exercises, soap opera videos, icebreaker activities, etc.). Furthermore, key community leaders were invited to share their knowledge and insights with the parents (e.g., school board member, principals, college representative, legal aid representative, the MALDEF PSP director, etc.). The latter half of the curriculum provided parents with leadership training designed to assist them in the development of their parent projects. Through these projects, parents are prompted to identify areas of high-need in their school and/or community and collectively develop and implement a plan of action to address them. The parent projects were an underlined and central component of *Padres Líderes*, in which they were indirectly and directly informed by each of the program sessions. These projects yielded a space in which participants drew from their individual/collective socio-cultural and intellectual tools gained and/or developed through *Padres Líderes IV* towards meeting their group goals. At the beginning of the program, participants were prompted to individually reflect on their school sites and distinguish areas that they perceived needed improvement. As the program progressed

²⁰ Session topics include: Orientation, Parents Right’s and Responsibilities, Parent Teacher Conference, Structure and Function of the School, Structure and Function of the District, and College Bound.

²¹ Session topics include: Politics in Education, Group Process, Facilitating a Meeting, Communication Skills, Responsible Leadership, and Reflection and Graduation.

participants were reminded of their upcoming project and encouraged to continue identifying areas of concern.

iv. **Parent project developments and the summer academic program group demographics**

The district's contentious political climate, brought forth by the LCFF and LCAP, created an urgency for Latin@ parents to be civically engaged in their local political process. The overwhelming majority of the *Padres Líderes IV* parents' children were low-income and ELL learners; hence, the LCAP had a real and direct impact on their families. This compelled the coordinating team to help advance the parents' capacities to collectively take part in the development of their district's LCAP. This was not an original goal of the program, but became one as their political climate unfolded and the parents' interest became evident. For their action project, the coordinators focused on helping the parents identify areas of high-need that they could present on at an upcoming televised LCAP public hearing. Five activities across five weekly sessions (Weeks 8-12) constituted the interactive work that parents engaged in to produce a letter representative of their groups' concerns. The classroom sessions covered during these five weeks were specifically devoted to helping increase the participants' capacity to collectively carry out these and other advocacy projects. Table 3 provides a general description of these events and activities.

In Week 8 Mrs. Perez led the class on a *lluvia de ideas* (brainstorm) activity to help parents deliberate and identify the areas of high-need they wanted to concentrate their group efforts on. The group consecutively agreed on the following eight areas of high-need: ELL reclassification, school safety, parent-teacher collaboration, student counseling, tutoring, summer programs (later negotiated to summer *academic* programs), extracurricular activities,

and quality school lunches. Isabel asked the parents to identify four topics that they were the most passionate about; she settled on four because this would allow each team to have a coordinator as their designated group facilitator. The parents selected the following four topics: 1) tutoring, 2) English Language Learner reclassification, 3) school safety, and 4) summer academic programs. One father in particular (Avi) strongly advocated for the inclusion of summer academic programs; he argued that during the summer students lost

Table 3		
<i>Padres Líderes IV: Parent Project Group Work Timeline</i>		
Week	Session	Activity
8	Responsible Leadership and Working in a Group	Parents collectively selected the four areas of high-need that they wanted to concentrate their efforts on.
9	Developing an Action Plan	Parents worked on two worksheets to help them brainstorm how to approach and address their area of high-need.
10	Facilitating and Participating in Productive Meetings	Parents worked on the first rough draft of their letter to the school board on a funding priority.
11	Strengthening Communication Skills	Parents worked on the second draft of their letter.
12	Graduation Ceremony	Prior to the graduation ceremony parents met to make final preparations and edits to their letters.
13	Fieldtrip to School Board	Parents presented their letters to the school board during the LCAP open hearing.

their motivation and as a result were less enthusiastic about starting the new school year. Ms. Ibarra shared Avi’s interest and interceded to share that students statistically fall behind three months during the summer break because they do not receive the academic support that they

need during this period of interrupted learning. Isabel asked the parents to signal if they supported summer academic programs as their final group; all but two parents visibly raised their hands while none presented a counter argument for a different topic. Figure 3 is an image taken of the coordinators while facilitating the brainstorming activity that helped the parents to identify and select their four areas of high-need.

Figure 3. Lluvia de ideas: Helping Parents Select their Four Areas of High-Need

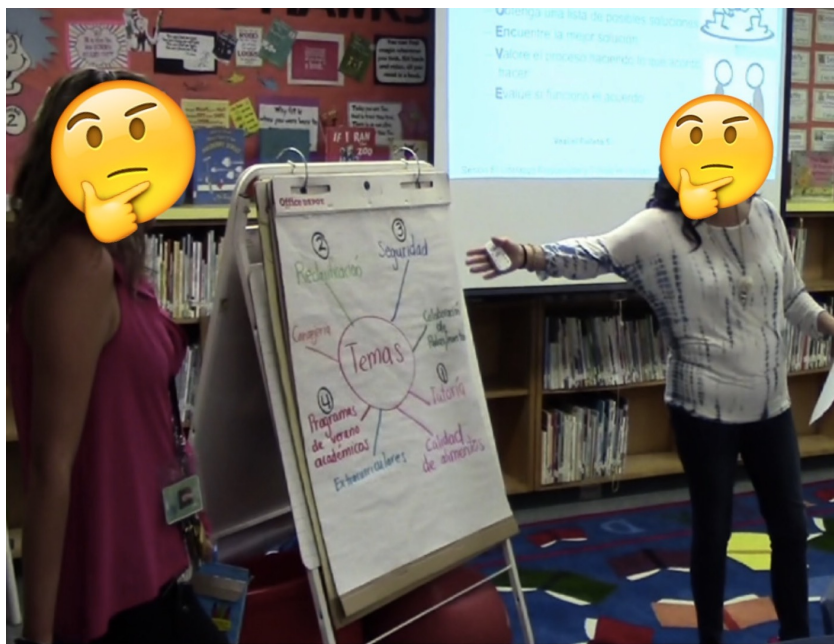


Figure 3. Mrs. Perez (first to the left) and Isabel (first to the right) help the parents to identify their areas of high-need. The circled 1, 2, 3, and 4 identify the groups' agreed topics. In this image Isabel is seen pointing to the easel, as a way to confirm the parents' selection.

The parents were then asked to select one of the four topics that they were most passionate about to concentrate their group efforts on. The coordinating team separated the classroom into four areas, each representative of a group topic, parents were encouraged to move towards the team that they wanted to work with. Group four on summer academic programs received the most parent interest, overall 9 out of 19 parents in attendance wanted

to work with this group. Tutoring came in second with seven parents, followed by school safety with two parents and ELL reclassification with one parent. Given the disparity among these groups the coordinating team asked parents in overrepresented teams if any of them were willing to support another group. They stressed that their decision to advocate for another topic did not imply that they were any less interested in their original choice but that they were willing to support their classmates. Three parents left summer academic programs for ELL reclassification; one mother left the group on tutoring for school safety. The remaining parents in the summer academic program's group declined to leave, even after Ms. Ibarra asked for a second time if anyone else wanted to join another group.

The coordinating team briefly explained that each group was going to collectively write a letter directed to their school board that outlined their concerns and proposed solution. They cautioned parents not to be nervous about their project and assured them that over the next four weeks they would adequately prepare them for their visit by supporting each group in producing a strong well-written letter. Notably, they did not mention that they would or should align their projects with their district's LCAP. The group on summer academic programs first made this connection organically, which was later affirmed in Week 10 as the coordinators' objective. Figure 4 consists of an image taken after the parents broke up into their groups.

The parents that elected to work on summer academic programs were composed of four mothers (Sabrina, Nuvia, Marina and Reyna) and two fathers (Eduardo and Avi). Both dads worked full-time, Sabrina worked part-time while Nuvia, Marina and Reyna were stay-at-home moms. Avi, Eduardo and Marina represented Travis while Reyna, Nuvia and Sabrina had children attending Forest Hill. All parents identified as Latin@s and primarily spoke

Spanish in their homes. Sabrina noted that she was fluent in English, while the other parents selected that they spoke some English. Nuvia, Marina and Reyna did not study beyond eight grade, Sabrina and Eduardo received some high school education while only Avi graduated from high school. Sabrina was the only parent that was U.S. born and who received her education in America. The remaining parents were immigrants of Mexican decent who solely received their education in Mexico. According to state standards every one of these

Figure 4. *Padres Líderes IV* Group 4: Summer Academic Programs



Figure 4. These are the parents that elected to advocate for summer academic program (from left to right: Marina, Eduardo, Nuvia, Reyna, Sabrina, Avi). The parents were rather excited to start working together. Eduardo, Nuvia and Sabrina can be seen holding up four fingers to indicate their group number; Nuvia and Sabrina also used their legs to make a figure four.

families was considered below poverty, with half supporting their families with less than \$22,000 a year. All parents had students in elementary school, while Reyna, Marina and Nuvia also had children in high school and Marina, Eduardo and Sabrina had young child of

non-enrollment age. Reyna, Nuvia and Sabrina were friends and attended programs and events together. The other parents did not give any indication that they knew one another or had work with each other in the past.

III. Data Collection

For this study I employed an ethnographic research approach as a participant observer (researchers, consultant, guest speaker, and group facilitator). My research team consisted of two undergraduate students (Orlando and Fernanda) that worked with me during the full length of the program. Collectively we made ethnographic observations, wrote fieldnotes, classroom reflections, gathered artifacts, and collected video and audio recordings of the weekly coordinating meetings, program sessions, and post-session debriefs. Data collection extended for a period of four months. I trained my research team in how to use technological tools for data purposes (e.g., camcorders, tripods, microphones, audio recorders, iPad, and iPhone recorders.). In addition to our fieldnotes we wrote reflections after each weekly session, these were uploaded on to a secure online sharing platform (Dropbox) within a 24-hour period.²² I reviewed our fieldnotes and reflections and utilized them to understand and triangulate the social dynamics that were not captured by cameras, yet impacted the interactions in the classroom. The coordinating team met weekly to develop the following session's agenda. I utilized these agendas to prepare my research team for transitions in the classroom that would require the movement of cameras or audio recording tools (e.g., role

²² The following are some guiding questions for the weekly reflections I provided my research team: What are your thoughts on class today particularly regarding the framework and execution of the agenda (e.g., what were the coordinators goals, did they reach them, why/why not, etc.)? What classroom interactions/dynamics stood out to you from today's class (e.g., the vibes of the participants)? Where there any nuances that captured your attention (e.g., a parent asking if his wives involvement in school also counts for him)? What questions do you have moving forward (e.g., I am curious to see how...)?

play activities, group work discussions, etc.). Each week prior to approaching the research site I provided them with data collection instructions, recording tips and suggestions. We also met once a week to discuss any questions/challenges/observations that we had. During the classroom sessions we used one main camera (camera 1) that was positioned in a corner towards the front of the class to help capture both the parents' interactions and that of the facilitators. A research assistant stayed with camera 1 at all times. A second camera (camera 2) was used when parents engaged in activities with their classmates. Orlando and Fernanda were primarily in charge of video recording. As the lead researcher my focus was that of observing the classroom interactions, taking fieldnotes, and providing assistance with in-class content as requested by the coordinating team.²³

Shortly after the second weekly session was over, the coordinating team initiated an impromptu conversation while we cleaned up the site. Considering I was primarily there as an observer, but had previous experience implementing the program, they asked for my feedback on the status of the class; these conversations continued until the end of the program. These exchanges became a venue where the coordinating team and graduate researcher could share their observations and suggestions regarding the development of the program. These conversations were audio recorded and coupled with fieldnotes. I was also contacted several times throughout the week regarding classroom details or concerns that the coordinating team had regarding the progression of the program; I refer to these interactions as side-conversations. Immediately after concluding these chats I audio recorded my reflections.

²³ For example, during class they would ask me to explain a concept that they felt I well understood.

The parents' group project was not pre-planned, as a research team we had to adapt as they adapted. For example, the coordinators decided that based on the interest of the parents they were going to create four action groups. These groups included: tutoring, English Language Learner (ELL) reclassification, school safety, and summer academic programs. At the time I only had two video cameras and therefore we had to improvise. The group on summer academic programs became the *iTable*; we utilized my iPad to collect video data and synced it with the audio recording application on my iPhone. These coupled sources gave us both visual and clear audio data. I then borrowed a third camera from a close colleague. In order to have a research assistant at each group table I reached out to Karina, a prospective graduate student who had assisted with the program in previous years, she remained with the group on ELL reclassification until the program concluded. Furthermore, each of the four parent groups took a different approach to developing their letters. For example, the group on tutoring found it very difficult to get their ideas down *in-vivo*, instead they decided to each write a letter that they could bring back to the group and piece together to make one complete proposal. The coordinating team asked me to assist in facilitating the group on tutoring. This service took me away from following the intricacies that transpired in all four groups. Consequently, I relied on my research assistants to record fieldnotes and collect the data for the remaining three groups. We photographed the artifacts that the parents created in their groups (e.g., drafts of their letter and brainstorming documents). We did not collect the original documents because these were tools that they constantly drew from to progress their work. Data collection also included the documentation and cataloging of various artifacts. For example files created by the coordinating team, guest-speaker supplemental materials, pamphlets, flyers, legal documents detailing the LCFF and district versions of the LCAP, etc.

Emails regarding coordinating details and the parent project development were also cataloged for research purposes. Considering that this study responded to a statewide policy the usage of primary sources was vital. All relatable state and district-wide documents with pertinent information on the LCFF and LCAP were logged.

IV. Data Analysis

My research team and I transcribed key video and audio data utilizing the Transana qualitative software program. I trained a team of 10 bilingual (English/Spanish) undergraduate research assistants who created video logs and transcribed key sections of the data; all program and group data was in Spanish. My team of researchers was provided with a transcription key for consistency (see Appendix B). I later polished the transcripts that would be utilized as examples in this study; all excerpts used are accompanied by the original Spanish text. The data was not translated verbatim; instead I produced culturally responsive translations that focused on the parents intended use, which were substantiated by the paired ethnographic fieldnotes. When presenting the transcripts, as a bilingual speaker, I decided to italicize the Spanish text because this visual marker helps me to more easily switch between languages. This decision was intended to help bilingual speakers transition between texts, not to otherize Spanish.

As noted, the coordinators broke the parents up into four action groups, each responsible for collectively creating a letter to their school board on a funding priority. I reviewed the group video data and all accompanied artifacts to created a timeline that documented the evolution of the parents' project. I also analyzed e-mails shared by the coordinating team to triangulate the timeline that each group employed to produce their letters. These timelines were member-checked by the parent-coordinators and research

assistants for reliability. Considering the analytic detail that I wanted to employ I decided to focus my attention on the group on summer academic programs for two main reasons: 1) It was facilitated by both an educator and parent-coordinator, providing me with perspective into how these different leaders influenced the parents' work, and 2) this topic received the most support from the parents; too many in fact that the coordinators asked if some of the parents would be willing to support other groups.

In terms of data analysis, I focused my efforts on how the program sessions influenced the thematic evolution of key concepts in this group's letter to their local school board. I started by identifying major themes in the group's final letter; I performed several coding cycles until I saturated the occurrence of emergent themes. I triangulated these findings with Orlando, my research assistant who was the second person most familiar with the data and the program. These themes included feeling heard, LCAP parameters, *concientización*, student tracking, funds of knowledge, forms of capital, and group work socialization. I proceeded to perform a backward thematic analysis utilizing the Transana qualitative software program. I meticulously reviewed every single classroom video, starting with session one, and coded for every instance that these themes emerged both in the classroom sessions and in the group's meetings. As I went through the data I started to identify several sub-themes. For example, *feeling heard* parsed into collective vs. individual voice, emotional dispositions, social belonging, brokering, etc. The Transana software program enabled me to create a collection of the major themes and its subthemes, each containing the video clips that pertained to that concept. Each video was labeled with keywords (or codes) that I could later retrieve to analyze as independent and then collective concepts (e.g., elementary founding blocks, college pathways preparation, etc.). These clips

were transcribed and accompanied by analytic memos. After developing this coding scheme, I shifted my focus to the five classroom activities that influenced the key evolution of this groups production of their letters to the school board. On a group level, I specifically honed in on the skills and tactics that the parents utilized to advance and negotiate the thematic progression of their letter. Patterns soon emerged; it became evident that these parents were drawing from a wide range of funds of knowledge and forms of capital to accomplish institutional business in purposeful and strategic ways. At the level of discourse analysis I paid close attention to pronouns discerning how the group utilized their concept of *I*, *we*, *us*, *them* and *they* and how these positionalities influenced the thematic development of their LCAP proposals. I also identified the forms of capital and funds of knowledge that parents employed and how they utilized them to negotiate their collective voice (e.g., *dichos*/cultural sayings, lived experiences, social networks, etc.).

To oblige with an *embedded* Ecologies of Parent Engagement approach, I drew from a range of sources to contextualize the *Padres Líderes IV* program within its socio-cultural, historical, and political landscape. These included *talking points* documents derived from the College Pathways Office that outlined the history of these programs in the district, fieldnotes that I took over the course of four years during the core players planning meetings, shared emails specific to the developments of the program, and newspaper articles detailing the transition of principals at Travis and Forest Hill. Other documents included program budgets, flow charts and program calendars specific to the *Padres Líderes IV* model. I member checked the following historical developments with the coordinating team to assure its reliability. In order to identify the demographics of these two school sites I turned to their school report cards available online at their school district website. During the orientation in

Week 1, the parents in this study answered a demographic survey that I utilized to provide background information on the parents. I also divided the data to include the demographics specific to the group on summer academic programs. I drew from fieldnotes and the commentary of the coordinating team and research assistants to create descriptive profiles of the parents. In order to contextualize the *Padres Líderes IV* program within its political overarching activity systems I turned to the California Department of Education website to gather official information regarding the design and intent of the LCFF policy. I contacted, via e-mail, the designated representative at the department to address questions not outlined on their website. I specifically inquired about the mandatory actions Californian school districts had to take in order to include community feedback in the design of their LCAP. Furthermore, I tracked information shared on the Coastland School District webpage to identify how they interpreted their role in this new policy. I also obtained different drafts of the LCAP to follow how/if the concerns brought up by the parents made it to their final plan. Lastly, I retrieved an official video copy of the school board public hearing that the parents in this study attended. I triangulated this video with the fieldnotes taken by my research team and myself in order to gauge how the parents' interpret their experience and how the school board member reacted to their presence.

Analysis of data from the program sessions, the team's group discussions, and drafts of the parents' letter revealed three emergent themes that can be traced back to the implementation of the program. These include parents' 1) multifaceted *concientización*, 2) sense of 'feeling heard', and 3) perception of parent-educators as joint-collaborators in the education of students. Chapters four and five of the dissertation begin by contextualizing

how these themes evolved throughout the course of the program. I highlight key interactions initiated by the coordinating team and/or guest speakers that influenced the parents' group work.²⁴ I then reveal how these themes transpired in group conversations and accompanying drafts (*guiding question 1*). Additionally, I expound upon the various forms of capital and funds of knowledge parents displayed and activated to negotiate the direction and content of their LCAP proposal (*guiding question 2*). In chapter four I explore how parents in this study utilized their *concientización* as a tool for strategic alignment, mediation, and as an information arsenal that they drew from to collectively negotiate the thematic progression of their letter to the school board.²⁵ Chapter five discusses parents' sense of 'feeling heard' and perception of parent-educators as joint-collaborators in students' education. In addressing these two themes jointly, I reflect on the relationship of how the coordinating team and parents discussed these major concepts. Throughout these chapters I illustrate how the parents ingeniously applied various individual and collective mediational tools to advance the progression of these three major themes. Table 4 (see below) provides a summary of the mediational tools parents activated and engineered to develop a LCAP proposal reflective of their collective concerns. Further discussion is provided in chapter 6 where I distinguish patterns in the strategies parents employed when using their mediational tools; this detailed analysis results in a richer appreciation and understanding of the ingenuity and deliberateness with which parents utilized their funds of knowledge and forms of capital to address their local budgetary concerns (*guiding question 2*).

²⁴ Note that there will be some contextual repetition given that several of these key moments influenced the parents' negotiation of more than one theme.

²⁵ *Concientización* refers to an individuals' deeply rooted critical consciousness of their social positioning (Durán, 2011; Wink 2011) (refer to chapter two and chapter four for more details).

Table 4.***Padres Líderes IV Parents' Meditational Tools***

Code	Description
Funds of Knowledge	
Lived Experiences:	
First-person	Parents referenced their personal lived experience in order to make their arguments compelling.
Second-person	Parents used this tense to hypothesize how others within and outside of their team would think, respond, and feel in given situations.
Third-person	Parents shared their lived experiences from a third-person perspective to explicate social patterns.
Shared Experiences	Parents drew from general experiences that they shared with other individuals within and outside of their group to strengthen their arguments.
School Experiences	Parents drew from their lived experiences in their children's schools to negotiate their Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) proposal. The <i>Padres Líderes IV</i> program helped to give their experiences validity within the American education system that in turn helped to expand their academic and cultural capital.
Program Concept Ownership	Parents referenced concepts discussed throughout the <i>Padres Líderes IV</i> program to mediate their group discussion. The ownership and negotiation of these concepts supports that understandings became a part of their cultural capital.
<i>Dichos</i> and <i>Refranes</i>	Parents gathered from a range of <i>dichos</i> (cultural sayings) and <i>refranes</i> (idioms) to express themselves in culturally responsive ways, and ingeniously reflect their critical understanding of larger social issues; they utilized these tools to strategically advance their proposal.
Tools & Artifacts	Parents utilized physical tools and artifacts to mediate and progress their collaborative efforts.
Forms of Capital	
Intellectual Capital	Parents drew from their individual and collective forms of capital and funds of knowledge to jointly negotiate the thematic progression of their LCAP proposal and engage local political ecologies.
Political Capital	Parents activated and developed a knowledge of <i>politica</i> (how politics work) to anticipate their school board's response and strategize a comeback.

Critical Capital	Parents utilized their growing understanding of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and LCAP and a critical awareness of the direct impact that these policies could have on their community to strategically advocate for the needs of Latin@ students.
Communicative Capital	Parents activated their political capital, critical capital and cultural capital to discern how to strategically communicate their concerns before their local political ecologies to avoid being dismissed.
Cultural Capital	Parents drew from their Latin@ cultural knowledge to discern culture clashes. Their growing understandings of how the U.S. education system works (academic capital) and how to author these spaces (political and critical capital) further advanced their cultural capital.
Social Capital	Parents voiced connections to other external individuals, organizations, resources, and access to information that could help them achieve their group's goals.

Chapter 4: Parents' Multifaceted Concientización

This dissertation addresses notable gaps in the literature by revealing the dynamic and complex ways in which parents utilize, understand, and employ their concientización. The parents in this study utilized concientización as a tool for strategic alignment, mediation, and as an information arsenal that they drew from to negotiate the content and parameters of their LCAP proposal. Their concientización is reflective of their critical and intellectual capital in-the-making. In order to dutifully address the complexity of this theme I discuss its operations as three separate, yet related, topics. First I address the parents' strategic decision to align their proposal on summer academic programs with their district's LCAP (concientización as *strategic alignment*). Then I unpack their resolution to tactfully present themselves as critically conscious parents capable of collective action (concientización as *mediation*). Finally I divulge how the parents' critical awareness of student tracking deeply influenced the parameters and content of their proposal (concientización as an *information arsenal*). Through multiple efforts, the *Padres Líderes IV* coordinating team and guest speakers influenced the development and progression of the parents' concientización. Through these approaches they helped to expand parents' awareness and ability to collectively mediate their local political ecologies (or their critical and intellectual capital). I start each of the following sub-themes by addressing how these constructs were introduced and advanced throughout the program. Then I illustrate how the parents utilized their concientización in multi-faceted ways to mediate their local political ecologies through their LCAP proposal.

I. Concientización for Strategic Alignment

Throughout the course of *Padres Líderes IV* the coordinating team worked diligently to broker the parents' understanding of how the U.S. education system works, all the while helping them to build their abilities to individually and collectively advocate for their children, school and community. The district's apprehensive political climate, brought forth by the LCFF and LCAP, created an urgency for Latin@ parents to be civically engaged in their local political process. This compelled the coordinating team to help advance the parents' capacities to collectively take part in the development of their district's LCAP. This was not an original goal of the program, but became one as their political climate unfolded and the parents' interest became evident.

In Week 5 the coordinating team invited Mark, the MALDEF PSP director, to broker the evolving LCFF and LCAP policies. Through his presentation Mark underscored the unprecedented opportunities these policies provided. He also stressed the direct impact, both positive and negative, that it could have on Latin@ families. He urged the parents to get involved in their LCAP processes in order to ensure that the incoming funds were distributed in ways that reflected the needs of their schools and community. None of the parent participants had voiced any prior experience in advocating or participating in a local school board meeting. Given the parents' lack of familiarity with these political ecologies, the coordinating team decided that it was imperative for them to help scaffold the parents' involvement in their district's LCAP. Instead of simply stressing to them the importance of their involvement, they took on the responsibility of helping them become engaged. After Mark's visit, the coordinators announced their decision to submit a request for a fieldtrip in Week 10 to their local school board during a scheduled LCAP public hearing. Later the

coordinators affirmed their commitment to helping parents have a productive and positive school board experience by rescheduling their fieldtrip to the week following the parents' formal graduation ceremony. They recognized that the first scheduled date would not provide the parents with adequate time to prepare strong proposals. By changing the date, parents gained an additional month to prepare.

In addition to Mark, the coordinating team invited two local influential guest speakers to help foster the parents' understanding of their evolving political ecologies. In Week 6 Yasuri presented on the politics in education and on their district's LCAP developments. Yasuri was an active member of the Coastland's school board and hence presided over the LCAP public hearings. Through her presentation she informed the parents of the different steps that their district was taking to create their LCAP and ways that parents could get involved. Yasuri encouraged them to be a part of these developments by attending the public hearings and advocating for the priorities of their students, schools, and community. She explained to them that following these public meetings the school board members deliberated on which proposals they were able to endorse. She added that as parents their constant presence in the schools made them particularly knowledgeable of any existing issues and needs, which was important for school board members to hear. Pablo, the assistant superintendent for elementary schools in the Coastland Unified School District was another influential guest speaker who, like Yasuri, presided over the LCAP public hearings. Prior to his aforementioned appointment, Pablo was the principal for Forest Hill Elementary during the implementation of *Padres Líderes* I and II. Pablo was a big proponent for the program and continued to demonstrate his support well after his promotion. In Week 11 Pablo addressed the importance of Latin@ parents' engagement in their district's LCAP processes

and insistently encouraged parents to voice their concerns during the upcoming public hearings. Pablo remarked that their school district was in need of changes and that he wanted to see them sitting at the very front of these public hearings asking for the assistance that they require. He professed that by doing so, “*Para que sepan los miembros de la mesa directiva que ustedes si se están fijando el lo que esta pasando y que quieren cambios.*” The members of the school district will know that you are all paying attention to what is happening and that you want changes” (Week 11, 0:04:02-0:04:12). Through this message Pablo underscored that by exercising their voice in the LCAP public hearings the school board members would recognize the parents as an *active* and *conscious* constituency that they need to respond to. Next I provide evidence of the parents’ *concientización* of their changing political climate impacted both their word choice and strategic decision to align their proposal with their district’s LCAP.

In Week 9 the group of parents that elected to champion summer academic programs met for the first time. The coordinating team provided them with 56 minutes of class time to begin working on their proposal. Natalia, one of the parent-coordinators, was absent this day. Mrs. Perez served as group facilitator until Natalia returned the following week. Natalia then remained with this group for the duration of the program. In their first meeting the parents focused their collective efforts on answering two worksheets that were designed to help them brainstorm their action plan (see Appendices C1-2 and D1-2). It was in this initial meeting that the group on summer academic programs did the majority of their brainstorming. They initiated their discussion by reflecting on students’ need for these services. They discussed the changes that they had observed in students’ performance once

these programs were no longer offered by their district. They agreed that as a result students were not as well prepared for the academic year as they once were when these summer services were in operation. On this note, Mrs. Perez prompted the parents to identify what they thought had led to the cancellation of summer academic programs. Marina drew from her *lived school experiences* to respond that educators had told her that budget cuts were the main reason why these services were no longer in operation.²⁶ She attested, “*Desde que ya ah dejado de a ver es lo que siempre me dijeron en la escuela. Que ya no había fondos, que ya no había como pagar a los maestros.* Since they have stopped being offered that is what they have always told me in in the school, that there weren’t any funds, that they did not have any means to pay the teachers” (Week 9 Group 4, 0:06:15-0:06:25). The parents conceded that the district-wide budget cuts impeded the continuation of summer academic programs in their schools, which they reasoned resulted in lower levels of student academic achievement because they were not receiving the support needed to successfully transition onto the next academic year.

After they identified budget cuts as the culprit for the cancellation of summer academic programs, Mrs. Perez asked the group to pinpoint how they, as parents, could address their district’s lack of funding for these services. Avi used a hypothetical first-person scenario from the perspective of a child to suggest that they could inquire before the district why they had elected to take away from them a valuable resource that they once had. “*Primero me daban mi recreo y ahora no me lo dan. ¿Porque no me lo dan? First y’all gave me my recess and now y’all won’t give it to me. Why don’t y’all give it to me?*” (Week 9 Group 4, 0:37:30-0:37:40). Avi proposed that from this premise they could request for the

²⁶ Following the national recession in 2007 the Coastland School District was forced to make drastic budget cuts, for example in 2011-12 their district was forced to reduce their budget by a minimum of 7.5 million dollars.

reinstallation of these services. He argued that if the programs were once offered, now that funding was returning to the schools, they could propose for them to be reenacted. Avi also drew from his *political capital* to suggest that it was best for them to ask the school board to reinstate summer academic programs, as opposed to simply requesting these services without noting their awareness of its previous implementation. He furthered that by adding the term *reinstate* the school board would recognize that they were not asking for new services that required detailed work to initiate; on the contrary, they were petitioning for them to once again offer services that were previously in operation and that positively impacted students' academic development. He hypothesized that this approach would stop the district from responding with the catch phrase that *there is no funding*. The group voiced their agreement and proceeded to write down the *reinstallation of summer academic programs* as their objective on their worksheet.

Mrs. Perez asked the group if there were other ways that they could address their district's issue with funding. Reyna drew from her *cultural capital* to suggest that they could hold a *kermes* (Latin@ festival fundraiser) to generate the necessary funds for these programs. Marina used her *political capital* to reject Reyna's suggestion, she reminded the parents that funding was being made available based on students' needs; the issue they faced, however, was equitable distribution. In accordance with Marina, Avi reflected his political consciousness of the newly adopted LCAP policy and the inequality it could create, he used this tool to ascertain that they did not have to raise the funds themselves, instead they needed to collectively advocate in political spaces so that the incoming funds could be distributed in ways that also met the needs of Latin@ children. Avi furthered that they must make the district aware that the parents at Forest Hill, at Travis, and at other schools across their

district were conscious of their children's need for summer academic programs and that they want them to be reinstated. He maintained that if these services were cut in the past due to funding, now that financial resources were once again returning to their schools, they needed to motion for their district to reallocate funds for these programs. Avi determined that participating in their district's LCAP meetings, aligning their proposal with this policy, and presenting their letter at their upcoming public hearing was the most strategic way for them to address their concerns. He voiced, "*Es la única manera que nos escucharían, pienso yo pues.* Well this is the only way that I think they will listen to us" (Week 9 Group 4, 0:46:05-0:46:15). The group agreed that aligning their proposal for the reinstatement of summer academic programs with their district's LCAP was the best course of action. Notably, Avi and Marina each organically made these observations before the class was explained that these were the objectives the coordinators had in mind for them. Up to this point the coordinators had announced that as part of their parent-project they were going to take a class trip to the school board and that four parents were going to speak as representatives of their groups. They, however, had not specified that the parents should align their work with the LCAP. Avi's and Marina's deliberate propositions were reflective of their *political capital* and *program concept ownership*, each which fostered their group's intellectual and critical capital. As a group these parents drew from their funds of knowledge, specifically their lived experiences, to collectively identify why these programs were no longer in operation, why that was problematic and how to strategically approach this area of need. This group carefully selected the words that they wanted to use to identify their efforts, they drew heavily from their political capital to identify which terms would better help them attain a desirable outcome (e.g., reinstate instead of request). This consciousness is reflective of a

new form of capital absent in the literature, *communicative capital*. Drawing from their political awareness they rationalized that they did not have to take the initiative to resolve their schools' funding issue, instead, they needed to make their priorities those of their district by aligning their proposal with the LCAP and methodically using written language to garner their support. In the upcoming sessions this group faced the challenge of aligning their petition for summer academic programs with their district's LCAP.

In Week 10 the coordinators broke the parents up into their assigned groups and provided them with 22 minutes of class time to begin working on their first draft.²⁷ In order to help advance the development of their letter, they spent the first two minutes deciding which meeting roles they felt best assuming. Nuvia agreed to serve as their secretary, Reyna as the reporter, Marina as the timekeeper, and Natalia operated as the group facilitator. Avi, Eduardo, and Sabrina considered themselves the assistants and were notably vocal in the negotiation of their letter. As secretary, Nuvia was in charge of transcribing the first draft of their proposal. While Nuvia transcribed the group's introduction, Avi transitioned the parents' focus by asking them to voice how they wanted to talk about summer academic programs. As parents shared, Reyna reminded them that their main objective was to align their proposal with the LCAP. In support Avi added, "*No estamos pidiendo dinero, el dinero ya esta, solamente queremos que ellos lo distribuyen así. We are not going to ask for money, the money is already there, we are simply wanting them to distribute it in this way*" (Week 10 Group 4, 0:05:15-0:05:26). This conversation reflected their previous consensus regarding their group goals. Their objective was not to fundraise, but instead to advocate for the inclusion of summer academic programs in their district's LCAP, in this way, the parents'

²⁷ They originally announced that parents would have 20 minutes to work but gave them two extra minutes to finish collecting their thoughts.

priorities were also the priorities of their school district. Natalia asked Reyna to articulate how she thought they should include the LCAP in their letter and Reyna struggled to express her thoughts. Avi came to her aid and noted that they first needed to identify their theme and really underscore their need, after which they could make connections to the LCAP. The group agreed, Natalia then prompted Nuvia to finish writing the introduction so that they could proceed to the body of their letter. This group spent half of their meeting time working on their introduction, mainly because they found it imperative to present themselves as critically conscious and capable parents (see *concientización* as a mediational tool below). Once they were ready to begin discussing the body of their proposal they were short on time and consequently they were unable to align their first draft with the LCAP (see Appendices G1-2).

In Week 11 the coordinating team provided the parents with 35 minutes of group time to work on their second draft. While in their group Nuvia spent 15 minutes copying their first draft onto a new sheet so that it would be legible, she did not make any notable changes to their letter. Once transcribed Eduardo served as the group's reporter and read the letter to his team (See Figure 5). After hearing it back the parents agreed that their second draft lacked clarity and continuity, and needed to be reorganized. Avi also observed that they had failed to align their proposal with the LCAP as they had previously discussed. In the following excerpt he advocated for its inclusion while displaying his critical awareness of why they must not fail to clearly articulate this connection (Week 11 Group 4, 0:18:22-0:19:02). In this excerpt Avi pressed that as a group they must align their proposal for summer academic programs with their district's vision. LCAP in order for these services to receive notable consideration (L7-11). He argued that by making this deliberate association

Figure 5. Eduardo Reading their Second Draft Out loud



Figure 5. Eduardo thoughtfully reads his group's second draft out loud. Nuvia sits across from him and bashfully listens to the letter she transcribed.

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | Avi: <i>Y también hace falta escribir lo que</i> | And we also failed to write like what |
| 2 | <i>como decía ella,</i> | she had said, |
| 3 | <Pointing to Reyna> | |
| 4 | <i>que de la repartición de los fondos</i> | of the redistribution of funds for the, |
| 5 | <i>para los, ¿Como se llama? El nuevo? =</i> | what is it called? The new = |
| 6 | Natalia: <i>Oh del LCAP.</i> | Oh of the LCAP. |
| 7 | Avi: <i>¡A ha! Que sugiramos que en la carta</i> | Uh huh! We have to suggest in |
| 8 | <i>que hay que um-que ellos con</i> | the letter that with the um-that with |
| 9 | <i>esos fondos [se los tomen en cuenta,</i> | those funds [they need to take them |
| 10 | <i>tomen en cuenta, si.</i> | (summer academic programs) into |
| 11 | | account, take them into account, yes. |
| 12 | Natalia: <i>Que con esos fondos se utilicen, sean</i> | That those funds are utilized, |
| 13 | <i>utilizados para estos programas,] para</i> | that they utilize them for these programs,] |
| 14 | <i>que los niños que están en desventaja</i> | so the children that are at a disadvantage |
| 15 | <i>[les de esa ayuda para que alcancen</i> | [are provided with the necessary help to |
| 16 | <i>a los demás niños.</i> | academically reach the other children. |

<p>17 Avi: <i>Para que ellos se den cuenta que</i> 18 <i>nosotros] ya sabemos que se va hacer</i> 19 <i>la nueva repartición.</i> 20 Natalia: <i>Exacto, exacto.</i> 21 Avi: <i>Entonces ellos van a decir “¡Ah caray!</i> 22 <i>Ellos si nos están poniendo atención!” o</i> 23 <i>“Sabén de lo que nos están pidiendo.”</i> 24 Parent Participants: <Voice agreement.></p>	<p>So that they (school board) realize that] we already know that there is going to be a new distribution. Exactly, exactly. Then they are going to say, “Oh my gosh! They are paying attention to us”, or “They know what they are asking us for.”</p>
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the school board would recognize that they were conscious parents who knew that the incoming funds would be redistributed in new ways (L17-19). In support, Natalia added that they must make this connection so that underperforming students could be provided with the assistance that they needed to academically perform at the level of other students (L12-16). Using a third-person hypothetical, Avi theorized that the school board would be dumbfounded by their connection to the LCAP and henceforth recognize that they were critically conscious parents who are paying attention to the decisions and actions that they were taking (L21-22). He used the *dicho* term *¡Ah caray!* (oh my gosh) to capture their presumed shock that as Latin@ parents, they were cognizant of their political climate. As previously noted Pablo, their assistant superintendent, in Week 11 indicated to the parents that by exercising their voice in the LCAP public hearings their school board members would recognize them as an active, observant, and conscious constituency. Avi clearly embodied the message that Pablo delivered just an hour prior to their group meeting by using this same reasoning as confirmation and support for why they must align their proposal with the LCAP. Most importantly, this excerpt supports that the parents understood their *concientización* of their local political ecologies to operate as a mediational tool, which by projecting it to the school board, could aid them in negotiating a favorable response for their proposal. By using language that portrayed their awareness of the LCAP, the parents were confident that it

would lead their local school board to know that they are politically aware (*para que sepan que sabemos*, so that they know that we know) and conscious (*que estamos poniendo atención*, we are paying attention). The group agreed with Avi's and Natalia's suggestions, Sabrina even chimed that they should immediately proceed to include this discourse in their letter. However, Avi disagreed and insisted that before they could make any additions they first needed to entirely restructure their draft so that it contained an introduction, body, and significance that underscored the importance and value of their proposal; without this structure he feared that their message would not be communicated effectively. Then they would be ready to align their request with the LCAP. This group's thoughtful word choice reflects their political, critical, intellectual, and communicative capital in action. In response the group decided to have Avi take the lead in writing the third draft. He accepted and took the drafts home with him as guiding tools, he assured them that he would not change their ideas but instead would organize the letter to better reflect what they previously agreed on (see Figure 6).

Prior to their graduation ceremony in Week 12, the coordinating team gave the parents seven minutes to quickly meet with their groups and make any final edits to their letter. Avi read to the group the letter that he drafted, he commented that it needed further editing so that it could be read in less than three minutes without difficulty. The parents overwhelmingly responded with positive affirmation and unanimously approved of this third draft. They congratulated Avi on his effort to join their voices as one; Reyna added that he did a good job at arranging their ideas and including *un pedacito* (a piece) of each of them in the letter.

Figure 6. Avi Looking Over his Group's Drafts.



Figure 6. Nuvia handed Avi the first and second draft of their letter. In this image, Avi is seen thoughtfully reviewing these artifacts.

With this draft, the group agreed to start the body by establishing the target audience, need, and significance of summer academic programs. They pressed that their district and its student body would overall benefit by ensuring all students are scholastically prepared for the following school year. These improvements in students' performance would enable them to perform at the standards expected of them as the new LCFF is implemented across the state. Interestingly here Avi focused their efforts on the statewide policy (LCFF) instead of their local developments (LCAP). As mentioned, Avi informed the group that he would further edit their draft for brevity so that it could be read under the three-minute mark. The group's final letter remained relative close to their previous draft; however, it was more organized and more succinct. Instead of relating their concerns to the LCFF, Avi focused their

arguments specifically on their district's LCAP. After establishing the need for summer academic programs they preceded by stating, "*Es por eso, mi recomendación para que con los fondos de control local LCAP se ofrezcan programas de Verano Escolar Académicos que les brinde ayuda en las áreas de Inglés, Matemáticas, Escritura y Lectura.*" It is in light of these reasons that I recommend that the funds derived from the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) be utilized to offer summer academic programs that will help these students with English, math, reading and writing" (Appendix J, Lines 17-22). This well-structured sentence cannot be appreciated in isolation of the constant support the parents received from the coordinating team and accompanied guest speakers. We must also recognize the labor that parents exerted to collectively align their proposal for summer academic programs with their district's LCAP and the wide range of funds of knowledge and forms of capital that they utilized as mediational tools to communicate in a presumably effective way.

Overall, the data supported that these parents' collective awareness of their changing political climate impacted both their word choice (e.g., reinstate instead of request) and their motivation to align their proposal with their district's LCAP. Towards the beginning of their group discussions these parents drew from their funds of knowledge to concede that the district-wide budget cuts hindered the continuation of summer academic programs in their schools. Drawing from their political awareness they rationalized that they did not have to take the initiative in resolving their schools' funding issue themselves; instead, they needed to make their priorities those of their district by aligning their proposal into the LCAP and garnering their support. The results suggested that these parents understood their *concientización* of their local political ecologies to operate as a mediational tool; that is, by presenting their proposal to the school board, it could help them in negotiating a favorable

response. By selecting language that portrayed their awareness of the LCAP (communicative capital), the parents were confident that it would lead their local school board to recognize that they were politically conscious parents that were attentive to the decisions and actions that their district was taking (critical, political and intellectual capital). After several conversations and accompanied drafts, this group concluded in the body of their letter to the school board by recommending that the funds derived from the LCAP be utilized to offer summer academic programs to students who need assistance with speaking English, math, writing, and reading. This well-intentioned, strategic and purposeful sentence was influenced by the ongoing support that this group received from the coordinators and guest speakers. It is also reflective of the activation and negotiation of their individual and collective mediational tools (funds of knowledge and forms of capital) to advantageously address the needs of their community. In the following pages, I explain how the parents resolved to tactfully *presentarse* (present themselves) as critically conscious parents capable of collective action.

II. Concientización as a Mediational Tool

Throughout the course of the program, the coordinating team conveyed to the parents the importance for them to *presentarse* (present themselves) as critically conscious and capable parents; they stressed that doing so would help them to more efficiently and effectively achieve their goals. For example, in Week 3, they scaffold the parents on how to write effective formal letters to address their educational concerns. Isabel shared with the class a sample of a strong and weak letter (See Appendices E1-2 and F1-2). She reviewed them carefully, emphasizing the different components that render a letter ineffective or

effective.²⁸ They advised the parents to write in first-person and to fixate their experiences on their own lived reality. They commented that when parents write in third-person, their claims could come off as unwarranted or even as complaints. Isabel instructed the parents that, after stating their name, they should include the organizations that they are a part of and their positions in them (e.g., vice-president of the Parent Teacher Association). She stressed, “*Ustedes represéntense porque cuando uno se representa así ellos saben que nosotros sabemos muchas cosas*. You all need to present yourself because when one represents themselves like this they know that we know a lot of things” (Week 3, 0:39:20-0:39:58). Isabel emphasized that when they establish their *presencia* (presence) as part of larger active organizations, educators would in turn distinguish them as critically conscious parents who are not alone. Educators’ awareness of parents’ *concientización* and intellectual capital would in turn prompt them to respond to their concerns in more efficient and effective ways.

Nearing the end of this activity, Isabel advised the parents to close their letters in a cordial manner and to once again include their name and group identity. Avi, one of the fathers from the group for summer academic programs, inquired if they could identify themselves as members of MALDEF. Isabel responded cautiously and suggested that they instead could identify themselves as members of the *Padres Líderes* program that works in partnership with MALDEF, the leading Latin@ legal civil rights organization. She sustained that once educators become aware of parents’ presumable connection to MALDEF, they would respond with attentiveness, mainly because of its known history in litigation.

Overall, the coordinating team communicated to the parents the importance for them to *presentarse* as a strategy to mediate their individual and collective goals. The data

²⁸ Examples included having a strong introduction, clearly identifying the problem/objectives, using concrete examples, speaking in first-person, staying focus, using an assertive tone, outlining suggestions for future action, author’s contact information, etc.

illustrates that the endeavor of establishing one's presence was an important and complex task for the group on summer academic programs to realize. It further reveals that they recognized this strategy of *presentación* (presenting oneself) and the threat of collective action as a mediational tool for the intent of accomplishing their group's goals.

Momentarily, I discuss how this team collectively worked to establish their *presencia* before the school board as conscious parents capable of collective action.

In Week 10, the coordinators provided the parents with 22 minutes of class time to work on their first draft. After Nuvia wrote down the date Natalia suggested that they were ready to *presentarse*, they spent the next 11 minutes working on establishing their *presencia*. Natalia advised Nuvia to write in first-person, considering that she was the one transcribing their first draft.²⁹ She prompted her by saying, “*Preséntese usted. ¿Quién es usted? Present yourself. Who are you?*” (Week 10 Group 4, 0:02:41-0:02:45). Natalia reminded her that the school board members would not automatically know who she was; therefore, she needed to include her affiliations as a way to establish her *presencia*. Nuvia proceeded by scribing her name, the number of children she had, and her role as the representative of her *Padres Líderes IV* group. The team motivated her to generously include her partnerships. For example, Sabrina used a *dicho* (cultural saying) to encourage Nuvia to “*Tu échale. Toss it all in there*” (Week 10 Group 4, 0:03:27-0:03:29). Reyna also drew from her *shared experience* with Nuvia to advise her to add ELAC (English Language Advisory Committee) and PTA (Parent Teacher Association); she claimed that they belonged to these committees because they regularly attended their meetings and that she should henceforth include them in the draft.

²⁹ Throughout the program the coordinators consistently advised parents to write in first-person as a means to keep their letters focused and relative of their own lived reality. They were asked to avoid writing in third-person because it could lend to gossiping or making statements that were not warranted by facts.

As Nuvia wrote these details down, Natalia asked the group if there was anything else that they were missing. Avi took this opportunity to negotiate for a more powerful way to include their partnership with MALDEF and *Padres Líderes* IV. He recommended that instead of simply naming the *Padres Líderes*, program they should emphasize that they were members of this *excellent* program that was getting work done. His group responded with excitement and support. He reasoned that it was crucial for them to accentuate where they were coming from by adding vocabulary that distinguished their program and emitted prestige. Avi anticipated that the school board members would respond with alertness saying “*¡Ay caray! Ya estamos escuchando mucho de Padres Líderes.* Oh my gosh! We are hearing a lot from *Padres Líderes*” (Week 10 Group 4, 0:04:12-0:04:19). Avi utilized his *political and communicative capital* to indicate that distinguishing themselves in this way would result in the school board members’ acknowledgement of their presence, unity, and excellence. This in turn would aid them in attaining the goals of their proposal. In support, Natalia prompted Nuvia to include Avi’s suggestion and to finish introducing herself by giving a quick summary of her engagements. Nuvia however had a difficult time transcribing her group’s letter with so many simultaneous ideas and voices contributing to the conversation. Due to her continual editing, Nuvia trashed the first sheet and started re-writing the letter onto a new paper. To help orient herself, she pulled from her PSP binder the effective formal letter sample that the coordinating team reviewed with the class in Week 3 (see Appendix E1-2). This tool provided her with a tangible example of how to structure their draft. Both Natalia and Avi reminded the group that their letter was a *borrador* (draft) and, as a work-in-progress, it would be subjected to many edits before it was a finalized piece. They made these comments hoping to get the group to move faster as they were

running out of time and had yet to complete a draft that they could share with the class. Recognizing how demanding this process was on Nuvia, the team agreed to remain silent in order to give her the opportunity to write without so many *in-vivo* changes. After a few minutes of silence, the team resumed vocalizing their ideas. Natalia mentioned to Nuvia that by including her involvement with PTA and DLAC, the school board would recognize her as a mother that was highly engaged in her school. She then used a hypothetical third-person scenario to communicate that, after hearing her affiliations, “*Van a decir ‘Ohh okay, esta señora es una señora que si conoce del sistema escolar, sabe’*. They (school board members) are going to say, ‘Oh okay, this woman is a woman that understands how the school system works. She is aware’” (Week 10 Group 4, 0:10:20-0:10:26). In support, Avi voiced that Nuvia should include all of the titles that apply to her; the group endorsed his recommendation. They evidently believed that including their engagements with other organizations would simultaneously project their *concientización* and intellectual capital.

With the help of her group, Nuvia established her presence as the author of their first draft. After 11 minutes of dynamic interaction, she finished transcribing the following introductory paragraph (See Appendix G1, Lines 1-10):³⁰

1	<i>4/23/14</i>	4/23/14
2	<i>Muy Buenastarde</i>	Good afternoon
3	<i>Mi nombre es Nuvia Soy madre</i>	My name is Nuvia I am mother of 7
4	<i>de 7 hijo y bengo Representando</i>	children and I come here representing a
5	<i>aun grupo De malde. que Sellama</i>	group that is called malde. and is
6	<i>y es un exélfente grupo y Soy</i>	an excellent group and I am member of
7	<i>miembro de Pitie y la y Soy boluntaria</i>	Pitie and I am a volunteer in my children’s
8	<i>del Salon De mis hijo que existen en la</i>	classroom that attends Forest Hill and

³⁰The parents’ Spanish first and second written drafts are transcribed here verbatim in order to reflect the challenges Nuvia faced to capture her group’s feedback *in-vivo* (see Appendices G1-2 and H1-2). Translating Spanish grammatical and spelling mistakes is challenging, mainly because these two languages do not share the same grammatical rules. It is likewise difficult to discern where a spelling error in a Spanish word would take place in the English word. I attempted to translate these challenges, however the Spanish text is better indicative of the struggle Nuvia faced to transcribe *in-vivo*.

9 escuela Forest Hill y Villa High School. Villa High School.

This transcript supports that Nuvia wrote her group's *in-vivo* suggestions, as reflected by her incomplete sentences and lack of punctuation (L5-7). Her group had reminded her that they were working on a *borrador* and edits were expected. Evidently, Nuvia was more concerned with jotting their ideas down that they could later modify. This draft also illustrates that even though Nuvia was instructed to write in first-person, as a group they managed to negotiate the inclusion of a collective voice. Nuvia established early on that she was speaking as a representative of her group, a notation that was suggested to her by her team (L4-6).

Notably, in the first draft, she did not include her involvement with DLAC, even though both Reyna and Natalia proposed it. In Week 11, the coordinating team provided the parents with 35 minutes of group time to work on their second draft. Nuvia spent 15 minutes copying their first draft onto a new sheet so that it could be legible. In order to allow her to focus, her group agreed to refrain from making any suggestions until she was done writing. In this second draft, the only addition that Nuvia made to the introductory paragraph was her membership in DLAC and not just the PTA. This supports that when Nuvia was able to slow down the input of her group's ideas, she also found it vital to include all of her affiliations. Once she finished copying their letter, Eduardo served as the group reporter and read their second draft to the group. As aforementioned, after hearing it back, they all agreed it lacked both clarity and continuity, requiring reorganization. As a group they volunteered Avi to take the letter home and work on the third draft, a task that he agreed to. He assured them that he would not change their ideas, but would instead organize the letter to better reflect what they had previously agreed on.

In Week 12, Avi read to the group the draft that they had entrusted him with editing. He disclosed that he had used first-person tense, as instructed by the coordinators, and that his personal details would change to include those of their final reporter. Avi's introductory statement read as follows:

Es un privilegio para mi tener la oportunidad de expresarles nuestras inquietudes escolares sobre la educación de nuestros hijos. Mi nombre es Avi, soy un orgulloso representante de clases de MALDEF para la colaboración entre padres y escuelas, también soy padre de dos alumnos de la escuela primaria Travis que pertenece a este distinguido distrito escolar. It is a privilege for me to have the opportunity to express to you all our academic concerns regarding the education of our children. My name is Avi and I am a proud representative of the MALDEF classes that works for the collaboration between parents and schools, I am also the father of two students from Travis Elementary School that belong to this distinguished school district. (Appendix I, Lines 2-10)

Avi initiated the introduction by identifying himself as the expressive voice of other parents, who, like him, were concerned about the academic development of their children. When writing in first-person, Avi, like Nuvia, negotiated a collective voice. He then proceeded by establishing his presence as the proud representative of the MALDEF parent-school partnership program and as the father of two children that are a part of the Coastland School District (See Appendix I). Evidently, Avi, like his team, found it invaluable to collectively establish their *presencia* as critically conscious parents capable of collective action. In this same session, the coordinating team announced their recommendation to modify all of the groups' introductory statements so that they could all have a unifying label. As coordinators, they recognized that each of the groups was making diligent efforts to establish their *presencia*. They were also cognizant of other district-wide *Padres Líderes* chapters that were planning on attending the public hearings. In response, they created the following unifying label for each of the parent groups to use: "*Mi nombre es ____ y soy padre/madre que representa a la clase de Padres Líderes de las escuelas Travis y Forest Hill, que trabaja en*

*colaboración con MALDEF, la oficina de Pathways to College en Palo Duro University y el Coastland School District. My name is _____ and I am a mother/father that represents the class of Padres Líderes from the Travis and Forest Hill school sites, that works in collaboration with MALDEF, the Pathways to College office at Palo Duro University and the Coastland School District". This identifier was intended to enable the parents to establish their *presencia* and accent the uniqueness of their multi-level partnership, all the while projecting their belonging to a larger district-wide Latin@ parent movement.*

In summary, data supports that the group for summer academic programs was purposeful in how they collectively decided to establish their *presencia* before their school board members. Early on in the program, the coordinating team communicated to the parents that, by establishing their *presencia*, educators *would know that they know* critical information and that they are not alone in their endeavors. The parents reflected the embodiment of this message by spending notable time strategically deciding how to word their *presencia*. This group internalized the importance of identifying their engagement with other programs/committees/organizations as a strategy to project their *concientización* toward their targeted audience. They hypothesized that this *threat of awareness* and collective action would in turn help them mediate these political spaces in more efficient and effective ways. Educators would then conclude that the parents' partnerships provided them with access to multiple resources, including the threat of collective action. Simply stated, by *presentándose*, parents implicitly indicated that they were critically conscious and readied with intellectual, critical and political capital. This act of projecting their *concientización* was utilized as a mediational tool for the intent of reaching their collective goals. The parents' calculated decisions pertaining to word choice and approach was reflective of their

communicative capital in action. In the following pages, I illustrate how the parents' concientización of student tracking influenced the target audience, as well as the need and significance of their proposal for summer academic programs.

III. Concientización as an Information Arsenal

Over the course of four weeks, the group dedicated to summer academic programs engaged in rich and complex discussions to jointly negotiate the inclusion of key concepts into their letter. The parents' concientización of student tracking influenced the parameters and content of their proposal. It chiefly helped them to establish the need, target audience, and significance of these services. Notably, the parents' awareness of student tracking did not begin in their groups; in fact, it was fostered by discussions that took place throughout the program. I begin by contextualizing the parents' awareness of the importance of a solid elementary education as the foundation for college readiness. Then, I demonstrate how their concientización of student tracking influenced the content and parameters of their LCAP proposal for summer academic programs.

Throughout *Padres Líderes IV*, the coordinating team and accompanied guest speakers stressed to the parents that their children's college pathways began in elementary school. For example, in Week 1, Isabel asserted that the term *elementary education* in itself indicated that during these first six years, students must receive a solid foundation that prepares them for college. She cautioned the parents not to, for once, believe that their children were too young to start being primed for higher education; she warned that if they did not remain vigilant, their children could be derailed from a college pathway. The coordinating team also addressed the many ways that English Language Learners (ELLs)

were at-risk of scholastically falling behind. They shared that ELLs were typically provided with an education that did not have the same rigor as other English dominant students. They explained that if ELLs did not get reclassified as English proficient before high school, they would not gain access to the gatekeeping A-G courses required for eligibility into institutions part of the University of California and California State University systems. The coordinators later invited Yasuri, the assistant director for admissions at Palo Duro University, to lead the session on college readiness. Yasuri addressed a wide range of topics to help parents actualize their aspirations for their children's higher education. She also spoke in detail about California's A-G course requirements; she stressed that a student's coursework played a significant role in their college acceptance. Yasuri, like the coordinating team, maintained that the quality of students' elementary education was deeply consequential in their ability to enroll in classes that increased their eligibility and competitiveness for college admissions. The coordinators also addressed the challenges that the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) could have on students' education.³¹ After hearing this information, Avi and other parents vocalized their critical understanding of the importance that a solid elementary education had on students' college readiness. He pressed that all students should have access to an education that allowed them to develop a set of fundamental skills that prepared them to successfully carry out their professional and/or collegiate aspirations. He went on that in order to reach that outcome, all children should be afforded an equitable opportunity to perform at the expected standards. Later in his group, Avi negotiated these very concepts into their LCAP proposal. This thematic progression is discussed later in this chapter.

³¹ The CCSS are a set of high-quality academic standards in English language arts/literacy and mathematics; they outline what a student should know by the end of each academic year. The CCSS are designed to prepare students for college and/or professional career, and are adopted across forty-two states.

In sum, the coordinating team and guest speakers collectively echoed the founding role that students' elementary education has on their college pathways. They emphasized that student performance in elementary school is consequential, and to some degrees decisive, as to what they can accomplish later in their academic career. Through these multi-efforts, they strived to help nurture the parents' *concientización* of the different factors that track students out of college and how parents could impede these outcomes (e.g. ELL status, A-G course requirements, CCSS, etc.). In the following, I reveal how the summer academic programs group reflected their critical understanding of the gatekeeping A-G courses and the CCSS by negotiating these concepts into their letter. They furthermore utilized their *concientización* of student tracking as the backbone of their LCAP proposal from which they drew to identify the need, significance, and target audience for summer academic programs.

In Week 8, the coordinators led the class on a *lluvia de ideas* (brainstorm) activity to help the parents determine the areas of high-need on which they wanted to concentrate their efforts. Marina suggested summer academic programs, with which Avi readily agreed. As the class worked to select four out of the eight identified topics, Avi made a case for summer academic programs. He drew from his *lived experiences* to reason that during the summer, students tended to lose their motivation and were less enthusiastic about starting the new school year. In support, Ms. Ibarra shared that during the summer break, students statistically fall behind three months because they do not receive the adequate support needed to perform at the expected academic level; they then enter the next grade scholastically behind. As a class, they agreed to advocate for the summer academic programs so that

students could be provided with enriching learning opportunities during their two-month summer gap.

As aforementioned, the group of parents that elected to champion this cause met for the first time in Week 9. They gathered for 56 minutes and began working on their proposal. Mrs. Perez facilitated this initial group meeting until Natalia returned the following week. As a team they focused their collective efforts on answering two worksheets that were designed to help them brainstorm their action plan; these included: Defining the Problem and Organizing Your Research (Appendices C1-2 and D1-2). It was in this first meeting that the group on summer academic programs did the majority of their brainstorming; as they went through these worksheets, they addressed several key issues that outlined the target audience, as well as the need for and significance of these services.

While in their group, Mrs. Perez prompted the parents to distinguish why they felt that there was a need for summer academic programs; Avi quickly responded to her inquiry. The following transcript captures his reasoning (Week 9 Group 4, 0:18:50-0:19:10).

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | <i>Avi: Una que se desconectan de la</i> | For one students get disconnected from |
| 2 | <i>escuela durante dos meses.</i> | school during those two months. |
| 3 | <i>Y otra es que,</i> | another thing is, |
| 4 | <i><Speaking to Mrs. Perez></i> | |
| 5 | <i>póngale,</i> | on there write down, |
| 6 | <i>que si están ya atrasaditos, llegan</i> | that if they are already behind, |
| 7 | <i>mas atrasados para el siguiente año</i> | they will enter the next school |
| 8 | <i>escolar.</i> | year even more behind. |
| 9 | <i>Y si no están atrasados,</i> | And if they are not behind, |
| 10 | <i>que van bien,</i> | if they are doing well, |
| 11 | <i>se desconectan y llegan</i> | they will get disconnected and some |
| 12 | <i>unos atrasados.</i> | will enter the next grade behind. |
| 13 | <i>Mrs. Perez: Okay.</i> | Okay. |
| 14 | <i>Avi: Ósea que, no están preparados</i> | In other words, they are not |
| 15 | <i>adecuadamente para el</i> | adequately prepared for the following |
| 16 | <i>siguiente año escolar.</i> | academic year |
| 17 | <i><Group voices their agreement></i> | |

From a third-person standpoint, Avi communicated his understanding that when students miss school during their summer break, they do not enter the following academic year adequately prepared (L1-3). He confidently instructed Mrs. Perez to transcribe that students that are already behind will stagger even more, and those that were not behind were still at risk of underperforming due to the elongated period in which they are disconnected from the classroom (L6-12). Notably, Avi's argument was different from what he first presented in Week 8, in which he stated that students seemed unmotivated and unenthusiastic about entering a new academic year. Here, he instead focused on student academic preparation, which suggests his *program concept ownership* of information that Ms. Ibarra shared in class. His awareness of the ways that students were scholastically affected by the absence of an academic routine is arguably now a part of Avi's funds of knowledge, which he drew from to articulate the need for summer academic programs. Avi showed consciousness of the consequences that interrupted periods of learning can have on student performance and confidently asks Mrs. Perez to transcribe his comments. After Avi detected the support of his group, through their contextualization cues, he switched from third-person to first-person by sharing his *lived experience* with summer breaks.³² He expressed, "*Para mi como padre, en vez de darme gusto, abecés me preocupa porque dice uno, 'Como que yo siento que mi hijo no esta muy preparado para el siguiente año escolar.'*" For me as a father, instead of being joyful, at times I am concerned because one likely says, 'I feel like my son is not really ready for the next academic year'" (Week 9 Group 4, 0:19:23-0:19:32). The group vocalized their agreement, after which he continued by speaking in second-person, noting, "*En cambio si dan un curso de verano, sabes que por lo menos una idea de lo que ya van a ver, ya la*

³² John Gumperz defines contextualization cues as nonverbal and verbal signaling mechanisms that speakers use to deliver the intent behind their utterances and interpret the meaning behind utterances others communicate to them (Gumperz, 1982).

tiene. On the contrary, if they provide a summer course, you at least know that at a minimum he will have an idea of what they will learn” (Week 9 Group 4, 0:19:31-0:19:37). Avi observed, though his group’s contextualization cues, that his lived experiences resemble those of the other parents. In second-person, he affirmed that their shared circumstances would improve if summer academic programs were available to their children.

Through the sharing of their own lived experiences, other parents also communicated why they felt summer academic programs were necessary. Eduardo stated, “*Yo digo que si, si es importante que haiga en el verano clases porque mi hijo estuvo cuando había, y si le sirvió mucho, hasta amaneció en el tercer grado*. I say that yes, yes it is important to have summer classes because when they were available my son attended, and they benefited him a lot, he even woke up in third grade” (Week 9 Group 4, 0:20:10-0:20:22). Eduardo drew from his *school lived experiences* with his son’s schooling to support that summer academic programs were indeed impactful and made a difference in students’ development. He used the cultural term *amaneció*, which in Spanish literally means to wake up, to imply that his son arose in third grade, or in other words was cognitively present. The group conceded that students were not performing as well as they once were when the summer academic programs were in operation. They ascertained that students were not as adequately prepared to transition to the next grade and, as a result, they lagged behind during the academic year. Without these services to break the cycle, students would develop a pattern of underperformance that would deter them from a college pathway.

Avi also drew from his *lived experiences* to convey that students’ low academic achievement not only impacted their collegiate future, but also their self-esteem. He shared,

Yo fui estudiante también, bueno soy todavía, pero fui estudiante y sinceramente cuando a mi se me complicaba las matemáticas o tenía un mal día en las matemáticas,

casi todos los demás días escolar, se me dificultaban porque mi autoestima bajaba mucho, entonces si yo en las matemáticas no soy el mejor, pero le entiendo y lo hago bien, posiblemente todas las demás materias se me hagan fácil. I was also once a student, well I still am, but I was a student and frankly when math got too complicated for me, or I had a bad day in math class, almost all of the other school days were challenging for me because my self-esteem would drop a lot. So if I am not the best in math, but I understand it or perform well, it is possible that the rest of the subjects will be easy for me. (Week 9 Group 4, 0:22:25-0:22:45)

Avi proposed that a student's self-esteem is affected by how they perform academically; he reasoned that if the pattern of underperformance is not addressed, then the student's self-esteem in their academic abilities would accordingly deteriorate. Using himself as the third-person hypothetical example, he noted that if his performance improved in the subject area that he most struggled with, then his confidence would likely transcend to other subject matters. By negotiating his *lived experiences* and those of his group members, Avi determined that if a child needs additional academic support, they should receive it instead of being allowed to advance to the next grade without developing confidence in their intellectual abilities. This collective message underscored this group's need and significance for summer academic programs.

After these developments, Mrs. Perez prompted the group to distinguish how they would address students' eligibility for these services. As opposed to summer school, they agreed that admittance should not be decided by an outward measurement of underperformance (e.g., failing or passing). Instead, they conceded that eligibility should be decided on a students' sincere need or want for academic support during the summer break. They reasoned that a student should not have to be on the cusp of failing to receive summer support because even those that are doing well are still at risk of falling behind during this period of interrupted learning. Sabrina, the only parent whose son was given admittance into summer school, agreed that this determination of access was ideal because even students like

her son, who was in special education, could benefit from these opportunities. Through their discussions, they reasoned that underperformance did not imply that a student was necessarily failing a subject, but instead that they were not performing at the expected level and hence needed additional support.

Through these discussions, the group concluded that summer academic programs have a positive impact on students' academic achievement. They agreed that the absence of these services disrupted students' academic routine, led students to lose interest in school, and affected their self-esteem, all of which contributed to their underperformance during the academic year. Without these services, students would fall behind and stay behind, resulting in their derailment from a college pathway. They also agreed that these services should be made available to all students who express a need for summer academic assistance because they all face the risk of underperforming. In the following meetings, this group had the task of recording the target audience, need, and significance of summer academic programs into a draft form.

As aforementioned, in Week 10, the coordinators broke the parents up into their assigned groups and provided them with 22 minutes of class time to begin working on their first draft. As part of their introductory statement, the team on summer academic programs spent half of their time working on establishing their *presencia*. This focus limited the amount of time that they had to spend on the body of their proposal. This was also the first week in which Natalia served as the group's facilitator. She was not familiar with the group's objectives, which benefited them because she pressed them to clearly articulate the target audience, need, and significance of their proposal. Once Nuvia finished transcribing the introduction, Natalia stated that they were ready to move forward with the body of their

proposal. She asked them to identify what services they were requesting. In accordance with their previous discussion, the group voiced “*la Reinstalación De cursos De Verano académicos*. The reinstallation of summer academic courses,” which Nuvia proceeded to write down (see Appendix G1, Lines 14-15). Natalia asked the group to define their target audience. Avi responded to Natalia, while simultaneously instructing Nuvia to jot down his response, that they wanted these services available for students with “*bajo nivel académico para provocar un mejor desempeño académico*. Low academic achievement in order to stimulate an improvement in their academic performance” (Week 10 Group 4, 0:15:27-0:15:38). In the session prior, they had agreed that they wanted these services to be available to all students that were struggling academically and had a genuine need for these programs.

As Nuvia began to transcribe Avi’s declaration, Natalia prompted the parents to recall that English Language Learners (ELLs) mainly struggle with their course work because they have difficulties learning in their non-native language. She then suggested that these summer academic programs should focus on ELLs because of the added risks they face in falling behind. The following transcript illustrates the rich discussion that this group engaged in to vocalize the target audience of their proposal (Week 10 Group 4, 0:16:10-0:17:02):

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | Avi: <Pointing to the draft that Nuvia was transcribing> | |
| 2 | <i>No. Aquí dice, hay dice efectivamente</i> | No. Here it says, it says in fact that we |
| 3 | <i>para niños con necesidades, con bajo</i> | want these services for students with |
| 4 | <i>nivel académico del que salieron=</i> | needs, that left their previous grade with |
| 5 | | low academic Achievement= |
| 6 | Natalia: <i>Los como en este caso serian</i> | Like in this case it would be the |
| 7 | <i>los aprendices de ingles.</i> | English Language Learners. |
| 8 | Avi: <i>Pues si pero no nos queremos meter</i> | Well yes, but we do not want to delve |
| 9 | <i>mucho con eso porque a ellos</i> | too much into that because they |
| 10 | <Points to the group that is focusing on ELL reclassification> | |
| 11 | <i>les toca la reclasificación y tal vez</i> | are taking up reclassification and |
| 12 | <i>como que se confundan un poco.</i> | perhaps they (the school board) will |
| 13 | | get a little bit confused. |
| 14 | <i>Les queremos hablar mas específicamente</i> | We want to more specifically talk to them |

15	<i>como de niños, por ejemplo</i>	about students that, like for example
16	<Points to Natalia using her as an example>	
17	<i>que su niña salió este año con bajo</i>	that your daughter exited this (school) year
18	<i>nivel académico en matemáticas</i>	with low academic achievement in
19	<i>no necesariamente en el ingles [y,</i>	math, not necessarily in English [and,
20	Natalia: <nodding> <i>Umm hum]</i>	Umm hum]
21	Avi: <i>Tiene usted dudas que en el</i>	you doubt that in the following (school)
22	<i>próximo año pueda iniciar a un nivel</i>	year she will be able to enter at a regular
23	<i>académico [regular.</i>	academic [level.
24	Natalia: <nodding> <i>Umm humm.]</i>	Umm hum]
25	Avi: <i>Entonces a usted le interesaría</i>	Therefore you would be interested in
26	<i>que fuera a algún programa que</i>	your daughter attending some type of
27	<i>pudiera brindarle asesoría a</i>	program that could offer her (academic)
28	<i>su hija durante el verano.</i>	support during the summer.
29	<i>Y eso es nuestro objetivo.</i>	And that's our objective.
30	Natalia: <i>Okay okay.</i>	Okay okay.
31	Nuvia: <i>Es nuestro objetivo.</i>	That is our objective.
32	Natalia: <i>Ya haber terminen de cerrar los</i>	Well then finish wrapping up your
33	<i>últimos comentarios, anoten el gol.</i>	final comments, score the goal.
34	Parents: <Burst into laughter>	

Avi defended that as a group they were focused on serving students that were academically underperforming and at risk of falling further behind during their summer break (L1-5).

Natalia interjected, asserting that these underperforming students were likely ELLs (L6-7).

Avi acknowledged this connection, however, he contested that as a group they did not want to utilize language that specifically focused on ELLs because that was the target audience of another group in the class (L8-11). He explicated that they did not want blatant overlap because that could confuse the school board and undermine their objectives (L12-13). Avi concluded that, as a group, they wanted these programs to serve students that were underperforming regardless of whether or not they were ELLs. In an attempt to get Natalia to comprehend their reasoning, Avi presented a hypothetical scenario with her as the actor. In second-person, he detailed that if in theory Natalia's daughter was struggling in math, not necessarily in English, as her mother, she would be apprehensive about her daughter's

transition and performance in the next academic grade. Her trepidation would then prompt her into finding services that could support her daughter's academic development during the summer break. Natalia agreed that this was a close depiction of how she would respond in such a situation (L20, 24 & 30). Avi then concluded that the reinstatement of summer academic programs for underperforming students was their group's objective, a conclusion that Nuvia and his team confirmed (L29 & 31). Through the use of this second-person hypothetical scenario, Avi, in a nonchalant manner, displayed a deep understanding of his group's objectives based on their observed social pattern. In less than a minute, he clearly outlined the need and target audience of his group's proposal. Avi considered how parents would likely respond to a situation in which their student was underperforming; he understood what a parent would want for their child and the services they would seek. He further reflected his critical awareness of how their local political ecologies functioned (political capital) by anticipating that redundancies across their overall groups' proposals would serve the school board as an excuse to dismiss their petitions. Natalia recognized that as a team, they had a firm understanding of their objectives. She used the soccer reference that Avi had previously made to indicate that they were indeed ready to *meter el gol* (score the goal); the group responded with laughter (L33-34). By making this connection, Natalia, in a culturally responsive way, expressed to the parents her confidence in their abilities to, like a soccer team, win the match by scoring in the last minute.

At this point, the coordinating team announced to the class that they had three minutes remaining. Pressed for time, Avi took the lead role in dictating the body of their draft to Nuvia; he watched her closely as she wrote and made suggestions as she transcribed them. The rest of the team contributed by mainly helping with word choice. They aimed to

limit the amount of voices dictating so that Nuvia could concentrate. As she wrote, Natalia reminded her that it was a *borrador*, hence she should not worry about grammatical errors or punctuation. In less than four minutes, the group completed the body of their proposal, which read as follows (See Appendix G1, Lines 11-26):

<p>1 <i>y estoy orgullosamente representando</i> 2 <i>apadres quenotienen la oportunidad</i> 3 <i>de participa. Susnecesidades como</i> 4 <i>Son la Reinstalación De cursos De</i> 5 <i>Verano academicos para los niños con</i> 6 <i>bajonivel académico para Provocar un</i> 7 <i>mejor Desempeño académico para</i> 8 <i>niños De lento aprendizaje-</i> 9 <i>Promo biendo el entusiasmo-De</i> 10 <i>estudiantes y Padres Para Paun mejor</i> 11 <i>nivel escolar Del Distrito escolar y se</i> 12 <i>vea reflejado en el Futuro De nuestra</i> 13 <i>comunidad en los aspectos economicos</i> 14 <i>socia educativos culturales y</i> 15 <i>deportivos gracias porsuatención y</i> 16 <i>apollo a los programas mencionados.</i></p>	<p>and I am proudly representing parents that do not have the opportunity to advocate for. Their necessities which include the Reinstallation Of Summer academic courses for children that are performing at a low academic level in order to yield an Improved academic attainment for students that are slow learners promoting the enthusiasm- of students and parents for an improved academic level in the School District which can be reflected in the future of our community in terms of its economic social educational cultural and athletic developments thank you for your attention and support to the programs mentioned.</p>
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In this section of their draft, the group conferred that the proposed summer academic programs should serve students that were slow learners and henceforth academically underperforming (L5-9). Due to their time constraints, they did not specify what they meant by students that were slow learners. For example, were they referring to students with learning difficulties and special needs or were they referring to a wider spectrum of societal and developmental challenges that impede students' learning? As a team, they also identified the significance that students' improved academic achievement would have on society. They outlined that the future of their community would be positively impacted in many aspects, including its economic, social, educational, cultural and even in its athletic developments (L10-15). Clearly, improvements in students' learning would not merely benefit the students

themselves but positively impact their society. The group did not have the time to discuss these observations more in-depth; however, later drafts are more informative of the consequential role they associated with summer academic programs.

As mentioned above, in Week 11, these parents spent the majority of their group time copying their first draft onto a new sheet for legibility. They did not make any notable changes to this second draft and agreed to hold off on editing it until it was restructured to include a clear introduction, body, and significance that underscored the importance and value of their proposal. The group decided to have Avi take the lead in creating their third draft. He accepted and took the drafts home with him as guiding tools. He assured them that he would not change their collective ideas, but would instead organize the letter to better reflect what they previously agreed on. Prior to their graduation ceremony in Week 12, the coordinating team gave the parents seven minutes to quickly meet in their groups and make any final edits to their letter. Avi read to the group the third draft that they had entrusted him with editing, commenting that he still needed to clean it up so that it could be read in less than three minutes without any difficulty. The parents responded with positive affirmation and unanimously approved of this draft. They congratulated Avi on his notable effort to join their voices as one.

A distinct edit that Avi included in this draft was the external factors that he perceived cause students to academically fall behind and why this lagging was overall problematic. He began the body of their letter by remarking that, as a group, they were there to respectfully solicit for the school board to, within their possible means, support the reinstatement of summer academic programs for students that were underperforming. Avi continued that these students,

Que por causa de fuerza mayor como problemas económicos, de salud, familiares, legales, o precisamente de lento aprendizaje se hayan atrasados en el año escolar y así sean atendidos de manera apropiada en el verano para regularizar su nivel académico preparándolos para su siguiente año escolar. Due to external powers such as issues with finances, health, family, legal, or precisely due to learning disabilities find themselves academically behind during the academic school year and henceforth need to receive suitable academic support during the summer, in order to regulate their learning to the appropriate level, so that they are adequately prepared for the following academic year. (Appendix I, Lines 15-22)

Avi recognized that these were observations that, as a group, they had not discussed, so he then took the opportunity to explain his reasoning and get feedback from his team. The following transcript illustrates how Avi drew from his funds of knowledge to negotiate the inclusion of external factors that, although often ignored, notably affect how students academically perform (Week 12 Group 4, 0:03:37-0:04:35).

1	Avi: <i>Porque hay niños,</i>	Because there are children,
2	<i>yo lo que eh notado,</i>	what I have noticed,
3	<i>pero no precisamente porque</i>	that not necessarily because they
4	<i>sean flojos [si Natalia: Si] no porque</i>	are lazy [Yeah. Natalia: but] instead because=
5	Reyna: <i>Tienen un problema=</i>	They have a problem=
6	Avi: <i>Tuvieron [algún problema.</i>	they had [some type of problem.
7	Natalia: <i>Tienen algún problema] en casa.</i>	They have some type of problem]
8		in their home.
9	Group: <In agreement> Umm hum.	Umm hum.
10	Avi: <i>Y entonces por esos niños es como</i>	And so for those children it is like
11	<i>no se preocupan por ellos, dicen</i>	they do not worry about them,
12	<i>"no mas lento aprendizaje, no paso"</i>	they say "that student didn't pass because
13		she/he is a slow learner"
14	<i>o algo</i>	or something like that,
15	<i>pero no saben=</i>	but they do not know=
16	Isabel: <i>Sin investigar la razón.</i>	Without investigating the reason.
17	Avi: <i>Si=</i>	Yes=
18	Natalia: <i>La raíz de adonde [viene.</i>	Where the root of the problem
19		[came from.
20	Avi: <i>Y abecés] porque los niños no</i>	And sometimes] because the
21	<i>tienen dinero sus papas y tienen que</i>	children's parents do not have money
22	<i>trabajar mucho,</i>	and they have to work a lot,
23	<i>o al revés no tienen dinero</i>	or the opposite, they do not have money
24	<i>y no trabajan</i>	and they do not have a job because they
25	<i>porque no han tenido trabajo,</i>	have been unemployed,
26	<Parents nod in agreement>	

27	<i>Y como dicen en México</i>	and like they say in Mexico, “If you don’t
28	<i>"Si uno no come no entran la letras".</i>	eat the lessons won’t go in”.
29	Group: <Nod in agreement> Umm hum.	Umm hum.
30	Avi: <i>Y abecés el niño se enfermo un mes</i>	And sometimes the child got sick for a
31	<i>y se atraso demasiado.</i>	month and he fell behind significantly.
32	Group: <Nod in agreement> Umm hum.	Umm hum.
33	Avi: <i>Oh tuvieron problemas que sus</i>	Or they had issues because their parents
34	<i>papas se separaron y el niño se le</i>	separated and the child is=
35	<makes gestures with his hands signifying that the child is struggling>	
36	Sabrina: <Agreeing with Avi>	
37	<i>Les afecta mucho a los niños.</i>	Children are really affected by that.
38	Avi: <i>Oh de aplano son niños que tienen</i>	Or on the other hand, they are children
39	<i>todo pero su aprendizaje es mas</i>	that have everything but they learn at a
40	<i>lento que los demás. So hay que</i>	slower pace than other students. So
41	<i>entender que esos niños hay que</i>	one must understand that we also have to
42	<i>apoyarlos también.</i>	support those children.
43	Group: Umm hum.	Umm hum.
44	<Avi’s voice breaks, sniffles, wipes tear from eye>	
45	Avi: <i>Eso es mi punto de vista porque yo</i>	That is my point of view because I am
46	<i>estoy viviendo eso.</i>	living it.

Avi drew from his *lived experiences* to support that students do not necessarily fall behind because of personal choice (e.g., they are lazy). Instead, he argued, there are external factors that play a role in their performance. Avi utilized his personal observations to assert that educators discount the external struggles that these students face (L10-11). Using a third-person hypothetical scenario, he maintained that educators attribute students’ underperformance to learning difficulties, without first taking into account the numerous factors that cause them to fall behind (L10-14). The group agreed that this oversimplification leads educators to disregard the hardships that students endure without duly investigating why they are struggling (L16-19). On this note, Avi used a *refrán* (or cultural saying) to ingeniously convey the external role poverty and hunger plays in students’ underperformance. He shared a common expression used in Mexico to relay that if students are hungry, their focus is consequently deterred from their academics, *si uno no come no*

entran la letras (if you don't eat the lessons won't go in) (L27-28). He then proceeded to include other factors that can also affect student achievement, such as sickness and divorce.

On this note, Sabrina added that children are deeply affected by the separation of their parents. In acknowledgement of Sabrina's situation, Avi followed by voicing that, at times, children are not facing a range of external factors, but instead have learning difficulties that cause them to fall behind. In Week 9, Sabrina had shared that her son was in special education and that she had adamantly advocated for his admittance into summer school so that he could receive the academic assistance he needed. Avi affirmed that these students were also in need of their support and should have access to summer academic programs (L40-42). Right after this comment, Avi's voice began to break; he sniffled and wiped a tear from his eye (see Figure 7.). He then transitioned from third-person to first-person by

Figure 7. Avi Reflecting Emotionally on the External Factors His Students Face



Figure 7. Avi (first from left-to-right) is seen wiping a tear from his eye after he bared to his group that he drew from his lived experiences to support that students are affected by the divorce of their parents. His teammates expressed their sympathy.

revealing that his beliefs were derived from the personal struggles that his family was experiencing (L45-46). Prior to *Padres Líderes IV*, Avi and his then wife had lost custody of their children; in Week 11, he was awarded full guardianship of their two kids. Without going into detail, he emotionally expressed his hurt towards the distress his children were facing and how their education was being affected. In support, Natalia added that both educators and parents must identify the root of the cause that leads students to academically fall behind, particularly those that extend beyond the confines of their classroom. The group readily agreed with and affirmed Avi's observation. Through the use of several contextualization cues, they helped progress the inclusion of these external factors in their final letter (L34-5, 7-9, 16, 18-19, 26, 29, 32, 36-37, 43). These external factors further substantiated why parents believed that there was a need for summer academic programs: unless adequate resources were in place to help these students get back on track, they would be at risk of not receiving the fundamentals needed to stay on a college pathway.

In their first two drafts, this group began to identify the district-wide outcomes that they perceived could result from students' improved academic development. They outlined that these benefits would positively impact the future of their community in many aspects, including its economic, social, educational, cultural, and even in its athletic developments. For their third draft, the group agreed to more concrete language that encapsulated how these services would help students remain on a college pathway. First, they articulated that students who were academically underperforming needed summer academic programs that could help them to excel at the level expected of them, particularly as the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) came into play. This would in turn lead to a student body that was adequately primed for the upcoming school year and could perform as expected. As

aforementioned, in session three, the coordinating team addressed the challenges that the new CCSS could have on students' education. The parents had voiced that they were unaware of these new state standards prior to this class. Avi drew from the knowledge that he developed throughout the *Padres Líderes IV* program to indicate that by striving to improve students' academic achievement, all students would have the opportunity to perform at these new standards, particularly as the new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) policy came into effect. In this third draft, the group also postulated that by ensuring that all students were scholastically prepared for the school year, the student body and school district as a whole would be positively impacted. They presumed that their district's foci on improved academic performance would overall yield a student body that was adequately prepared for a college education and that this would propel students toward attaining a better future and wellbeing for their families and communities. These parents' belief that their students' college education would uplift their family and community is reflective of Latin Americans communal culture and trust in the role of education for upward mobility (Hill & Torres, 2010).

Moving towards their final draft, the body of parents' letter was slightly altered; their ideas remained, but the structure was improved to read more clearly. Prior to and after reading the third draft, Avi commented that their letter needed to be further edited for succinctness. The group approved, particularly after Marina informed them that it took Avi three minutes to read the draft, which was the max allotted time that speakers were permitted for their presentations. The group was concerned that their speaker would be at risk of getting cut off by the school board members before they finished reading their letter. On several occasions, the coordinating team warned them that a timer would begin counting

down once they started presenting and that after it reached the three-minute mark, they would be asked to stop, regardless of whether they were finished or not. Avi agreed to further polish and condense their letter so that it was succinct but still inclusive of their ideas. The group as a whole did not get to see these additional edits because they took place after their session 12 graduation ceremony. However, they entrusted Avi and Natalia with the executive decision regarding the final tweaks that needed to take place. The final body of their letter reads as follows:

Estoy aquí para expresarles mi preocupación hacia los alumnos con bajo rendimiento académico que a veces por razones económicas, salud, familiares ó de lento aprendizaje se van atrasando académicamente. Es por eso, mi recomendación para que con los fondos de control local LCAP se ofrezcan programas de Verano Escolar Académicos que les brinde ayuda en las áreas de Ingles, Matemáticas, Escritura y Lectura. Sabemos que esto es de suma importancia, a nivel elemental proveer una base solida de educación que prepare a nuestros hijos, para que en junior high y high school tengan acceso a clases avanzadas que los preparen para ir al colegio y la universidad. I am here to express my concerns regarding students who are academically underperforming that at times fall behind due to economic, health, family situations or due to learning disabilities. It is in light of these reasons that I recommend that the funds derived from the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) are utilized to offer summer academic programs that will help these students with English, math, writing, and reading. We are aware that it is of dire importance for our children in elementary school to be provided with a solid academic base so that in middle school and high school they have access to advance classes that will prepare them to go to college and the university. (Appendix J, Lines 12-29)

This group's final letter remained relatively close to what they had previously agreed to. It was, however, better organized and more succinct. In Week 9, the parents stressed that, during the summer, they wanted students to receive academic assistance, instead of simply childcare or entertainment. Avi underscored the group's focus on academic preparation by specifically adding the subjects that the parents had observed their children struggling with (e.g., English, math, writing, and reading). Significantly, Avi voiced that, as a group, they were aware of the invaluable role that a solid elementary education had on students' futures.

He professed that, as a group, they were conscious that students needed to develop a solid academic foundation in elementary school in order to remain on a college pathway. He also expressed their understanding that if students were not adequately prepared early on, they would not have access to the classes that would prepare them for a college education (e.g., the A-G course requirements). In a single sentence Avi, encapsulated the reasoning that motivated parents to advocate for summer academic programs and why they found it significant. Most importantly, he conveyed that they were aware of how students were being tracked out of a college pathway and how these programs could help students combat the external and internal factors that they face in order to perform as needed. The group then closed their letter by stressing that by working in collaboration, both parents and educators could ensure that students attained the academic success that they so rightly deserve. This theme of joint collaboration is discussed in the following chapter five.

In sum, the coordinating team and guest speakers collectively echoed the founding role that students' elementary education had on their college pathways. Through multi-efforts, they strived to help nurture the parents' concientización of the different factors that track students out of college. The group on summer academic programs thematically progressed their critical awareness of student tracking into their letter, which deeply influenced the need, significance, and target audience for their LCAP proposal. As a group, they voiced their awareness of the dire importance that receiving a solid elementary education had on students' futures and how underperformance tracked students out of a college pathway by denying them access to the A-G courses. The group theorized that summer academic programs would help students perform at the new levels expected of them through the CCSS. They conceded that several external factors affected the way that

students performed academically and that these services should be made available to all students who express a need. The parents attested that students' attainment of a higher education would ensure a better future and wellbeing for the families of their community. Overall, they agreed that summer academic programs would have a positive impact in students' academic achievement and that the absence of these services would allow for a cycle of underperformance that progressively derailed students from a college pathway. The parents' individual and collective critical awareness of these various issues enabled them to utilize their *concientización* as an information arsenal from which they drew to guide the need, significance, and direction of their group efforts.

In relation to theme two, multiple comprehensive events helped shift the parents' perspectives of their local school board public hearing from a space they should fear to a civic engagement platform where they could exert their voices and be heard. In regards to theme three, the coordinating team and accompanied guest speakers helped influence the parents' sense of feeling heard by underscoring that both parents and educators desired students' academic success and therefore needed to collaborate to jointly accomplish equitable outcomes. In light of the interwoven ways that the coordinating team and parents discussed these two themes, I jointly analyze them in this chapter five. First, I expound on how the coordinating team and guest speakers influenced parents' sense of feeling heard and joint-partnership, then I divulge on how the group on summer academic programs advance these themes in the drafts of their LCAP letter to the school board.

Chapter 5: Parents' Sense of Feeling Heard and Joint-Partnership

Throughout the course of the program the coordinating team took several steps to help foster the parents' understanding of their evolving political ecologies (or their social, cultural, critical, and political capital).³³ Through these efforts they simultaneously addressed parents' emotional attitudes and sense of belonging within these political spaces by encouraging them not to feel afraid or out of place. For example, in Week 2 Natalia stressed to the parents that they unapologetically had the legal right to take up space in their local school board meetings. She emphasized that in order for parents to gain the outcomes that they desired they needed to stay informed so that they could consciously exercise this legal right.

In Week 5 the coordinating team invited Mark, the MALDEF PSP director, to help broker the evolving LCFF and LCAP policies. Mark unpacked these policies in digestible ways all the while underscoring how Latin@ families could be negatively and positively affected by their district's LCAP. The overwhelming majority of the parents did not possess this form of critical capital; they were largely unfamiliar with these policies and did not comprehend how they could affect their families. Mark urged the parents to get involved in their local political processes to ensure that the incoming educational funds were distributed in just ways that also reflected the needs of their Latin@ community. None of the parents had voiced any prior experience in advocating or participating in a local school board meeting, much less a public hearing. This type of civic engagement was not part of these parents' social, cultural, political, or intellectual capital. As a result, the coordinating team decided that it was imperative for them to help the parents get involved in the development of their district's LCAP. They recognized that they were overwhelmed, intimidated, and

³³ For example, they invited influential guest speakers, shared their personal testimonies, presented videos of likeminded parent advocates, produced tools and supported their parent project.

uncomfortable with the idea of advocating at a district level. In response, Natalia expressed her empathy by sharing that feeling intimidated was normal and that she had also felt that way when she first started getting civically engaged. She attested that the school board members were *gente bien sencilla* (real humble people) and that as parents they should not be afraid of them. With this statement, Natalia attempted to humanize the school board members before the eyes of the parents; they later invited two educators that presided over the LCAP hearings to further help the parents identify them as their partners.

The week following Mark's visit, the coordinators announced their decision to submit a request for a fieldtrip during a scheduled school board LCAP public hearing. Maribel explained that as coordinators:

Quisiéramos que ustedes tuvieran la experiencia de que fueran (a la mesa directiva) para que se quiten ese miedo de que "¿Oh eh que voy hacer? Si no tengo opinión no voy," oh esto oh el otro. No. Para que sepan que es de ustedes, es publico y ustedes pueden ir aunque sea para aprender. We want you all to have the experience of going (to the school board) so that you can get rid of the fear of "ohh umm what am I going to do? If I don't have an opinion I won't go," or this or that. No. So that you all know that it is yours, it is a public space and you can all go even if it is just to learn. (Week 6, 0:56:37-0:56:57)

This clip illustrates that the coordinating team responded to parents' observed fears by deciding to scaffold their firsthand experience in their school district's public hearings. They strived to alter the parents' sense of belonging by reiterating that the school board meetings were held in a public space and as members of the community, it unapologetically belonged to them. This also supports that parents' civic engagement in school ecologies is culturally disconnected from the way that Latin@ parents understand their role in schools. This population requires adequate socio-cultural brokering to help them visualize themselves as

agents of change. Another way that the team strived to diminish parents' fears was by socializing them into perceiving themselves as joint-partners in their children's education.

Throughout the course of *Padres Líderes IV* the coordinating team underscored that educators and parents alike share the same goal of wanting all students to receive a quality education. From the onset Mrs. Perez sustained, “*Y eso es lo que cada uno de ustedes quiere y nosotros (como maestr@s), la mejor educación para sus niños*. And that is what we (educators) and each and every one of you want, the best education for your children” (Week 1, 2:00:16-2:00:20). The team persisted that both parties must work in collaboration to ensure students' academic success. Natalia furthered that when parents work in collaboration with educators they are more likely to secure better outcomes for their children. As noted in the background chapter, Latin@ parents hold educators in high regard thus thinking of themselves as their *equals* is a disconnection from their cultural beliefs. However, Latin@ parents' collective culture and strong sense of *familia* (family) is conducive to a parent-educator partnership. The coordinators also emphasized that there was an intertwined relationship between parents' rights and responsibilities. Isabel advised parents that they should not approach schools by saying, “*¡Dame, dame, dame, dame!* Give me, give me, give me, give me!” without considering what their own responsibility was to finding a solution (Week 2, 0:43:16-0:43:20).

While the coordinators promoted a joint-partnership and mutual responsibility, they also cautioned parents from taking on an adversarial approach towards educators. For example, in Week 7 Isabel prompted the parents to recall that one of the program's chief goals was for parents to utilize their action projects to address areas of high-need in their schools. She motioned that their objective, “*Es de trabajar en colaboración con las*

escuelas, okay. Trabajar con las escuelas no contra la escuela, no contra el distrito, no contra los maestros, es una colaboración entre padres, maestros y alumnos. Is to work in collaboration with the schools, okay. To work with the school not against the school, not against the district, not against the teachers, it is about collaboration between parents, teachers and students” (Week 7, 0:16:01-0:16:16). Notably the facilitators encouraged the parents to think of their relationship with educators as joint-partners, not adversaries, who mutually want academic success for their children. To further influence the parents’ sense of belonging and feeling heard, the coordinating team invited two guest speakers to help broker their district’s LCAP processes. In addition to their role as cultural brokers, Yasuri and Avi were also gatekeepers who presided over the public hearings; they each had an influential and decisive role in the structure of their district’s LCAP.

In Week 6 Yasuri, an active member of the Coastland’s school board, eloquently presented in Spanish on the politics in education and on their district’s LCAP developments. Prior to her presentation, Isabel aimed to position Yasuri as a key LCAP figure who could relate to the parents’ needs on a more personal level. She communicated that Yasuri was a child of Mexican immigrant parents who, like them, came from a humble upbringing and was dedicated to serving the Coastland community she was raised in. Yasuri’s upbringing and relatedness fit with the notion that the school board members consisted of humble, good-hearted people. In her speech, Yasuri underscored the importance for Latin@ parents to collaborate in their district’s LCAP developments. She expounded that the public hearings provided a formal space where parents could share how they thought the funds would be best distributed. She further illustrated the importance of the parent-educator collaboration by sharing an incident that had recently occurred in their district.

During a previous school board hearing, a group of Latin@ parents brought forth a case that exposed the way their respective school was acting in violation of their parental rights. She shared with the class that, “*¡Wow! eso es un problema súper grande, súper grande, así que cuando hay algo yo no voy a saber eso si alguien no me dice. Wow! That is a super huge problem, super huge, so when something like that happens I will not know unless someone tells me*” (Week 6, 2:06:55-2:07:08). She also stated that due to the large size of their school district, injustices can occur that are not hastily brought to their attention unless parents ensure that they are. Yasuri affirmed that the school board wanted to hear the parents’ proposals because their lived experiences help them generate valuable opinions that the school board must learn about. She stressed that in addition to voicing their concerns families must also identify ways in which they can be a part of the solution. Through these statements Yasuri communicated that the district not only *wanted* but *needed* Latin@ parents to be civically engaged so that they could work in collaboration to advance students’ education. She also assured parents that English-Spanish translation services would be available at the public hearings to safeguard that they could both understand and be understood. Yasuri’s presentation and sincere inclination to get Latin@ parents civically engaged influenced their sense of belonging. For example, Avi communicated to Yasuri, “*Yo estoy notando que ustedes van hacer eso (el LCAP) como de una manera integral, que todos vamos a poner de nuestra parte. I perceive that you all are going to do that (the LCAP) in an integral way, that we are all going to contribute*” (Week 6, 2:04:22-0:04:28). Through this statement Avi voiced his observation that as a school community they were going to work collectively to create a funding plan that served all students. The group discussions that the team on summer academic programs engaged in, which will be discussed momentarily,

reveal that these parents identified themselves as partners in their children's education and internalized that the school board public hearings were spaces where they could express their viewpoints and be heard.

Pablo, the assistant superintendent for elementary schools in the Coastland School District was another influential guest speaker that, like Yasuri, presided over the LCAP public hearings. Through his impromptu presentation he discussed the importance of Latin@ parents' engagement in their district's LCAP processes; he insistently encouraged the parents to voice their concerns at the upcoming public hearings. Pablo informed the class that the voice of Latin@ parents was missing in their local decision-making bodies. He further stated that Latin@ children were falling behind, in comparison to their peers, and although he was using his position of power to advocate for them, he needed Latin@ parents to collaborate by voicing their concerns via the school board public hearings. Pablo noted that in these hearings parents often came to voice their opinions, however, most of the time they were not Latin@ parents. He added that these parents were asking for specialized programs and resources that would advance their children, without recognizing how Latin@ children would be negatively impacted. Pablo declared that unless Latin@ parents became a part of the conversation decisions would be made that would not be in the best interest of their children. He affirmed that he vigorously worked behind the scenes to advocate for the needs of Latin@ students and their families, yet he often found himself alone. He urged parents to actively learn more about how the U.S. education system works and how funds are generated at state and local levels so that they could consciously utilize their voice. Pablo concluded his speech by imploring, "*Yo no puedo hacerlo solito, los necesito a ustedes. Y espero verlos a ustedes trabajando juntos, y unidos para estos cambios.*" I cannot do this alone, I need all of

you. And I hope to see you all united and working together for these changes” (Week 11, 0:05:28-0:05:41). Through this statement Pablo genuinely epitomized that he *needed* Latin@ parents to unite so they could work alongside educators to help meet the needs of their community.

Evidently, both Pablo and Yasuri utilized their positions of power to help parents conceptualize their local public hearings as a civic engagement platform where they *could* and *should* exert their voices. They affirmed that their district not only *wanted* but *needed* the presence of Latin@ parents to help ensure that their LCAP also met the needs of the Latin@ community. They further exhibited that parents and educators alike aspire for students’ academic success. As gatekeepers they helped lessen parents’ fear by being the familiar faces that they could recognize and feel connected to during the public hearings. Overall, they genuinely encouraged the parents to exert their voices, in their own native language, within their local political ecologies to collectively bring about change.

In addition to inviting gatekeepers to help broker, welcome, and motivate the parents, the coordinating team took additional measures to help them feel less intimidated by these public hearings. Throughout the program the coordinators echoed their school district’s desire for Latin@ parent representation. For example, in Week 6 Isabel attested that their superintendent was actively creating outreach opportunities for Latin@ families to come forth, take a stand, and advocate for their LCAP priorities. Later in Week 9 she illustrated that the voices of Latin@ parents was like *un martillo* (a sledgehammer) to the school district; in essence, it was really powerful. She continued that the parents from their neighboring school, which was majority Anglo, constantly submitted letters advocating for their LCAP priorities. She then utilized this message to underscore that both their school

board members and the superintendent's team had a fervent desire to hear from the Latin@ community. In Week 6 the coordinating team created a flyer that included the names, photos, and positions of all the school board members and presiding representatives of the LCAP public hearings (e.g., superintendent and assistant superintendents). When asked by the parents why they had received this document, the coordinating team explained that they wanted them to be familiar with all those chairing the hearings, as not to be intimidated in their presence. They stressed that all these representatives were community members, who like them, wanted to ensure that all students received an equitable education. The coordinating team even rescheduled the parents' fieldtrip to the week following their graduation ceremony, which provided them with an additional month to prepare strong proposals. The coordinators also showed the class YouTube videos of previous school board public hearings in order to help familiarize them with the setting. They discussed the visual layout of these spaces while addressing the rules and norms that took place. After viewing the layout the parents appeared even more apprehensive. Isabel noticed their angst and assured them, "*No no es corte, no es corte*. No no it is not a (legal) courtroom, it is not a courtroom" (Week 9, 0:38:28-0:38:34). Relieved, the parents responded with laughter while voicing that the school board meeting room did indeed resemble a legal courtroom. Finally, to help parents' visualize themselves advocating within these political spaces, the coordinating team presented YouTube videos of other local Latin@ parents, who in Spanish, presented their LCAP proposals in previously held public hearings. Much like themselves, these parents belonged to other *Padres Líderes* chapters in their district and advocated for similar needs (e.g., school safety, ELL student reclassification). Isabel explained to the class that by showing them these videos they wanted parents to internalize that it was possible for

Latin@s to exert their voice within their local political spaces. She also wanted to demystify the belief that only Anglo and English-speaking parents were capable of advocating in these venues. In support, Isabel declared, “*Queremos que tengan esa confianza de poder ir y sentarse y mirar lo que están haciendo o de poder ir a pedir algo. We want you all to have the confidence to go, take a seat, and observe what they are doing, or to be able to go and ask for something*” (Week 9, 0:05:36-0:05:46). This clip further supports the coordinators’ willingness to help the parents feel confident, unapologetic, and unafraid to exert their voices within their local political ecologies. It also exemplified their commitment to helping them recognize their efforts as part of a larger Latin@ parental movement.

Overall, the coordinating team worked diligently to help shift the parents’ perspectives of their local school board public hearings from a place that they feared to a civic engagement platform where they could exert their collective voices and be heard. These included inviting cultural brokers/gatekeepers, consistently emphasizing their district’s need for Latin@ representation, fieldtrip logistical modifications, the creation of brokering tools, and helping parents to visualize themselves as part of a larger movement. Through these various approaches, the coordinating team and guest speakers helped to develop parents’ social, cultural, critical, political, and intellectual capital. In the following pages, I demonstrate how the group on summer academic programs utilized their funds of knowledge and forms of capital to negotiate the themes of feeling heard and joint-partnership into their accompanied drafts.

In Week 9 the coordinating team assigned all groups two worksheets to help them brainstorm how to approach and address their areas of high-need (see Appendices C1-2 and D1-2). After defining their problem statement, Mrs. Perez asked the group to identify some

possible solutions for improving students' academic achievement. Marina suggested that their school district should offer students more instructional assistance, and her group agreed with this recommendation. Avi then proposed that as a team they should *ask* the school board to reinstate the summer academic classes that were previously offered to students before the severe district- and state-wide budget cuts. The group then debated about how they should word the actions they intended to take. Avi suggested that they should *ask* or *inform* the school district of their needs, while another mother proposed that they ought to *voice* their concerns. Eduardo then advised that they must *demand* for their needs to be addressed. The group immediately responded with laughter, using it as a tool for disapproval, and struck down Eduardo's suggested approach. In a light manner Sabrina stated that "*Te (el distrito escolar) van a decir 'bye', te van a decir 'bye', y te vas.* They (the school district) will say 'bye' to you, they will say 'bye', and you will go" (Week 9 Group 4, 0:37:27-0:37:31). The group agreed with Sabrina that a presumably aggressive approach would result in the district's dismissal of their proposal. The group proceeded to discuss how they should build their case to *request* the reinstatement of summer academic programs. Eduardo was dissatisfied with the way his team overruled his suggestion and advocated once again for a more insistent approach. The following transcript reflects how his group responded (Week 9 Group 4, 0:38:02-0:38:12):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 Eduardo: <i>Yo pienso que si se debe de,</i>
 2 <i>como resistir, pero con buenos modales.</i>
 3 <Parent participants voiced their agreement>
 4 Avi: <i>Bueno, eso seria una manera,</i>
 5 <i>como solicitar, reiniciar.</i>
 6 Reyna: <In agreement with Avi>
 7 <i>Pedir pero no exigir.</i>
 8 <Parent participants voiced their agreement></p> | <p>I think that we should,
 like resist, but with good manners.

 Well, this is a way to do that,
 like by soliciting, reinitiating.

 Asking but not demanding.</p> |
|--|--|

This clip reveals Eduardo’s belief that civically resisting their social condition made for a good approach (L1-2). His group agreed with him but underscored that by describing their group actions with assertive terms, like *soliciting* the reinstatement of summer academic programs, they would in fact be resisting in a diplomatic way (L3-8). Eduardo agreed with their reasoning and no one else verbally opposed this approach. This clip demonstrates that the parents were critically aware that the type of discourse that they would utilize to resist their social condition would render them with different treatment and success; these strategies are indicative of their *communicative* and *political capital*. Throughout their drafts, group four proceeded to use assertive terminology to portray their actions, while resisting aggressive discourse. Words such as *express, opinionate, comment, respectfully solicit, recommend, and reiterate*. As previously expounded, the coordinating team consistently encouraged parents to resist an adversarial approach by prompting them to identify themselves as joint-collaborators in their children’s education. This group arguably endorsed this ideology by immediately refusing what could be considered an aggressive approach, even when it was presented by one of their members.

In Week 10 the coordinators provided the parents with 22 minutes of class time to work on their first draft. After recording their introductory statement, Nuvia transitioned towards the body of their letter. The following transcript captures the complex exchange that took place as this group decided how to describe the way they understood the orientation of their advocacy work (Week 11 Group 4, 0:12:58-0:13:51):

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 Nuvia: “ <i>Y estoy muy orgullosamente</i> | <Dictating what she last wrote> |
| 2 <i>representando</i> ”= | “And I am proudly representing”= |
| 3 Sabrina: <i>Padres Líderes.</i> | <i>Padres Líderes.</i> |
| 4 Avi: <Reading off Nuvia’s sheet> | |
| 5 <i>Representando.</i> | Representing. |
| 6 Avi: <Stops to respond to Sabrina> | |

7	<i>Ya dijo que "Padres Líderes" ¿No?</i>	She already said “ <i>Padres Líderes</i> ” no?
8	Avi: <Continues organizing sentence>	
9	<i>Representando, ah podría ser ah oh=</i>	Representing, uh it could be uh um=
10	Nuvia: <i>Ah ah representando a muchos-</i>	Uh um representing a lot of-
11	<i>[a muchos. Natalia: Representando-a.</i>	[a lot of. Natalia: Representing-umm.
12	<i>Sabrina: A muchos programas].</i>	Sabrina: A lot of programs].
13	Natalia: <i>Ahh estoy representando a</i>	Uhh I am representing
14	<i>padres que a lo mejor no tienen la</i>	parents that perhaps do not have
15	<i>oportunidad=</i>	the opportunity=
16	Sabrina: <i>De-de venir.</i>	To-to come.
17	Avi: <i>De expresarse=</i>	To express themselves=
18	Natalia: <i>A pesar de que usted es solo una</i>	Even though you are only one
19	<i>persona su vos es la de otros veinte</i>	person your voice is the voice
20	<i>[padres que a lo mejor no pueden</i>	of another twenty [parents that perhaps
21	<i>estar aquí.</i>	could not be there.
22	Avi: <Agreeing with Natalia, dictates to Nuvia what to write>	
23	<i>Estoy representando a padres]</i>	I am representing parents] on there
24	<i>allí póngale “a padres- [a padres</i>	write down “parents- [parents,
25	<i>Sabrina: yo so el ejemplo.] que no</i>	Sabrina: I am the example.] that do
26	<i>tienen oportunidad de expresar=</i>	not have the opportunity to express=
27	<i>[Avi & Natalia: sus necesidades”]</i>	[Avi & Natalia: their needs”]
28	<The group agrees and remains in silence as Nuvia writes>	

This transcript supports that this group interpret the school board public hearings as a space where they could both *express* their concerns and act as the *representative* voice of other parents. They felt responsible to not only advocate for their immediate concerns (L1-7) but also serve as the voice of other parents who shared their needs but did not have the opportunity and/or forms of capital/funds of knowledge to engage their local political ecologies (L9-17). Natalia reminded the group that even though the speaker was addressing the school board members in first-person, through their collective letter they were projecting the voice of a greater number of parents that could not be in attendance (L18-21). With this statement, Natalia conveyed that regardless of who served as their group’s reporter, their letter encapsulated the voice of their team and that of a larger parent-need. In agreement, Avi asked Nuvia to transcribe, “*Estoy representando a padres que no tienen oportunidad de*

expresar sus necesidades. I am representing parents that do not have the opportunity to express their needs” (L23-27). She instead wrote “*estoy orgullosamente representando apadres quenotienen la oportunidad de participa. Susnecesidades*. I am proudly representing parents that do not have the opportunity to present their necessities” (Appendix G1, Lines 11-13). It was common for Nuvia to record slightly different messages from what her group suggested or she herself had agreed to. The multiple instances of latching (see lines 2, 9, 15, 17, 26) and overlapping speech (see lines 11-12, 20-23, 24-25, 27) made it difficult for her to document their *in-vivo* suggestions. In her first and second drafts Nuvia had several spelling errors and run-on and incomplete sentences that her team encouraged her to overlook in order to use their group time to focus on capturing their collective ideas (see Figure 8). This clip overall supports that the coordinating team identified the school board public hearings as a space where they could *express* their collective concerns and act as the *representative* voice of other parents; this authorship is indicative of growths in their cultural capital. Towards the beginning of the program these parents were unfamiliar with how their local school board operated, and they were also intimidated by the concept of engaging these spaces. The data indicate that the coordinating team and key guest speakers helped the parents to identify their local political ecologies are spaces were they belonged and as a platform were they, as advocates, could express their concerns and those of other likeminded parents.

As previously mentioned, in Week 11 Nuvia copied their first draft onto a new sheet for legibility; this second draft had very minor edits (see Appendices G1-2 and H1-2). After hearing the letter read out loud, the parents agreed that it lacked clarity and continuity and needed to be re-organized. The group decided to have Avi take the lead in creating their

Figure 8: Nuvia Transcribing her Group's Ideas *In-vivo*.

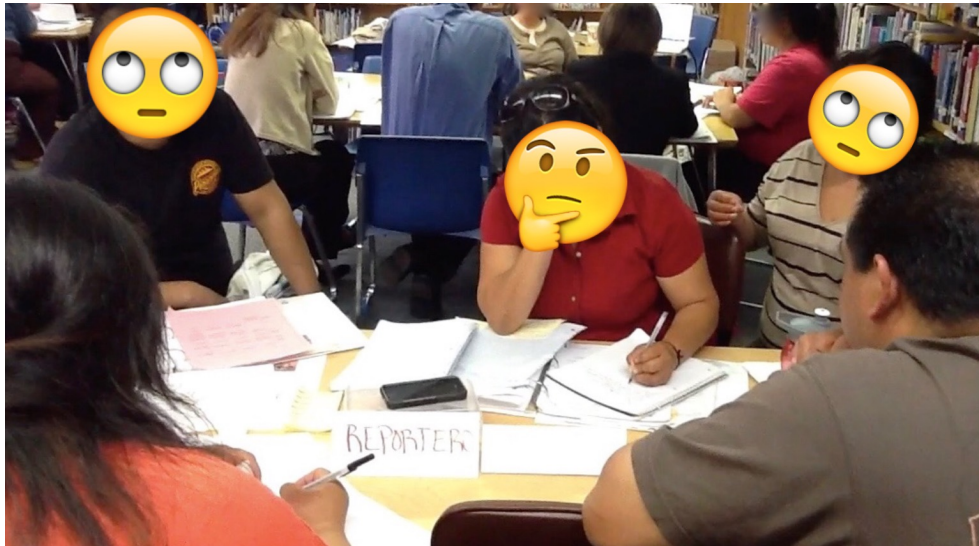


Figure 8. In this image, Nuvia (in center of photo) is deeply concentrated trying to jot down her group's ideas *in-vivo*. Sabrina (her left) and Avi (to her right) are thinking of ways to word their suggestions.

third draft. He accepted and assured the group that he would not change their ideas but instead organize the letter to better reflect what they previously agreed on. In Week 12 Avi read to his group the letter he drafted. The team unanimously approved of this version and thanked him for his notable effort in bringing their voices together. With this draft the group agreed on more specific wording to capture their intended actions. For example Avi began their introduction by voicing that “*Es un privilegio para mi tener la oportunidad de expresarles nuestras inquietudes escolares sobre la educación de nuestros hijos.* It is a privilege for me to have the opportunity to express to you all our academic concerns regarding the education of our children” (Appendix I, Lines 2-5). Here he established that as a group they were united by their collective concerns that would be *expressed* through the voice of their reporter; this sentence remained unaltered in their final letter. The concept of

unity was particularly important to this team. For example, Reyna declared that there was a piece of each of them in the letter. Avi then started the body of the third draft by remarking, “*Mi comentario es principalmente para solicitarles respetosamente en la medida de sus posibilidades y recursos la reinstalación de los cursos académicos de verano para los alumnos con bajo rendimiento escolar.* My chief comment is to respectfully solicit, within the extent of your possibilities and available resources, the reinstallation of summer academic courses for students that are academically underperforming” (Appendix I, Lines 11-15).

This text supports that the group perceived the school board public hearings as a space where they could *share* their comments and *solicit* funding support for their proposal. In their final letter Avi stayed relatively close to their previous draft; he slightly altered the body by opting for a more succinct and direct approach. For example, he *expressed* their concerns for underperforming students while confidently *recommending* that the school board utilize the incoming LCAP funds to offer students’ academic assistance over the summer. By offering their *recommendation*, instead of just sharing their concerns, this group implied that through their collective knowledge they had arrived to a solution for student underperformance that their school board needed to take into consideration. This negotiation is reflective of parents’ critical, political, and communicative capital (See Appendices I and J).

Furthermore, when discussing their third draft the group agreed on starting their closing paragraph by stating, “*De ante mano agradezco su atención y comprensión a nuestras opiniones como padres de familia.* I thank you all in advance for your attention and comprehension towards our opinions as parents-of-families” (Appendix I, Lines 34-36).

This sentence was included and unaltered in their final draft (see Appendix J, Lines 30-32).

Here the group agreed on thanking the school board members in advance for their

foreseeable attentiveness and understanding towards their concerns. This may seem forward, however considering the initial apprehension that the parents exhibited (e.g., associating the venue to an intimidating legal courtroom), this text hints that the efforts made by the coordinating team and guest speakers to help parents feel *heard, understood, and needed* within these political spaces were indeed internalized by the parents. Avi concluded their third draft by stating (Appendix I, Lines 36-41):

1 <i>También reitero que estoy dispuesto a</i>	I also (want to) reiterate that I am
2 <i>trabajar en lo que mi</i>	willing to work in whatever
3 <i>parte corresponde para lograr</i>	my part dictates in order to
4 <i>conjuntamente la educación</i>	jointly achieve the education
5 <i>que deseamos para nuestros hijos</i>	that we all desire for our children
6 <i>y les brindemos la educación</i>	so that we can provide them with
7 <i>que se merecen.</i>	the education that they deserve.

This conclusion reveals three important concepts: 1) the embodiment of the intertwined relationship between parents' rights and responsibilities, 2) the belief of a joint-collaboration between parents and educators, and 3) the confidence that both parties share the same goals. Speaking as the representative of their group, Avi emphasized that as parents they were committed to working alongside educators to mutually address student underachievement (L 1-4). This text exposes this group's embodiment of the intertwined relationship between parents' rights and responsibilities that the coordinating team and guest speakers motioned throughout the program. These parents not only wanted to voice their concerns, but they also wanted to be part of the solution. This group also agreed on discourse that presented them as joint-collaborators in their children's education (L4). Throughout the program the coordinating team and key guest speakers echoed that parents and educators must work in collaboration to ensure that students receive an equitable education. In fact, the facilitators cautioned parents from taking an adversarial approach by reminding them that the aims of the

program and their action-project was not to cause a revolution, but instead to develop their abilities to work in collaboration with their respective schools. Through this text the group also affirmed their belief that parents and educators were not each other's adversaries; on the contrary, they both desired a quality education for their students (L 5-7). The concluding paragraph in the group's final letter remained relatively the same. Avi slightly modified the wording in the last sentence for succinctness, while staying true to their agreed text (see Appendices I, Lines 36-41 and J, Lines 33-37). Overall the group's discourse and accompanied drafts illustrate that the parents adopted ideologies of mutual responsibility, joint-collaboration, and shared goals between parents and educators, all of which likely influenced their sense of feeling *heard*, *understood*, and *needed* within these political ecologies. The negotiation of this text indicates developments in parents' cultural, social, and communicative capital.

The data further indicate that this group perceived the school board public hearings as a space where they could communicate their concerns, even though they knew that they were not going to receive an immediate vocal response to their proposal. In Week 10 the group collectively worked on the first draft of their letter. As they neared the end they discussed amongst themselves which letter closing term they should use. They initially agreed on "*respetosamente esperamos su favorable respuesta*. We respectfully await your favorable response" (Week 10, 0:20:54-0:22:07). Natalia refuted the parents' choice; she reminded them that one of the norms of the school board meetings is that the members do not provide a response. Each speaker is given the opportunity to address them for three minutes, however, they do not provide any feedback. Avi suggested that they should change "*su favorable respuesta* (your favorable response)" to "*su favorable atención* (your favorable attention)",

which received the group's approval. With this change they insinuated that even though the school board members were not going to engage them in conversation, they would, however, give them their attention and hopefully favor their proposal. Immediately after coming to an accord, the coordinators resumed the class, which impeded the group from further discussing other approaches that they could have taken to request a response outside of the constraints of the public hearings. Apart from Eduardo, the group was rather content with not receiving a response to their proposal. This may have been partly due to when, in Week 6, Yasuri explained to them that after the community members presented on their proposals, the school board privately delegated which requests they were able to support (Week 6, 1:45:27-1:45:42). Neither Yasuri nor the coordinating team discussed any follow-up actions that the parents could capitalize on beyond the scope of *Padres Líderes IV* that could have further advanced their proposal.

In their third draft the group moved away from their previous letter closing statement that read "*respetosamente esperamos su favorable atención*. We respectfully await your favorable attention" opting instead for "*Gracias y buenas noches*. Thank you and goodnight" (See Appendices H1, Lines 26-27 and I, Line 42). Avi closed their final proposal by stating "*Muy buenas noches. Atención, Avi*. Have a very good night. Attentively, Avi" (Appendix J, Lines 38-40). This closing statement reflected the group's understanding that it was not going to receive a vocal response, yet they would remain attentive to how their proposal transpired. The parents' growing understanding of how the school board and the public hearings operate contributed to their evolving cultural, political, and critical capital; their deliberate decisions to strategically modify their written language to improve their chances of endorsement embodies their communicative capital in action.

It is important to note that these parents were not naïve in thinking that one visit would garner the outcome that they wanted. For example, in Week 11 Avi advised his group “*Pero acuérdense que posiblemente en la primera instancia van a decir que ‘no.’ Ósea, va para la segunda.*” But remember that it is likely that in the first attempt they will say ‘no.’ Therefore we will have to give it another take” (Week 11 Group 4, 0:09:21-0:09:27). Here Avi drew from his critical awareness of how politics work (political and critical capital) to argue that as a group they would likely have to continue advocating for their proposal. He then used a Spanish *dicho* (idiom) to underscore that due to the anticipated resistance “*va para la segunda*” or “they would likely have give it another take”. Overall, Avi reflected critical consciousness of the often elongated political processes and the importance of their unity and persistence.

In sum, the coordinating team responded to their contentious political climate by raising parents’ awareness of their LCAP processes and tactfully brokering their emotional and social experience in engaging their local political ecologies (e.g., supporting their parent project, organizing a fieldtrip to the school board, inviting cultural brokers/gatekeepers, sharing their personal testimonies, presenting videos of likeminded parent advocates, and producing tools, etc.). The overwhelming majority of the parents was largely unfamiliar with these policies or comprehended how they could affect their families. This type of civic engagement and critical awareness was not a part of these parents’ initial social, cultural, political, and intellectual capital. The coordinators consciously addressed parents’ emotional attitudes and sense of belonging by encouraging them not to feel afraid or out of place and by helping them to perceive themselves as joint-collaborators in their children’s education. Through these efforts they expanded parents’ forms of capital essential in mediating their

local political ecologies. The group's discourse and accompanied drafts support that these parents perceived the school board's public hearings as spaces where they could express their concerns, share their opinions, and offer their recommendations, all of which would be greeted by the district leaders' attentiveness and comprehension. The parents' deliberate decisions to select discourse that reflects mutual responsibility and partnership is indicative of their communicative, political, and intellectual capital in-the-making. The fact that these parents would not receive an immediate response to their proposal did not diminish their sense of belonging and feeling heard.

Chapter 6: Patterns In The Strategic Activation and Utilization of Parents'

Mediational Tools

Thus far I expounded on the various ways that parents utilized their mediational tools to collectively negotiate key themes discussed throughout the program into the body of their LCAP proposal. Thoroughly appreciating parents' thematic negotiation requires distinguishing patterns in the tactics that they employed to accomplish their individual and collective goals. In this chapter, I expose key patterns in how the parents in this study deliberately activated and utilized elements of their funds of knowledge and forms of capital to mediate their group approach (refer to Table 4).

One of the most influential utilization of the parents' funds of knowledge was their ability to draw from their *lived experiences* to negotiate the progression of their letter; they strategically spoke in first-, second-, and third-person to advocate for the inclusion of key topics in their proposals. Parents mainly spoke in third-person to explicate their lived

observations of social patterns. They often followed these reflections with the use of hypothetical scenarios; this strategy illustrates their ownership of these concepts all the while helping them to negotiate the progression of their LCAP proposal. For example, Avi regarded that educators tended to associate students' underperformance with their desire (or therefore lack of) to achieve; from this platform he theorized that they gave up on students without delving further into why they were underperforming and how they could adequately support their learning. Using this observed social pattern as *data*, Avi utilized a hypothetical quote from the position of an educator to assert that in that situation they would claim “*No mas lento aprendizaje, no paso*. That student didn't pass because she/he is a slow learner” (Week 12 Group 4, 0:03:55-0:04:01). Avi did not actually hear an educator make this comment, however his lived experiences led him to conjecture what educators in these situations *thought, said, and did*. Avi utilized this interpretation of expected behavior to advocate for the inclusion of external factors in their LCAP proposal. These additions outlined the numerous challenges that parents believed students faced that ultimately affected their academic performance. As a group, they agreed to include these external factors in their proposal as a strategic way to substantiate why summer academic programs were necessary in addressing student underperformance. Another example includes Natalia's strategic decision to encourage Nuvia to transcribe her involvement with PTA and DLAC in their draft. Drawing from her lived experience, Natalia used a hypothetical third-person scenario to communicate that after hearing her affiliations with these organizations the school board members would say “*Ohh okay, esta señora es una señora que si conoce del sistema escolar, sabe*. Oh okay, this woman is a woman that understands how the school system works. She is aware” (Week 10 Group 4, 0:10:20-0:10:26). She marked that these

inclusions in their draft would lead the school board to recognize her as a mother that was highly knowledgeable and engaged in her school. Influenced by her lived experiences, Natalia used this hypothetical scenario to indicate that different inputs in their letter would help them mediated their local political ecologies in more effective ways. Evidently, through the use of third-person hypothetical scenarios these parents reflected their critical awareness of social patterns; their lived observations helped them to anticipate how their audience would respond to their word choice utilized to influence the progression of their LCAP proposal. These parents utilized their presuppositions as reasoning tools to negotiate the text in their drafts in ways that they believed would prompt the school board to favor their proposal for summer academic programs; these calculated decisions features their communicative capital in-action.

When drawing from their lived experiences, the parents spoke in first-person to substantiate their arguments as tangible data derived from their personal occurrences within academic settings. For example, Marina drew from her *school experiences* to affirm that educators had explained to her that summer academic programs had been eliminated because the district-wide budget cuts eliminated the financial resources needed to support the teachers' summer salaries. Marina's lived experiences were received by her group as a testament of truth. From this accordance they proceeded to discuss how they should address their schools' funding issue. As a group they conceded that their best strategic approach would be to align their proposal for summer academic programs with their district's LCAP. Notably, Marina contributed to her group's collective mediational tools by sharing her school lived experiences, which they utilized as data to negotiate the thematic progression their letter.

The data support that parents strategically switched from third- to first-person once they received sufficient contextualization cues that gave them the impression that their group validated their beliefs. For example, in third-person, Avi communicated his understanding that when students missed school due to their summer break, they did not enter the following academic year adequately prepared. After Avi detected the support of his group, through their prosody and paralinguistic cues, he switched from third-person to first-person by revealing that instead of being joyful for the new school year to begin, he was concerned that his child was not adequately prepared for the challenges ahead. Avi's perceived need for summer academic programs was derived from observed patterns that resonated with his lived experiences. The parents' cued mutual agreement gave Avi the assurance that his group shared his lived experiences; this pressed him to confidently switch to second-person. In this tense, he asserted that the parents themselves would feel less concerned about their children's academic transition if these summer programs were in operation. Avi utilized the consensus of their *shared lived experiences* to substantiate both students' and families' need for summer academic programs. Like Avi, other parents spoke in second-person after they received affirmation that their team shared their positionality. Through this tense, they reflected ownership of the issues that affected them as a group and theorized how they would respond with different inputs in place. The use of second-person reflected the speakers' critical understanding of their group's shared beliefs, which was used as a mediational tool to negotiate key concepts in their LCAP proposal. Overall, the parents drew from their funds of knowledge to strategically utilize their lived experiences, both collective and independent, to advance their LCAP proposal. These parents ingeniously drew from their lived experiences and utilized first-, second-, and third-person tense to negotiate the progression of key themes

in their letter; their deliberate decisions to maneuver between tenses reflect their communicative capital in action.

The data indicate that the parents referenced information that they obtained throughout the *Padres Líderes IV* program to negotiate and shape the thematic progression of their LCAP proposal. This pattern suggests that they developed ownership of key concepts discussed in the program that arguably enhanced their funds of knowledge and forms of capital. For example, in Week 8, Avi drew from his lived experiences by correlating students' underperformance to their lack of enthusiasm and motivation to transition into the following academic school year. Immediately after making this claim, Ms. Ibarra shared with the class that statistically, students academically fell behind during the summer break because of the disruption in their academic routine. When the group on summer academic programs met for the first time in Week 9, Avi advocated for these services by focusing his argument on the academic impact that the absence of these programs had on students' learning. He was no longer emphasizing students' motivation or enthusiasm as the culprit for underperformance; instead, he concentrated on the ways that their cognitive development was affected by these repeated gaps of interrupted learning. This shift supports that Avi developed ownership of the information Ms. Ibarra shared in class, this awareness became a part of Avi's funds of knowledge, which he and his group drew from to negotiate the need for summer academic programs. The data demonstrate that the parents reflected ownership of several key concepts discussed in the program, which they readily activated to negotiate their proposal. These included student tracking, CCSS, A-G course requirements, and the LCFF/LCAP. Throughout the first half of program, the parents voiced their unawareness of how these different trajectories, exams, requirements, and policies affected their students.

The *Padres Líderes IV* program enhanced the parents' funds of knowledge and forms of capital that they collectively leveraged to negotiate the significance, need, and target audience of their proposal.

The data elucidate that the parents drew from their political capital, or awareness of how political spaces operate, to anticipate how the school board would respond to them; they coupled their political capital with their communicative capital to negotiate a counter approach that would help them garner their desired objectives. For example, Avi anticipated that the school board would attempt to *dismiss* their request for summer academic programs with the catchphrase that *there is no funding*. He proposed that they should both express their knowledge of these programs previous enactment and their district's increased access to financial resources made possible by the new LCFF. The parents reasoned that by voicing their awareness of these factors through their LCAP proposal their school board would find themselves obliged to listen to their concerns instead of immediately rejecting them. Avi also drew from his political capital to indicate that as a group, they should not expect their sole act of agency to grant them their request for summer academic programs; he maintained that they would likely have to persist by repeatedly engaging their political spaces. Overall, the data supports that parents anticipated that they would be dismissed before they would be listened to or met by their desired action. The coordinating team did not foster their awareness of the contentious and elongated political processes; on the contrary, the parents drew from their own political capital to hypothesize how their district would respond to them and to strategize their counter-approach.

The parents both activated and developed elements of their cultural capital; these growths impacted their collective abilities to more effectively engage their local political

ecologies. For example, Mrs. Perez asked the group to identify ways that they could address their district's funding issue with summer academic programs. Reyna readily drew from her *cultural capital* to suggest that they could hold a *kermes* (Latin@ festival fundraiser) to generate the necessary funds for these programs. Reyna presented her familiarity with *kermeses* as an instinctive and culturally-responsive approach to problem-solving their communal needs for funding in their schools. The group proceeded to discuss how *kermeses* operated differently at their respective sites in order to gauge if this approach would benefit them. Marina and Avi utilized their developing awareness of the LCFF and the impact it could have on their families (critical capital) to remind parents that they did not have to raise the funds themselves; instead they needed to advocate in political spaces so that the incoming funds could be distributed in ways that also met the needs of Latin@ children. Marina and Avi's awareness of their political climate enhanced their cultural capital, which they activated to offer an alternative solution to holding a *kermes*. These parents utilized their developing understanding of how funding in their school district operated and what this system valued as reasoning in order to negotiate their approach and the parameters of their letter in ways that were conducive to how their district handled institutional business. For example, as a group, they collectively shaped their LCAP proposal so that it fell within the eight LCFF state funded areas; this deliberation reflected their political capital (or ability to strategize better ways to reach their political outcomes). Although all of the group members were exposed to the same program content, they were at different stages of their concept ownership. These parents *in-vivo* activated their varied mediational tools in order to leverage and develop their collective forms of capital and funds of knowledge to achieve their group's goal. They clearly benefited from working together because through their conversations,

they realized more critical ways of understanding and addressing institutional business. These findings likewise reveal that growths in parents' critical capital (or awareness of their social condition) compelled parents to enhance other aspects of their mediational tools. Their critical awareness of the LCFF and LCAP policies, and the impact they could have on their families, prompted them to develop elements of their cultural, social, intellectual and communicative capital to achieve their group goals. Parents utilized their funds of knowledge and forms of capital to leverage additional mediational tools to enhance their collective abilities to engage their local political ecologies.

Patterns in the data further affirm that the parents utilized their cultural capital to help each other emotionally prepare to engage their local political ecologies. For example, Avi activated his *lived experiences* to assert that the Coastland School District was not a strict and unapproachable institution that would ignore them. This is noteworthy considering that their school board public hearings were located in their school district building. Avi explained to his group that now that he was more attentive of his children's education, he frequented their local school district's office to address his educational concerns. He upheld that even though they would consider him to be lying, the school board was not as strict or dismissive as he anticipated. Avi's expectations were derived from his lived experiences with Mexican school systems that, according to his familiarity, blatantly ignored parents. The response and treatment that Avi expected from his local American school district was starkly different from the behavior that he had been socialized to understand as was acceptable in Mexico. Avi illustrated that his colleagues shared his expectations of Mexican schools by presuming that they would believe him to be lying about the utterly different experiences he encountered with their local school district. This evolution in Avi's cultural capital converted the school

district into a connection, or part of his social capital, that he readily sought to address his goals. He utilized his own culture clash to mediate the parents' fears and expectations of how their local school district would presumably treat them. He explained to them that when parents showed up to the school district, the secretarial staff would, in a cordial manner, direct them to the individual and/or office where they must go to receive the assistance that they needed. Avi utilized his repeated experiences with the school district to affirm his group that the staff would value their concerns and help parents to address them. He used the development of his own cultural capital to broker the parents' emotional dispositions and expectations when engaging their school and political ecologies. By sharing his experiences, he sought to change the parents' outlook in order to compel them to likewise transform these spaces into resources.

Furthermore, the coordinating team worked diligently to develop the parents' cultural and political capital regarding how the school board public hearings function as an activity system. On several occasions, they reviewed the rules and norms of these public hearings and the actors involved. For example, they stressed that parents must arrive 30 minutes early to sign-up to speak, all public presentations must not exceed three minutes, translators would be available for Spanish-speaking parents, and that the school board would not offer a public response. The parents' group discussions portray that they embodied these key cultural norms and expectations. For example, they were adamant about keeping their presentation below the three-minute mark in order to avoid being cut off. They also recognized that they would not receive a public response, even though not all parents found this acceptable. Overall, the parents both activated and developed new forms of cultural and political capital

to leverage additional mediational tools, negotiate the thematic progression of their proposal, and emotionally prepare each other to engage their local political ecologies.

Themes in the data signal that the parents discussed ways that they could utilize their collective social capital to advance their group goals. For example, Reyna and Nuvia recognized that transcribing their letter by hand was a challenging task; they worried that their proposal would be difficult to read in its handwritten form. They started to identify connections to other community advocates that they could reach out to that could help them to polish and type up their group's letter. Another example includes the group's observation of a connection that they believed Reyna had made with Yasuri in Week 6 when she had presented before the class. Reyna shared with Yasuri an injustice that she had witnessed at her daughter's school where in just one day, over 20 students were suspended. Reyna pressed that this harsh punishment unfairly hurts students because it took them away from their education. Yasuri was stunned that this had happened in their district and noted that she was not made aware of this incident. She assured Reyna that she would speak with her respective principal to address this situation. Avi referenced this past interaction to imply that Reyna had left a lasting impression on Yasuri to the point that she would remember her if she was the one presenting for their group during the public hearing. Avi used this assertion to motivate Reyna to serve as their group's reporter based on the belief that their proposal would be more compelling if it was presented by her. Avi interpreted their exchange in class as an enhancement of Reyna's social capital, which they as a group could tap into in order to mediate their goals.

In addition to their social networks, the parents resorted to other external resources and tools outside of the parameters of *Padres Líderes IV* program that they felt could aid

them in advancing their collaborative efforts. After reading their second draft, the parents were unanimously unsatisfied with their letter. They began to problem-solve how they could improve their draft given that they would not have any more class time to accomplish their objective. Reyna and Natalia proposed that, as a group, they could meet at a local Mexican restaurant to finalized their edits. Avi noticed Reyna's shopping bag that had the logo of a local organization that they both unknowingly belonged to. He identified this space as a resource and suggested that he could change his attendance date to coincide with Reyna's schedule so that after their program meeting they could swap ideas over their letter. Natalia also suggested that they could use Google Docs, a free online website that allows users with email accounts to communally work on a shared document. This strategy fell through because Reyna was the only parent that, aside from Natalia, had a working email account; however, even she was not familiar with Google Docs and did not feel comfortable using this electronic platform to accomplish their group goals. Notably, the parents identified various external resources to problem-solve how they could continue improving their letter outside of the parameters of the program; they evidently decided to have Avi take the lead in writing their third and final draft. They identified Avi's grasp of their ideas and his leadership abilities as an asset to their group. Avi agreed to take the lead role and assured them that he would not change their ideas but instead organize the letter to better reflect what they had previously discussed. In sum, the parents identified networks and other external resources that they could activate to aid them in advancing their collaborative efforts; they ended up agreeing to take advantage of the talents in their group by asking Avi to take the lead role in polishing their letter.

The parents drew from a range of tools and artifacts to advance the thematic progression of their LCAP proposal; more specifically, they identified their PSP binders as a collection of supplemental resources. They utilized these physical tools of mediation to inform and progress their collaborative efforts. For example, when the group gathered to work on their first draft, Nuvia expressed her nervousness to serve as their secretary. Avi assured her not to worry, retrieved the Example of an Effective Letter (Appendix E1-2) from his binder, and motioned that she should use this tool to orient herself. Nuvia did not initially take the tool from Avi; however within six minutes of attempting to write down her group's ideas *in-vivo* she trashed the first sheet and resorted to the tool Avi had encouraged her to use. This tool provided Nuvia with a tangible example of how to structure their draft, which she constantly reverted too. As a group, the parents collectively created drafts of their letters, or artifacts, that were utilized by the parents to progress the thematic development of their LCAP proposal. For example, Avi took home the first and second drafts that Nuvia transcribed to use as guiding tools for writing their third draft. Notably, the parents utilized both physical tools and artifacts that they retrieved from their binders or collectively developed to progress and mediate their collaborative efforts.

The data illustrate that the parents ingeniously utilized several *dichos* (idioms) and *refranes* (idioms) to advance the thematic progression of their letter in culturally responsive ways, express their group unity, and to mediate the emotional climate of their group. *Dichos* are common words or phrases that differ from their literal meaning, and are progressively generated by people within specific sociocultural contexts; some translate across cultures while others are confined to their activity system. The parents in this study employed a wide range of *dichos* to mediate the progression of their letter and to express their group unity.

For example, as a means to motivate Nuvia to transcribe at a faster pace, the parents prompted her to *meterle al acelerador* (hit the gas pedal). They also used the dicho *tu échale* (toss it all in there) to influence her to generously list all of her associations and engagements in her school so that she could present herself as a critically conscious mother capable of collective action. Nuvia responded with, *¿Me estoy echando tacos?* (Am I giving myself too many tacos?) to inquire if she was overstressing her claims, to which her group again responded, *¡Tu échale!* The parents also utilized idioms to unanimously disapproved of the structure and content of their first and second draft. For example, Eduardo remarked that *quedamos un poquito como Cantinflas* (we ended up a little like Cantinflas). He used this *dicho* as a simile to imply that they had failed to concretely communicate their objectives and understanding. Mario Fortino Alfonso Moreno Reyes is an iconic Mexican comedian & film actor who professionally played the role of Cantinflas, a fast-speaking, ingenious and persuasive man that represented the poorer and more common people of Mexico; his status is synonymous with Charlie Chaplin. Eduardo drew from his cultural capital to cleverly use the widely known role of Cantinflas as a cultural idiom and a simile. In doing so, he communicated that even though they had said a lot in their draft, they had failed to say something concrete. The group responded with laughter and agreed that they needed to restructure their letter to more effectively communicate their message. The data indicate that these parents also utilized *dichos* to express the importance of their group's solidarity and collective identity. Even though the parents were initially instructed to write their letters in first-person, they adamantly negotiated the inclusion of a collective voice. They agreed that their *voz* (or the vocalization of their ardent beliefs) came together as one and was represented through the voice of their reporter. The parents conceded that their letter

included *un pedacito* (a piece) of each of their ideas. They affirmed that without group unity *se va todo para bajo* (everything falls apart) and declared that they were going to *hacer bola* (a mass of people gathered for a shared purpose) at the school board public hearing so that they could *echarle porras* (cheer on) their group leader. Evidently, the parents casually utilized a wide range of *dichos* to mediate the progression of their letter and express their unity. The parents did not hesitate or struggle to identify the ideal *dicho* to use in their given situation. This indicates that they could relate to one another at a socio-cultural level and could thus draw from their funds of knowledge and forms of capital to naturally express their positionality and advance the thematic progression of their LCAP proposal in culturally responsive ways.

Refranes (or cultural sayings) are traditional social-cultural phrases that contain a lesson. Like *dichos*, they are generated within socio-cultural activity systems and vary in applicability or translation across ecologies. The parents utilized *refranes* to mediate the emotional climate of their group and advance the progression of their letter in culturally responsive ways. For example, the parents voiced their nervousness as they neared the end of the allocated time that they had to work on their first draft; by then they had mainly managed to get their introduction down and had yet to work on the body of their letter. Avi calmed his group down by utilizing a *refrán* to reassure them not to worry. He affirmed, “*Nosotros somos como un partido de futbol, al ultimo minuto podemos meter un gol. We are like a soccer team, in the last minute we can score a goal*” (Week 10 Group 4, 0:14:27-0:14:38). Through this *refrán*, Avi urged his group not to fret because although they were running short on time, they collectively had all the skills they needed to accomplish their goal. They only needed to remain calm and trust that in the last minute they could score the

goal. Avi's clever utilization of this *refrán* reflected his critical awareness of the emotional climate of his group, which he ingeniously used to calm the angst of his teammates and build up their confidence in a culturally responsive way. The parents then responded with laughter and proceeded to finish their first draft right on time. Other *refranes* included *la unión hace la fuerza* (our strength is in our unity) that was vocalized by Reyna to underscore the importance of their team's unity and collective representation via their LCAP letter. Through the saying, *el entro últimamente* (he eventually made it in), the parents conceded that mediating their political ecologies would require their commitment to see their proposal through. The parents' usage of *refranes* reflected their critical understanding of social patterns; as was the case with Avi who in an effortless manner used the common Mexican expression, "*Si uno no come no entran la letras* (If you don't eat the lessons won't go in). With this *refrán*, Avi casually and cleverly underscored the external role poverty and hunger plays in students' academic performance. He communicated that hunger affects students' focus, which negatively impacts their scholastic achievement. He used the meaning of this *refrán* to assert that educators readily attributed students' underperformance to their intellectual abilities without taking into consideration the various external factors that impact how they perform, such as the economic status of their family. Clearly, the parents utilized *refranes* to advance the progression of their letter and mediate their group's emotional climate in culturally responsive ways. Their pertinent usage of these cultural sayings is reflective of their critical awareness (or critical capital) of larger social patterns and the immediate needs of their group.

The data support that parents utilized *dichos* and *refranes* to communicate their critical awareness of social issues; they also used them to express their group unity and to

mediate the emotional climate of their group. The casualness with which they employ these tools indicates that they considered each other to share similar socio-cultural capital. Both *dichos* and *refranes* fail if utilized outside of an activity system in which the listeners do not understand how the speaker is using the symbolism and meaning of these tools to communicate their message. Through several years of working with this program, I recognized that both coordinators and parents employed *dichos* and *refranes* in nonchalant and resourceful ways to communicate their critical awareness of issues discussed; hence, I expected to find these mediational tools in the data. I was most surprised, however, by the parents activation of their lived experiences to mediate the thematic progression of their LCAP proposal. These parents strategically transitioned from first-, second- and third-person to advocate for the inclusion of key topics in their proposals. They used their lived experiences as data to guide the direction of their collective work and hypothesize how others would feel and rationalize in a given situation. I was also impressed by the way that these parents utilized their PSP binders as a compiled set of retrievable tools. When parents first enroll in the program, they receive a three inch binder with every document that the PSP includes as part of their curriculum. Prior to this experience, I had never actually seen the parents *in-vivo* revert to their binder and utilize it as a database of mediational tools. The PSP binders are clearly useful to them within and beyond the scope of the program. This data also informed how parents take ownership of concepts discussed in class and contrive these concepts to help them achieve their goals. Their *in-vivo* negotiation indicates that this retrievable information is now a part of their mediational tools.

The parents in this study activated various forms of capital to mediate their local political ecologies, each of which helped them to leverage additional ways of *knowing, being* and *doing*. The parents' *concientización* of the impact the LCFF and LCAP could have on their students fueled them to enhance additional forms of capital to mediate their local political ecologies. Hence, developments in parents' critical capital prompted growths in their cultural, social, political, and communicative capital. These parents' need to take political action compelled them to strategically understand how their school board operated as an activity system, such as what norms and practices they would need to adopt to effectively engage these spaces. Their critical, cultural and political understanding was reflective in their deliberate decisions to communicate in effective ways. The parents' *in-vivo* thematic negotiation, through the activation and development of their collective and individual mediational tools, exemplify their intellectual capital in-the-making. Through this range of tools, parents reached new ways of *knowing, being, and doing*. They *knew* that changes in their state and local policies created a dire need for Latin@ parent advocacy; they *saw* themselves as partners and agents of change; and they *believed* that through their *group unity*, they could mediate their local political ecologies and *bring* about change. By activating, developing, and leveraging additional mediational tools, these parents worked to communicate to their school board that they were critically conscious parents capable of collective action. Finding ways to convey *para que sepan que sabemos* (so that they know that we know) guided these parents' decisions

Chapter 7: The Night of the LCAP Public Hearing

As the parents prepared to walk the stage for their graduation ceremony in Week 12, the coordinating team reviewed the logistics for their upcoming school board public hearing that was planned for the following Tuesday night. This was the district's last scheduled public hearing prior to the official adoption of their LCAP set for only two weeks away. Several factors potentially hindered parental attendance. The coordinators were unable to confirm with the parents if their school district would provide childcare accommodations for families that wanted to attend these hearings; it was uncommon for childcare to be provided at the school board meetings considering that parents did not typically attend (likely for that very reason). Throughout the official length of the *Padres Líderes IV* program, the College Pathways Office provided childcare and tutoring services; unfortunately, they were unable to confirm their support for this fieldtrip because it extended beyond the official program timeline and was therefore not accounted for as a budgetary expense. Additionally, the fieldtrip's date and time did not coincide with their staff's availability. Lastly, the coordinating team was unable give the parents an estimated duration of the public hearing; some of the school board meetings were rumored to go into midnight. Considering that this hearing was scheduled on a Tuesday night made it even more difficult for parents to prepare, commit, and feel relaxed attending. As parents of families, they each had to prepare their children for the following school day, both the uncertainty if childcare would be provided and the duration of the hearing added anxiety to an already nervous group of parents. Overall, 12 out of 21 parents from the *Padres Líderes IV* program attended the public hearings; Reyna and Eduardo served as the representatives for the group on summer academic programs.

On the night of the hearing, the parents met at Forest Hill at 5 p.m., having dinner with their families prior to departing. Two staff members showed up from the College Pathways Office ready to provide childcare; they stayed with the children at Forest Hill while the parents carpooled to the school district. They arrived to the district at around 6 p.m., which was roughly half an hour before the hearing was scheduled to commence. Our parents were third in line to register for the public comments section. Roughly 100 Latin@ parents were in attendance representing other *Padres Líderes* chapters and community organizations; so many in fact that there was insufficient seating and many ended up standing for the duration of the hearing. Each parent and/or community member that wanted to present during the open hearing section had to sign up. Prior to commencing, the school board president was provided with the large stack of slips from the individuals that had registered for the LCAP public comments section. He then announced that their speaking time would be reduced from three minutes to two. Instead of giving parents the time that they are assured, the board cut their time to more *efficiently* proceed with the hearings. This concerned our group of parents who had practiced and purposely negotiated their letter to fall within the standard three minute range. Reyna became so nervous that she relinquished her role as group presenter; Monica, a fellow mother from the group on ELL reclassification, readily volunteered to read the group's letter on their behalf. Eduardo was unaware of these developments because he chose to stand in the back and allowed for someone else to have his seat. Monica was one of the parents who originally wanted to advocate for summer academic programs, and she agreed to switch groups when the coordinators requested for parents to support other topics. While working with her team on ELL reclassification, she expressed to Mrs. Ibarra that she lamented that they had to pick only one project when they

were all in fact interesting and important. It is fitting that she volunteered to read the letter considering her initial and continued interest in advocating for this topic.

The public comments section was not streamlined, although the *Padres Líderes IV* parents were third to register they did not present until towards the end of the hearing. A total of 36 parents and two students presented that evening; 27 of the parents were Latin@ while nine were Anglo. The Latin@ parents primarily advocated for parent engagement programs, language access/interpreting services for Spanish-speaking populations, and ELL support and reclassification. Notably, parents from a local parent chapter utilized their two-minute time allocation to give the school board members a *break*. They stood before the board and proudly began singing *De Colores* (Made of Colors), a traditional Latin@ folk song associated with the farm worker movement. The room erupted in melody as parents and students sang along. The school board members, particularly the president, were perplexed as the parents used their cultural tools to take ownership of the hearing and, in doing so, giving them a *break*. This was the only instance during the hearing in which the large bold red numbers counting down their time was blatantly ignored. The *Padres Líderes IV* group started presenting at around 9:00 p.m. and finished by 9:30 p.m.; they waited for more than three hours before they had the opportunity to share their proposals. Our group on summer academic programs was the only group to advocate for this specific need. Immediately after the last of our parents presented, the coordinators gestured for them to discreetly leave the room. They all gathered outside for a brief minute to take a picture and share their experiences (see Figure 9). After the public hearings concluded, Yasuri commented that she had taken notes of the parents' requests and would use these to later

deliberate how and if these proposals could be supported by the LCAP. The parents were overall enthused with

Figure 9. *Padres Líderes IV* Group Picture After the School Board Public Hearing



Figure 9. The *Padres Líderes IV* team gathered for a picture outside of the school district building immediately after presenting their proposals during the LCAP public hearing.

their experience and felt as part of a larger Latin@ parent movement. It was roughly 10:30 p.m. by the time that these parents made it back to their school site to pick up their children. It was clearly a big sacrifice on their part to exert their collective voice in their local political ecologies.

Neither the coordinating team nor the parents discussed any follow-up steps to ensure that their priorities were noted from among the midst of so many parent presentations. Their district's final LCAP included a budget line item to support high school credit recovery programs, which specified summer school services aimed to help students meet the A-G course requirements. These services, however, focus on students at the high school level and not at the elementary level like these parents had specifically proposed. Apart from this line item, the final adopted LCAP did not include any additional support for summer academic programs. Other areas that did receive financial support were translation and interpreter services, English Language Development support for students, a parent resource center, and a position for a director of English Learner and Parent Engagement. Overall, these were notable gains for the Latin@ community.

There are some noteworthy discrepancies in the way that this public hearing operated. For one, the school board made numerous efforts to *project* that they wanted and needed the input of parents and community members in order to create an LCAP that was encompassing of their collective needs. The fact that they did not provide childcare services brings to question how genuine they were, as a whole, about their intentions, or perhaps more so, the type of parents that they wanted and/or expected to hear from and if they would or would not have a need for childcare services. This incident brings us back to the comments that Pablo made during the program in which he communicated that he oftentimes felt alone in his endeavors to advocate for Latin@ families by helping his Anglo colleagues to *get* the struggles and needs of Latin@ families. Furthermore, did the school board frankly want to hear from the parents? Or were they just following protocol? The school board president's immediate decision to cut down the public comment time from three to two minutes hints

that they approached the hearing as an event to get through and not a genuine space that could compel them to consider the decisions that they were making, or perhaps more accurately, had already made. This response embodies the truth in Avi's cautionary *va para la segunda* (will have to give it another take).

Chapter 8: Contributions, Significance and Limitations

This dissertation makes several key contributions to the literature on Latin@ parent engagement: It presents an enhanced theoretical framework, distinguishes parents' vast mediational tools, records the first dual-site parent-teacher coordinator parent program model, and uniquely elucidates the role of *affect* in parent empowerment and parents' possession of communicative capital. In the following pages I address the contributions and overarching significance of this research. I then discuss the limitations of this study and provide my reflections.

IV. Contributions

For this dissertation I build on Barton et al.'s (2004) Ecologies of Parent Engagement. This theory is useful for studying parent engagement; however, EPE has some clear limitations that must be addressed if used to analyze mediation in parent programs. The modifications that I propose are designed to aid scholars in comprehensively understanding the labor that families of color put forth to mediate various spaces. By addressing the limitations of this framework, this ethnography presents a more dynamic and thorough approach to EPE therefore yielding a more effective lens. To be more effective, EPE can include school-oriented political ecologies as a space, adopt an embedded analytical approach, and expand its limited depiction of parents' mediational tools.

Barton et al. drew from CHAT to theorize the concept of *space*; however, they limited their parameters to school-based academic, school-based non-academic, and community/home-base. Through this ethnography, I demonstrate why EPE must include school-oriented political ecologies as well. This added emphasis permits scholars to discern how parents come to understand and resist inequality within political spaces. This study suggests that Latin@ parents are not just the recipients of laws and policies; through their collective endeavors, they help each other become advocates and agents of change in their children's education. The recognition of this space enables scholars to distinguish how advocacy takes form at a grassroots level.

In addition to expanding EPE's conceptions of space, I likewise argue for an *embedded* EPE approach. My findings suggest that in order to value engagement, we need to situate it within the multi-layered and multi-directional ecologies that impact and/or try to influence one another. This enhancement allows researchers to consider how activity systems are embedded within other systems. Barton and her colleagues define parent engagement as the mediation between space and capital; however, these *spaces* where mediation takes place operate within various activity systems that can influence and even constrain the type of activities in which parents engage. Research that examines engagement outside of the overarching power structures that parents work to mediate yields a limited conceptualization of mediation. An embedded approach aids in expounding how various spaces influenced and even constrained the type of activities that the parents in this study engaged in and how they, through their collective endeavors, were not at the mere mercy of their state and local political ecologies. This ethnography adds to the EPE framework by underscoring the way that parents came to understand the embeddedness of various systems.

Parents' awareness of the LCFF and LCAP encouraged them to collectively develop a letter to their school board as a way to mediate the real-life implications that these policies have on Latin@ families.

I furthermore substantiate that in order to fittingly interpret the engagement of families of color within school ecologies, we must conceptualize engagement as the mediation between space and parents' forms of capital and funds of knowledge. Barton and her colleagues drew from Bourdieu's neo-capitalist work to distinguish capital as taking the form of human, social, and material resources that parents have access to or activate to achieve their goals. These findings suggest that Latin@ parents clearly employ more mediational tools than those initially considered by these scholars. EPE's traditional depiction of capital dismisses the many ways that immigrants and families of color support their children's education. By activating and developing their varied mediational tools, the parents in this study collectively worked to impact the activity that occurred in their local political ecologies. Prior to *Padres Líderes IV*, parents did not know how to engage these spaces or that there was even a need to. Through their letter, these parents aimed to mediate, and not just be impacted by, the decisions that took place at their local school district. By analyzing both forms of capital and funds of knowledge as mediational tools, this ethnography helps to validate the ways that parents came to understand their social condition, and that of their children. Additionally, it explored how their *knowing* influenced their collaborative endeavors of resistance. As researchers, we must evaluate what *counts* as mediational tools and press if the parameters set encompass the vast resources and skills that families of color employ. We likewise need to use analytical approaches that allow parents to show us what their mediational tools are and the ingenuity in which they use them. A

forms of capital and funds of knowledge approach allows the voices and experiences of parents to illustrate *how* they work to accomplish institutional business and *what* tools they use and for *what* purposes.

In addition to enhancing existing theory, this ethnography contributes to the literature on parent engagement and empowerment in ways that current scholarship has failed to. This dissertation expounds on the vast funds of knowledge that parents activate and the ingenuity in which they use them. It demonstrates what intellectual capital looks like in-the-making, how parents use and think of their critical capital (*concientización*), and it presents communicative capital as an emergent mediational tool.

Graciela Fernandez (2010) found that parents in a program that adopted the MALDEF PSP curriculum (likewise adopted by the *Padres Líderes* program) dynamically drew from their funds of knowledge, skills, and resources to understand how the U.S. educational system functions. Fernandez's work focused on *what* tools parents draw from to generate understanding, and did not attempt to show what parents *do* with that knowledge and *how* they utilize it to author school spaces. Understanding how parents apply their funds of knowledge to address real-life situations is imperative to identifying ways that educators, scholars, and activists can help parents advocate for their individual and collective needs in ways that are relatable to them. Like Fernandez, this dissertation affirms that Latin@ parents do not, in fact, enter educational spaces as blank vessels ready to be filled. Rather, the parents in this study continuously drew from their lived experiences, program concept ownership, culturally relevant discourse practices (*dichos & refranes*), and tools/artifacts to collectively negotiate the thematic progression of their LCAP proposal. This ethnography

goes further by expounding how parents *in-vivo* utilized their individual and collective understandings to strategize how to best engage their local political ecologies.

One of the most significant uses of the parents' funds of knowledge was their ability to draw from their lived experiences to negotiate the thematic progression of their letter; they strategically spoke in first-, second-, and third-person to advocate for the inclusion of key topics in their proposal. As a group, the parents generated new funds of knowledge and forms of capital; through their collective discussions, they agreed on the significance, need, and target audience of their letter to the school board. The parents constantly referenced key concepts they became exposed to throughout the *Padres Líderes IV* program including student tracking, CCSS, A-G course requirements, and the LCFF/LCAP. The parents relied on their lived experiences to negotiate their understanding of how these different trajectories, exams, requirements, and policies would affect their families in tangible ways. Through their collaboration, they drew from their ownership of these key themes to progress and influence the direction and content of their proposal. Notably, the parents rarely reverted to their PowerPoint slides or content-based information available in their PSP binders to warrant their claims; instead, they drew from these key themes they negotiated and developed by drawing from their lived experiences. In other words, they did not cite decontextualized information; they drew from concepts that were becoming and/or became a part of their individual and collective funds of knowledge. This is likely because their understanding of these concepts were negotiated in ways that were relevant and applicable to their lived experiences. This study also found that parents employed their individual funds of knowledge to help one another forge and leverage new forms of capital. Together, they reached new ways of *knowing, being* and *doing* by challenging what they understood as truth.

This dissertation addresses a notable gap in the literature by revealing how parents apply their combined funds of knowledge and forms of capital to mediate school ecologies.

The literature on Latin@ parents' capital development through parent engagement programs has been largely understudied; yet, Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011) made notable gains towards addressing this gap. These scholars found that two MALDEF PSP programs created conditions that built Latin@ parents' social and intellectual capital, both which are fundamental to the ways that Anglo and Asian parents leverage school resources. Intellectual capital is generally absent in immigrant and low-income families, which hinders their abilities to successfully engage in collective action to negotiate power and resources within school spaces. Although these scholars found that parent programs can create conditions where intellectual capital is developed, they did not attempt to document how it comes into existence. This dissertation addressed this gap by expounding how parents *in-vivo* activate and ingeniously employed a wide range of individual and collective mediational tools to negotiate the thematic progression of their LCAP proposal. In socio-culturally relevant ways, they helped one another to develop new ways of knowing, being and doing, which enhanced their individual and collective forms of capital. These forms of capital were instrumental in their abilities to negotiate and advance their group goals. The parents' collective negotiation of key themes in their letter, through the activation and development of their mediational tools, shows both the production and reflection of their intellectual capital in-the-making.

Auerbach (2004) made notable contributions to the literature on parent engagement by showing that programs *can* foster parents' development of critical capital. This study adopted an outcome-base approach rather than illustrate what critical capital looks like in-

the-making. Understanding how critical capital (or *concientización*) is activated and developed is significant to the field of Latin@ parent engagement as it highlights how parents' critical consciousness of their social condition empowers them to act as agents of change. This dissertation builds on parent engagement literature by expounding how parents come to think of their own consciousness and leverage it to accomplish their collective goals.

The parents in this ethnography relied on their critical capital as a tool for strategic alignment, mediation, and as an information arsenal that they drew from to negotiate the content and parameters of their LCAP proposal. This group's developing awareness of the LCFF and LCAP encouraged them to collectively develop a letter to their school board as a way to mediate the real-life implications that these policies could have on Latin@ families. Through the activation and enhancement of their individual and collective mediational tools, these parents worked to impact the activity that occurred in their local political ecologies. Prior to *Padres Líderes IV*, they did not know how to engage in this way and were unaware of the need to do so. Parents' *concientización* influenced their collaborative endeavors of resistance by aligning their request for summer academic programs with their district's LCAP; these acts of mediation display parents' critical and intellectual capital in-the-making.

This ethnography furthermore provides evidence that parents' act of *presentación* (presenting themselves) was more than a decision to *take up space*, but a projection of their *concientización* and threat of collective action as a personified object of mediation. *Para que sepan que sabemos* (so that they know that we are aware) embodies one of the most significant findings in this study, which conveys the complex and dynamic ways that parents worked to employ and objectify their *concientización*. This group was confident that by identifying their engagement with other programs/committees/organizations they would

indirectly project both their awareness (concientización/critical capital) and threat of collective action (intellectual capital). The parents believed that this demonstration would, in turn, help them to mediate their political ecologies in more efficient and effective ways. They believed that educators would associate their partnerships as an indication of their developed knowledge, access to multiple resources, and treat of collective action. By *presentándose*, parents implicitly indicated that they were critically conscious parents readied with intellectual capital. They utilized this act of projecting their concientización as a mediational tool for the intent of reaching their collective goals. These parents recognized the value of their intellectual capital and strategically negotiated ways to project their unity through their numbers.

Another key finding illustrates parents' discourse practices. Through several group discussions, the parents thematically negotiated specific wording into their drafts that portrayed their awareness of the LCFF and LCAP. These deliberate decisions embody what I distinguish as communicative capital. Communicative capital resembles Dell Hymes's concept of communicative competence (CC). CC refers to the socio-cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills that speakers must possess and be able to exercise in order to communicate appropriately with members in their speech community (Hymes, 1974; Johnstone & Marcellino, 2011). Here, I present communicative capital as more than a speaker's ability, but rather as a mediational tool parents individually and collectively employ to accomplish institutional business. The parents were not members of the school board's speech community; yet they exhibited a critical understanding of the rules and norms that shaped that space. They drew from their cultural, critical, and political capital to negotiate their discourse practices. They utilized these tools to anticipate how the school

board would respond to the language in their proposal. These presuppositions operated as reasoning tools to negotiate the text in their drafts in ways that they believed would prompt the school board to favor their proposal for summer academic programs. These calculated decisions feature their communicative capital in-action as a mediational tool.

In sum, this ethnography reveals that parents' *concientización* was not just a critical state of awareness or an orientation-to-action, but a formable and evolving type of capital that compelled them to activate and leverage other forms of capital (e.g., social, cultural, intellectual, communicative, political, etc.). They identified their *concientización* as an *object* that through their wording, alliances, and unity could be *displayed* and used as a mediational tool. The value that parents placed on their *concientización* emphasizes that parent engagement programs must strive to provide meaningful learning opportunities to parents. Such opportunities can help them develop the knowledge and tools needed to mediate their social condition since awareness without scaffolding does not suffice. Overall, this ethnographic focus on intellectual and critical capital furthers our understanding of parent empowerment and advocacy in ways that research has overwhelmingly failed to do. It also illustrates how parents utilize these combined mediational tools to methodically negotiate their collective voice, or discourse practices.

This dissertation presents the first of its kind dual-site parent-teacher coordinator parent program model, which demonstrates the influence that cultural brokers have on parent engagement. Moreover, the role that *affect* has on Latin@ parent engagement is currently absent in the literature; this study lessens this gap by exposing how addressing parents' emotional dispositions are key in helping them reach a state of empowerment.

The parent programs present in literature vary in implementation models, have different goals and yield different outcomes. Dual-model programs—that bridge both traditional and non-traditional approaches—strive not to only help build parents’ mediational tools, but to engage and empower them to shift the power differential. They do this by contributing to how schools work, so that they too work for Latin@ students. These models, such as the Parent School Partnership (PSP) program curriculum, are largely understudied. As detailed in the background chapter, the PSP curriculum embodies the traditional (involvement) and non-traditional (engagement) dual-model that Arias and Morillo-Campbell’s (2008) pressed as necessary to adequately serve culturally and linguistically diverse parents. This dissertation found that the *Padres Líderes IV* program, which adopts the PSP curriculum, not only increased parents’ mediational tools, it also rendered a space where empowered parents could individually and collectively work with other parents and educators to improve the educational outcomes of their children and schools. Helping parents to recognize their own power as collaborators and agents of change was at the core of this model; it was not a by-product as is the case with a majority of the programs present in the literature.

This ethnography found that families, schools, and students all benefit from parent-educator partnerships. The more mediational tools that parents individually and collectively possess, the greater assets they become to their school and students. Program engagement models must foster and approach parents as contributors and not merely as participants capable of carrying out school business in the ways that these institutions see fit. The dual-site *Padres Líderes IV* parent-teacher coordinator model mutually exemplified the benefits from parent-teachers’ joint-collaboration and shared goals. The program key players

advocated for this teaching approach because they recognized the invaluable resources that both parties brought to the program. The teacher-coordinators had a clear grasp on the policies, processes, and chain of command within their schools and district (forms of capital), while the parent-coordinators understood the cognitive and emotional experiences parents faced as they progressed through the program (funds of knowledge). The parent-coordinators constantly drew from their lived experiences as previous students of *Padres Líderes* to suggest alternative approaches to teaching that would best resonate with the parents. This program model expounds that educators are not the only actors who possess valuable knowledge worth sharing. Parent engagement programs must welcome the expertise of parent leaders so that together they can generate socio-cultural cognitive approaches to teaching and learning that help parents to recognize their own power as agents of change. This study furthermore illustrates the important role that cultural brokers have on parent engagement. Case and point, the parents' abilities and efforts to *author* and *position* themselves as advocates in their local political ecologies were brokered by the *Padres Líderes IV* coordinating team and key guest speakers; together they addressed both their understanding and emotional disposition toward these spaces. Evidently, program engagement models must consider welcoming community leaders that can help expand parents' mediational tools.

As demonstrated in this dissertation, the coordinating team worked diligently to help support the parents' awareness of key concepts (e.g., student tracking, CCSS, A-G course requirements, and the LCFF/LCAP). Most importantly, they recognized that explicating the dire consequences that the LCAP could have on their families and encouraging parents to get involved in their local school board public hearings would not suffice. The parents did not

initially possess the types of capital that would provide them with tools and resources to seamlessly engage their school board in the ways that they handled institutional business. The parent-coordinators recognized that they could not address the parents' socio-cultural disconnect without attending to their emotional dispositions, chiefly because *how* parents feel about their positionality plays a role in their willingness to mediate these spaces. Parents' emotions regarding how they come to *author* academic spaces is largely overlooked. The parent-coordinators drew from their own funds of knowledge to identify and broker the parents' angst in advocating within these political spaces. For example, they orchestrated the invitations of key cultural brokers/gatekeepers, presented videos of like-minded parent advocates and shared their own personal testimonies as once novice advocates. They further socialized the parents' understanding of how the school board public hearings operated to demystify these spaces. They believed that if parents felt familiar with settings, actors and processes they would feel less afraid to express their concerns as a group and also in their future endeavors. The members of Summer Academic Programs also drew from their lived experiences to broker each other's emotional inclinations in these academic spaces. The fact that Avi anticipated that his team would consider him to be lying about the positive experiences that he had with their local school district substantiates how starkly different the parents' understanding of their activity systems was in comparison to the ecologies that they aimed to bridge. Clearly, parental engagement is not just about the dissemination and acquisition of important information but recognizing and addressing parent's emotional dispositions. This study found that parents, part of a culturally responsive parent engagement program, developed a sense of feeling *heard*, *understood*, and *needed* within their political ecologies. The parents furthermore perceived the school board's public hearings as spaces

where they could express their concerns, share their opinions and offer their recommendations, all of which would be greeted by the district leaders' attentiveness and comprehension. This position is noteworthy considering they first associated the school board meeting space to a legal courtroom that ensued fear. Latin@ parents are often expected to engage schools in ways that are disconnected from their ways of *knowing, being, doing* without considering their socio-cultural disconnect and emotional attitudes. Parental engagement efforts must extend their focus beyond the dissemination of information to address parents' emotional dispositions so that they can genuinely author and position themselves as agents of change. In order for parents to reach new ways of *knowing, being, and doing*, they must *believe* that they can *be* and *do*. *Believing* that they can is an emotional experience. This dissertation advises that parent engagement programs must not dismiss the role that affect has in empowerment; *knowing* requires *believing*. Empowerment *is* an emotional disposition.

V. Significance

This dissertation addresses significant gaps in the literature on Latin@ parental engagement. First, it adds to the work of Fernandez (2010) by expounding *how* parents activate and develop their *funds of knowledge* to collectively engage and mediate political spaces. Second, it advances the work of Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011) by showing the parents, through the strategic and tactful negotiation of their mediational tools, intellectual capital in-the-making. Third, this ethnography furthers our understanding of critical capital (or *concientización*) in unprecedented ways. The parents in this study revealed that their *concientización* was more than a critical state of awareness, but a formable and evolving type of capital that could be leveraged, personified, and utilized as a mediational tool. Fourth, I

propose modifications to the Barton et al.'s (2004) Ecologies of Parent Engagement (EPE) framework; these alterations are intended to more comprehensively understand the work that families in parent engagement programs employ to mediate their political ecologies (see Figure 1). This ethnography underscores the notable labor that parents employ to collectively engage their local political ecologies. It uniquely elucidated the role of *affect* in parent empowerment and parents' possession of communicative capital. Overall, this ethnographic study demonstrates how through collaborative efforts and participation in a school-community partnership program, otherwise marginalized parents exert themselves as agents of change by engaging their local political ecologies to address their schooling needs.

VI. Limitations and Reflections

A limitation of this study is its sample size, which affects the reliability of the findings and the implications that can be made to the overall Latin@ parent population. However, in order to address the gaps in the literature in a reliable and rich way ethnography was the most informative approach. As a researcher, I found this data to be mentally stimulating and fascinating; a larger sample size would have taken me away from the intricacies in the labor that these parents performed. I stand by my approach. This research however can benefit from additional observations of this sort (with larger and similar sample sizes) in order to triangulate and better appreciate the diversity in the ways that parents engage and mediate political ecologies to address institutional business.

An observable limitation of the *Padres Líderes IV* program is in the fact that it *is* a program. I do not intend to discount the labor that numerous passionate advocates yearly exerted to make the implementation of this program possible. However, without moving away from a *program* and *class* model we take away any consistency in the schools and/or

district that can remain active to serve the parents. Parent engagement advocates must consider ways to move from program models to organizational models that evolve with the needs of the community and remain accessible to the parents beyond the constraints of a curriculum. As this ethnography has shown, *concientización* is capital, however, like other forms of capital it can be fleeting. National, state, and local policies are constantly changing and with it come new ways to marginalize and oppress. Politics after all is the distribution of resources, decisions are always made on *how* and *who* can access what resources. To put it bluntly, the LCFF and LCAP were going to happen regardless if the parents in this study became aware of it or not, if this program had not intervened, how would these parents have become aware of their social condition or developed the tools needed to engage these spaces? The parents in this group brought this conversation to surface and concluded that they were *conscious* because they were *lucky* that someone reached out to them and informed them about the program, had that not been the case, they resolved that they would have remained ignorant and at the mercy of their decision-makers. *Padres Líderes* was clearly meaningful to this cohort, and previous ones, nonetheless Latin@ parents need the consistency and stability, that is enjoyed by say a PTA program, that can nurture ongoing consciousness, political astuteness and mobilization.

Like Barton et al. (2004), I want to caution us from allowing an *outcome-base* approach to determine the *success* of these parents' engagement. When all was said and done, these parents were not able to secure summer academic programs for their children in elementary schools. That however, does not imply that they did not have much to *gain*. As this study supports, the parents enhanced and developed their forms of capital and funds of knowledge in invaluable ways. They were not idealistic enough to think that one attempt

would garner them the support that they needed. Consequently, even their own focus was on the processes, abilities, and the experiences that they were gaining. Another issue with this model approach was the lack of follow through by both the parents and the coordinating team. Let us recall that the parent projects were organic, in that the coordinating team responded to their contentious political climate and the interest of the parents to support their hands-on experience with addressing these spaces. The decisions that they made were done on a week-to-week basis and with no previous example to draw from. Therefore, the coordinators were unable to provide follow through systems in place that extended and supported the parents' advocacy beyond their scheduled school board public hearing. This was the first time that this team coordinated the *Padres Líderes* program, every week was a mystery and a challenge in and of itself.

Furthermore, this dissertation reveals that parents take up issues in ways that are meaningful to them (as they should). As a researcher and activist I would have liked for them to press into issues of structural inequality; however, that was not genuine to them. They rallied around services that they saw a tangible need for and felt that they could do something about. This ethnography presented a venue where parents could tell us as researchers what their vast mediational tools were and the ingenuity with which they use them. All of the parents' mediational tools are capital and they are all *formal* because they each served them in different ways. As researchers, we need to move away from dichotomizing their funds of knowledge and forms of capital as *informal* and *formal* resources. This approach endorses discourse that sustains systems of structural inequality that dictate whose *capital* has value.

Lastly, this study informs that for Latin@ parents' perceptions of themselves as the educators' *equals* or *adversaries* is disconnected from their cultural beliefs. However, when they perceive that educators share their same commitment and desire to advance their students' education, they are conducive to identifying themselves joint-collaborators. School administrators and paraprofessionals who want meaningful parent engagement and genuinely see each other as partners in education will not interpret parents' *concientización* and intellectual capital as a *threat*, but as a set of invaluable skills and abilities that will aid them in working towards their collective goals. Schools and students all gain from fostering Latin@ parents' abilities to be engaged and not just involved.

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Appendix

Appendix A: List of Padres Líderes Actors and Description

Institutions and Organizations

Coastland School District (CSD)	CSD is the district in which this dissertation study took place.
Pathways to College Office (PCO)	PCO is the outreach office that pioneered the partnership that promoted and sustained the <i>Padres Líderes</i> program.
Palo Duro University	Represents the neighboring institution of higher learning where PCO is hosted.
Community Excellence	Represents the non-profit organization that generously supported <i>Padres Líderes</i> .
Villa High School	Represents a neighboring high school in the Coastland School District.
Dolores Huerta Charter School	This was the school that Ms. Ibarra and Mrs. Perez taught at before transitioning to Forest Hill and Travis Elementary, respectively.
Isabel	Parent-coordinator representing Forest Hill Elementary.
Natalia	Parent-coordinator representing Travis Elementary.
Ms. Ibarra	Teacher-coordinator representing Forest Hill.
Mrs. Perez	Teacher-coordinator representing Travis.

Padres Líderes Key Core Players

Jairo	The College Pathways Office (CPO) director that replaced Margarita.
Margarita	The previous CPO director that left in June 2012.
Leslie	Forest Hill principal during <i>Padres Líderes</i> III and IV.
Shonda	Travis principal during <i>Padres Líderes</i> III and IV.
Pablo	Forest Hill principal during <i>Padres Líderes</i> I & II. Appointed superintendent for elementary schools in May 2012. Served as guest speaker in Week 11.
Reyna	Representative for the Community Excellence Foundation that generously helped fund the program.
Pedro	Professor at Palo Duro University and principal investigator of CPO and <i>Padres Líderes</i> .
Cristina	CPO senior evaluator.

Additional Support Team

Fernanda	Undergraduate student researcher assistant.
Orlando	Undergraduate student researcher assistant.
Karina	Prospective graduate student that served as a temporary research assistant.

Yasuri	School board member during the implementation of <i>Padres Líderes IV</i> , served as program guest speaker in Week 6.
Sandra	Senior <i>Padres Líderes</i> coordinator employed by CPO.
Uciel	CPO Graduate Student Researcher during <i>Padres Líderes IV</i> .
Ali	<i>Padres Líderes I</i> coordinator for Travis Elementary.
Erendira	<i>Padres Líderes II</i> coordinator for Travis Elementary.
Janice	Principal at Travis Elementary during <i>Padres Líderes I</i> .
Mark	MALDEF PSP director during <i>Padres Líderes IV</i> .
Akim	Temporary Principal at Travis Elementary during <i>Padres Líderes III</i> .

Group Four: Parent Advocates

Avi	Adopted the role of group assistant and readily shared his ideas.
Marina	Served as the group's timekeeper.
Reyna	Operated as the group's reporter.
Eduardo	Employed the role of group assistant and readily shared his ideas.
Sabrina	Assumed the role of group assistant and readily shared her ideas.
Nuvia	Served as the group's secretary.
Monica	Volunteered to read the group on summer academic program's letter to the school board during the LCAP public hearing.

Appendix B: Transana Transcription Key

Symbol	Name	Use
[text]	Brackets	Indicates the start and end points of overlapping speech.
=	Equal Sign	(T) Latching of speaker's utterance (when one speaker overtakes from another speaker with no discernible pause or says the same thing e.g., finishing each other's sentences).
(.)	Micro pause	A brief pause, usually less than .2 seconds.
,	Comma	Listing intonation (e.g., more is expected).
-	Hyphen	Truncation (e.g., what ti- what time is it?).
<Text>	Triple parenthesis	Used to give a message to the reader.

Appendix C1: Defining the Problem (Spanish Worksheet)



MALDEF Programa Nacional de Colaboración Entre Padres y Escuelas
Sesión 10: Creando un Plan de Acción



DEFINICIÓN DE UN PROBLEMA

Para ayudar a su equipo a identificar posibles soluciones, es importante primero identificar la raíz o raíces de un problema. Este ejercicio le ayudará a pensar en cuales son alguna posible causas.

¿Qué problema le molesta o preocupa a su equipo?

Q1: ¿Qué piensa que está causando el problema?

A1: _____

Q2: ¿Por qué la respuesta "A1" está pasando?

A2: _____

Q3: ¿Por qué la respuesta "A2" está pasando?

A3: _____

Q4: ¿Por qué la respuesta "A3" está pasando?

A4: _____

Q5: ¿Por qué la respuesta "A4" está pasando?

A5: _____

Si para la quinta respuesta ("A5") de los padres todavía parece que no han llegado a una causa raíz como un problema social como el desempleo, el racismo, la violencia doméstica, etc., entonces determine si necesita más información para aprender más de la problemática.

Si los padres continúan dando soluciones muy simples a un problema complejo, el grupo en si deberá pensar más profundo sobre el tema, y tendrá que seguir preguntando "¿Por qué?"

Para resolver problemas sociales desde la raíz, es probable que requiera de un plan a largo plazo, el compromiso de los integrantes, aliados, y recursos. Aunque el grupo no estará listo para resolver problemas y tomar acción a este nivel, el pensar en el tema, hacer investigación y análisis, le ayudará a guiar la acción que quieran tomar. No importa que tan chico o grande el proyecto es, is esta estratégicamente en línea para empezar a resolver el problema más profundamente.

Appendix C2: Defining the Problem (English Worksheet)



MALDEF National Parent School Partnership Program Session 10: Developing an Action Plan



PROBLEM DEFINITION

To help your team identify potential solutions, it is important to identify the issue's root causes. This exercise will guide you to think about all the possible causes.

What is the problem that bothers or concerns your team?

Q1: What do you think is causing the problem?

A1: _____

Q2: Why is this "A1" happening?

A2: _____

Q3: Why is "A2" happening?

A3: _____

Q4: Why is "A3" happening?

A4: _____

Q5: Why is "A4" happening?

A5: _____

If the fifth answer ("A5") parents provide sounds like a root cause of a social problem such as unemployment, racism, domestic violence, etc., then determine what additional information is needed to learn more about the problem.

If the parents continue to provide overly simplistic solutions for the issue they are studying, the group may need to think deeper and continue asking "why?"

Addressing the root causes of a social problem is likely to require a long-term plan, commitment, partners, and resources. Although the group may not be ready to take action to address the problem at this level, the thinking, research and analysis can help guide their action. However small or large their project is, it is strategic and aligned with addressing a root cause of problem.

Appendix D1: Organizing Your Research (Spanish Worksheet)



MALDEF Programa Nacional de Colaboración entre Padres y Escuelas
Sesión 10: Creación de un Plan de Acción



HOJA DE TRABAJO NÚM. 1 PARA EL PROYECTO EN GRUPO CÓMO ORGANIZAR LA INVESTIGACIÓN

Para organizar toda la información que el grupo ha recopilado sobre el asunto, utilice este formato para tomar notas de lo que se pondrá en la gráfica del grupo. La gráfica que se presenta en la clase de la sesión 12, deberá incluir la siguiente información:

DEFINA el PROBLEMA:

Prioridades mayores del grupo	Sus mayores prioridades	¿CUÁLES SON LAS POSIBLES CAUSAS?	Prioridades del Director
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		¿CUÁLES SON LAS POSIBLES SOLUCIONES?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Enumere todas sus fuentes de información:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Appendix D2: Organizing Your Research (English Worksheet)



ORGANIZING YOUR RESEARCH

To organize all of the great information that the team has gathered on the issue, use this handout to keep notes of what will be in the group's chart, to be presented to the class in Session 12. The chart should include the following information:

DEFINE the PROBLEM:

<u>Group's Top Priorities</u>	<u>Your Top Priorities</u>		<u>Principal's View</u>
WHAT ARE LIKELY CAUSES?			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.	<input type="checkbox"/>
WHAT ARE POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS?			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.	<input type="checkbox"/>

List all of your sources:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Appendix E1: Example of an Effective Letter (Spanish)



MALDEF Programa Nacional de Colaboración entre Padres y Escuela
Sesión 2: Derechos y Responsabilidades de los Padres



GUÍAS PARA LA REDACCIÓN DE UNA CARTA EFICAZ

Si usted está planeando escribir una carta, pregúntele a su distrito escolar si ellos tienen un "formulario de agravio" o muestra de una carta que usted pueda usar como modelo. Si ellos no cuentan con una, use la siguiente estructura y las recomendaciones como guía para redactar una carta formal.

- Antes de comenzarla a redactar, vea la jerarquía/cadena de mando dentro del sistema escolar para identificar a la persona o departamento adecuado a quien debe dirigir su carta.
- **Asegúrese de documentar las fechas, los nombres y otros detalles de la comunicación del asunto. Podría ser información importante para incluir en una carta formal.**
- Si está escribiendo para describir una falta de satisfacción o queja sobre un evento o incidente dentro del distrito, asegúrese de incluir una descripción de los hechos, qué pasos correctivos se han tomado, con quién ha hablado sobre el incidente, y que tipo de acción está usted solicitando que se tome para resolver este asunto, quién espera tome cartas en el asunto, y para qué fecha.
- ¡No se olvide de firmar y poner la fecha en la carta! Guarde una copia de la carta para futura referencia.

Fecha

Su nombre

Dirección

Ciudad, estado, código postal

Nombre de la persona / oficina / organización a quién está enviando la carta

Dirección

Ciudad, estado, código postal

Atención: Nombre y título

Referencia: De qué se trata la carta

Estimado Sr. /Srta. /Sra. /Dr.:

Cuerpo de la carta

Preséntese a sí misma (quién es usted).

¿Por qué está escribiendo la carta?

Indique los hechos y datos del asunto (documentación, fechas, personas involucradas). Asegúrese

que describa los hechos y la información más pertinente e importante (sea breve y vaya al punto).

Indique qué acción desea.

Cierre la carta de manera profesional y cortés y deles la oportunidad de contactarlo (teléfono, correo electrónico, celular, fax, etc.).

Atentamente, (también puede usar: respetuosamente, gracias,)

(Firme su nombre entre estos espacios)

Escriba su nombre con letra de molde

Título (si es que tiene uno)

CC: Las siglas significan "copia carbón". Incluir el nombre de la persona(s) y el título u organización de aquellos a quien está enviando por correo una copia de esta carta.



EJEMPLO DE UNA CARTA BIEN ESCRITA

11 de noviembre de 2003

Juana Doe
1111 cualquier calle
Los Ángeles, CA 90000

Srta. María Martínez
Miembro de la Junta Escolar
Distrito Escolar
1111 calle de la escuela
Los Angeles, CA 90000

Atención: Ana N. Sánchez, jefa de personal

Referencia: Construcción de la escuela secundaria de la vecindad

Estimado Miembro de la Junta Sr. Smith:

Le escribo con respecto a la construcción de la nueva escuela preparatoria en el área de Belmont. Soy una madre que participa en el programa de MALDEF de Colaboración entre Padres y Escuelas de Los Ángeles. Mis hijos asisten a la escuela **West Elementary**, también soy la madre representante del Título I.

Como madre y como miembro de la comunidad de su distrito, deseo elogiar a su oficina por el liderazgo y apoyo que usted le ha mostrado a nuestra comunidad en colaboración con nosotros para asegurar que el distrito escolar termine la construcción de la nueva escuela preparatoria. Deseo pedirle su apoyo continuo en nuestra lucha para que nuestros hijos asistan a una escuela en su vecindad. Además, deseo informarle que nosotros deseamos que la nueva escuela sea construida sobre el mismo sitio que el distrito escolar le prometió a la comunidad hace más de 20 años. También deseo enfatizar que necesitamos escuelas adicionales para aliviar el hacinamiento o sobrepoblación estudiantil y poner fin al traslado de estudiantes en autobús a escuelas fuera de su zona.

Una vez más, gracias por su apoyo y liderazgo. Por favor, manténgame informada de sus acciones en lo que concierne a la construcción de la nueva escuela preparatoria. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o si puedo ser de alguna ayuda en este asunto, no dude en contactarse conmigo al (213) 222-0000.

Atentamente,

Juana Doe

CC: Samuel Administrador, Superintendente
María Abogada, MALDEF

Appendix E2: Example of an Effective Letter (English)



MALDEF National Parent School Partnership Program Session 2: Parents' Rights and Responsibilities



GUIDELINES FOR DRAFTING AN EFFECTIVE LETTER

If you are planning to write a letter, ask your school district if they have a "grievance form" or sample letter to work with. If they do not, use the following framework and tips as your guide to drafting a formal letter.

- Before beginning to write, refer to the hierarchy/chain of command within the school system to identify the appropriate person/department to whom you should direct your letter.
- **Be sure you have documented the dates, names and other communication details relevant to the issue. This may be important information to include in a formal letter.**
- If you are writing to describe a lack of satisfaction, or complaint, with an event or incident within the district, be sure to include a description of the incident, what steps have been taken to remediate, whom you have spoken to about the incident, and what type of action you are requesting to be taken to solve this issue, by whom, and by what date.
- Don't forget to sign and date the letter! Keep a copy of the letter for your own future reference.

Date
Your Name Address City, State, Zip Code
Name of individual / office / organization you are sending the letter Address City, State, Zip Code Attn: Name, Title
RE: What this letter is about
Dear Mr./ Ms./Mrs./ Dr. :
Body of the letter Introduce yourself (who are you). Why are you writing the letter? State the facts (documentation, dates, persons involved). Make sure you describe the facts and the most relevant and important information (be concise and to the point). State what action you want.
Close in a professional and courteous manner, and give them the opportunity to contact you (phone, email, cell phone, fax, etc.).
Sincerely yours, (you could also use: Respectfully submitted, Thank you,)
(Sign your name in between these spaces)
Print out your name Title (if you have one)
CC: This means "carbon copy". Include the name of the individual(s) and title or organization of those to whom you are mailing a copy of this letter.



**MALDEF National Parent School Partnership Program
Session 2: Parents' Rights and Responsibilities**



EXAMPLE OF A WELL-WRITTEN LETTER

November 11, 2003

Juana Doe
1111 Any Street
Los Angeles, CA 90000

Ms. María Martínez
School Board Member
School District
1111 School Street
Los Angeles, CA 90000

Attn: Ana N. Sanchez, Chief of Staff

Re: Construction of Neighborhood High School

Dear Board Member Smith:

I write to you regarding the construction of the new high school in the Belmont area. I am a parent participant in *MALDEF's Los Angeles Parent School Partnership Program*. My children attend **West Elementary School**, and I am also the Title I parent representative.

As a parent and as a community member of your district, I want to commend your office for the leadership and support you have shown to our community in collaborating with us to ensure that the school district finishes the construction of the new high school. I want to ask you for your continued support in our fight to have our children attend school in their neighborhood. Additionally, I would like to inform you that we want the new high school to be built on the same site that the school district promised this community over 20 years ago. I also want to emphasize that we need additional schools to relieve the overcrowding and put an end to forced busing.

Once again, thank you for your support and leadership. Please keep me informed of your actions regarding the construction of the new high school. If you have any questions, or if I can be of any support in this matter, please feel free to contact me at (213) 222-0000.

Sincerely yours,

Juana Doe

CC: Samuel Administrator, Superintendent
María Abogada, MALDEF

Appendix F1: Example of a Weak Letter (Spanish)



MALDEF Programa Nacional de Colaboración entre
Padres y Escuelas
Sesión 2: Derechos y Responsabilidades de los Padres



ACTIVIDAD EN GRUPO: REVISIÓN DE UNA CARTA

Sírvase revisar el siguiente modelo de carta, escrita por una madre para el distrito. Su instructor lo guiará para que revise la carta formulando preguntas específicas sobre el tono y contenido.

11 de junio del 2008

A quien le concierna en el Distrito Escolar,

Creo que la localización de la nueva escuela primaria es un error. No deben de construir la escuela aquí porque ningún estudiante querrá ir, ni tampoco los padres porque está muy lejos. ¡También pienso que el sistema de evaluación para el idioma inglés es ridículo! Muchos de mis amigos que tienen hijos piensan de la misma manera que yo.

Usted nunca escucha a los padres especialmente cuando es por teléfono, y es por eso que le estoy escribiendo esta carta. También pienso que los maestros de la escuela primaria que usted contrata no están cualificados y son incompetentes.

Atentamente,
Juana Domínguez

CC: Superintendente estatal, Departamento de Educación Estatal
Sr. Obama, Presidente de los Estados Unidos

Después de leer la carta en clase, discuta las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Cuál es la meta de la escritora al escribir esta carta?
2. ¿Cuáles piensas que serán los posibles resultados o las acciones que tomará la escuela debido a esta carta?
3. ¿Describe la carta un evento específico?
4. ¿Sigue la carta una idea principal o trata muchos asuntos? ¿Es esto eficaz?
5. ¿Ofrece la autora alguna manera para que el recipiente se ponga en contacto (teléfono, dirección) con ella?
6. ¿Cuál es el tono general de la carta? (¿Cortés, amable, enojado, molesto?)
7. ¿Usa la autora una gramática y ortografía correcta?

Appendix F2: Example of a Weak Letter (English)



MALDEF National Parent School Partnership Program Session 2: Parents' Rights and Responsibilities



GROUP ACTIVITY: REVIEWING A LETTER

Please review the following example letter, written from a parent to a district. Your trainer will guide you to revise the letter by asking specific questions about the tone and content.

June 11th, 2008

To Whom It May Concern at the School District,

I think the locasion of the new elementary school is a mistake. You should not build the school here because no student will want to go to it, and the parents neither because it is too far away. I also think that testing system for English language students is ridiculous! Many of my friends with children think the same way that I do.

You never listen to parents and especially not on the phone, and this is why I am writing this letter to you. I also think the elementary school teachers you hire are unqualified and incompetent.

Sincerely,
Juana Dominguez

CC: State Superintendent, State Department of Education
Mr. Obama, President, United States

After reading the letter in class, discuss the following questions:

1. What is the goal of the writer in writing this letter?
2. What do you think the possible results or actions taken by the school will be because of the letter?
3. Does the letter describe a specific event?
4. Does the letter stick to one main idea, or address many issues? Is this effective?
5. Does the author offer a way for the recipient to get in touch (phone, address)?
6. What is the general tone of the letter? (Courteous/polite, angry, upset?)
7. Does the author use proper grammar and spelling?

Appendix G1: LCAP Proposal Frist Draft (Transcribed and Translated)

1	<i>4/23/14</i>	4/23/14
2	<i>Muy Buenastarde</i>	Good afternoon
3	<i>Mi nombre es Nuvia Soy madre de</i>	My name is Nuvia I am mother of 7
4	<i>7 hijo y bengo Representando aun</i>	children and I come here representing
5	<i>grupo De malde. que Sellama</i>	a group that is called malde. and is
6	<i>y es un exélente grupo y Soy</i>	an excellent group and I am member
7	<i>miembro de Pitie y la y Soy</i>	Pitie and I am a volunteer in my
8	<i>boluntaria del Salon De mis hijo</i>	children's classroom that attends Forest
9	<i>que existen en la escuela Forest Hill</i>	Hill and Villa High School.
10	<i>y Villa High School.</i>	
11	<i>y estoy orgullosamente representando</i>	And I am proudly representing parents
12	<i>apadres quenotienen la oportunidad</i>	that do not have the opportunity to
13	<i>de participa. Susnecesidades como</i>	advocate for. Their necessities which
14	<i>Son la Reinstalación De cursos De</i>	include the Reinstallation Of Summer
15	<i>Verano academicos para los niños</i>	academic courses for children that are
16	<i>conbajonivel academico para Provocar</i>	performing at a low academic level
17	<i>un mejor Desempeño académico</i>	in order to yield an Improved academic
18	<i>para niños De lento aprendizaje-</i>	attainment for students that are slow
19	<i>Promo biendo el entusiasmo- De</i>	learners promoting the enthusiasm- of
20	<i>estudiantes y Padres Para Paun mejor</i>	students and parents for an improved
21	<i>nivel escola Del Distrito escolar y se</i>	academic level in the School District
22	<i>vea reflejado en el Futuro De nuestra</i>	which can be reflected in the future of
23	<i>comunidad en los aspectos economicos</i>	our community in terms of its economic
24	<i>socia educativos culturales y</i>	social educational cultural and athletic
25	<i>deportivos gracias porsuatención y</i>	developments thank you for your attention
26	<i>apollo a los programas mencionados.</i>	and support to the programs mentioned.
27	<i>Respetosamente esperamos</i>	We respectfully await your favorable
28	<i>su favorable atención.</i>	attention.

Appendix G2: LCAP Proposal Frist Draft Original Artifact³⁴

47
4/23/17
Muy Buenas tarde
Mi nombre es
Soy madre de 7 hijo
y bengo Representando a un grupo
De madre que se llama x es un
exelente grupo x Soy miembro de
Pitier x la x Soy voluntaria del Salon
De mis hijo que existen en la escuela
x ~~x esto x esto~~
argülosamente representando a padres
quen tienen la oportunidad de participa-
Son necesidades como son la Reinstala-
cion De cursos De Verano academicos
Para los niños con bajo nivel academico
Para Probocar un mejor Desempeno
academico para un De
Para niños De lento aprendizaje -
Promo biendo el entusiasmo -
De estudiantes x Padres para la e-
ducacion para un mejor nivel escuela
Del Distrito escolar x Se va reflejado
en el futuro De nuestra comunidad
en los aspectos economicos socialde
educativos culturales x deportivos
Gracias Por su atencion x apoyo
a los programas mencionados. Respe

³⁴ All identifying factors (e.g., names of individuals, schools, etc.) have been blurred for confidentiality purposes.

Appendix H1: LCAP Proposal Second Draft (Transcribed and Translated)

1	4/23/14	4/23/14
2	<i>Muy Buenastardes</i>	Good afternoon
3	<i>Mi nombre es Nuvia soi madre De 7 hijos</i>	My name is Nuvia I am the mother of 7
4	<i>i bengo Representando a un grupo de</i>	children I come here representing a group
5	<i>Malde Que Sellama y es un excelente</i>	from Malde (MALDEF) that is called and
6	<i>grupo y Soy Miembro De Pitiei y</i>	is an excellent group and I am a member
7	<i>Deilag y Soy boluntaria de Salon de</i>	of Pitiei (PTA) and Deilag (DLAC) and I
8	<i>mis hijos Que existen en la escuela</i>	am a volunteer in my children's classroom
9	<i>Forest Hill y Villa High School</i>	that attend Forest Hill and Villa High
10	<i>y estoy orgullosa mente representando</i>	School and I am proudly representing
11	<i>Apadres Que no tienen la hoportunidad</i>	parents that do not have the opportunity to
12	<i>de Participar Sus necesidades como son</i>	present on their necessities such as the
13	<i>la Reinstalación De cursos De verano</i>	reinstallation of summer academic courses
14	<i>academicos para los niños conbajo nivel</i>	for children with low academic
15	<i>academico Para Provocar un mejor</i>	achievement in order to yield an
16	<i>Desempeño académico Para niños De</i>	improvement in the academic attainment
17	<i>lento aprendizaje Promo biendo el</i>	of children that are slow learners and
18	<i>entusiasmo De estuDiantes y Padres Para</i>	henceforth promote the enthusiasm of
19	<i>un mejor nivel escolar Del Distrito</i>	both students and parents that lead to an
20	<i>escolar y Sevea reflejado en el futuro De</i>	improvement in the academic level of our
21	<i>nuestra comunidad en los aspectos</i>	school district that can be reflected in the

- 22 *economicos sociales educativos* future of our community in terms of its
- 23 *culturales y deportivos* economic social educational cultural and
- 24 *Gracias Por Su atención y apollo a los* athletic developments thank you for your
- 25 *programas mencionados.* attention and support to the aforementioned
- 26 *Respetosamente esperamos su favorable* programs We respectfully we await your
- 27 *atención* favorable attention

Appendix H2: LCAP Proposal Frist Draft Original Artifact³⁵

4/23/14
Muy Buenastardes
Mi nombre es [blurred]
Soy madre De 7 hijos
y ibengo Representando a un grupo
De Malde Que Sellama x es un
excelente grupo x Soy Miembro De
Pitiei x De ilag x Soy bolontaria De Salon
De mis hijos que existen en la escuela
[blurred] x estox
argullosa mente representando Apadres
Queno tienen la hoportunidad de Participar
Sus necesidades como son la Reinstala-
ción De cursos De Verano academicos
Para los niños conbajo nivel academico
Para a Probocar un mejor Desenpeño
academico Para niños De lento aprendisa-
Je - Promo biendo el entusiasmo-
De esto Diantes y Padres para un mejor
nivel escolar Del Distrito escolar x
Seveq refejado en el futuro De
nuestra comunidad en los aspectos
economicos Sociales educativos cultura-
les x deportivos Gracias Por Soqtención
y apollo a los programas mencionados
Respetuosq mente espero Su Fqyborg
Ble atención.

³⁵ All identifying factors (e.g., names of individuals, schools, etc.) have been blurred for confidentiality purposes.

Appendix I: LCAP Proposal Third Draft (Transcribed and Translated)³⁶

1	<i>Buenas tardes a todos y cada uno de ustedes.</i>	Good afternoon to each and every one of
2	<i>Es un privilegio para mi tener la oportunidad</i>	you. It is a privilege for me to have the
3	<i>de expresarles nuestras inquietudes</i>	opportunity to express to you all our
4	<i>escolares sobre la educación de nuestros</i>	academic concerns regarding the education
5	<i>hijos. Mi nombre es Avi, soy un orgulloso</i>	of our children. My name is Avi and I am a
6	<i>representante de clases de MALDEF para la</i>	proud representative of the MALDEF classes
7	<i>colaboración entre padres y escuelas,</i>	that works for the collaboration between
8	<i>también soy padre de dos alumnos de la</i>	parents and schools, I am also the father of
9	<i>escuela primaria Travis que pertenecen a</i>	two students from Travis Elementary School
10	<i>este distinguido distrito escolar.</i>	that belong to this distinguish school district.
11	<i>Mi comentario es principalmente para</i>	My chief comment is to respectfully solicit,
12	<i>solicitarles respetosamente en la medida de</i>	within the extent of your possibilities and
13	<i>sus posibilidades y recursos la reinstalación</i>	available resources, the reinstallation of
14	<i>de los cursos académicos de verano para los</i>	summer academic courses for students that
15	<i>alumnos con bajo rendimiento escolar que</i>	are academically underperforming, who due
16	<i>por causa de fuerza mayor como problemas</i>	to external powers such as issues with
17	<i>económicos, de salud, familiares, legales o</i>	finances, health, family, legal or precisely
18	<i>precisamente de lento aprendizaje se hayan</i>	due to learning disabilities find themselves
19	<i>atrasados en el año escolar y así sean</i>	academically behind during the academic
20	<i>atendidos de manera apropiada en el verano</i>	school year and henceforth need to receive
21	<i>para regularizar su nivel académico</i>	suitable academic support during the

³⁶ In Week 12 Avi read out loud to his group the third draft that he took the lead in writing. Avi did not submit the written copy of their third draft to the researcher assistant; he decided to keep it to help him in writing their final letter. Therefore, we transcribed the video data to document their third draft.

<p>22 <i>preparándolos para su siguiente año escolar</i></p> <p>23 <i>y que a su vez se refleje en el mejoramiento</i></p> <p>24 <i>en todos los alumnos de la escuela y del</i></p> <p>25 <i>distrito escolar que así podamos participar</i></p> <p>26 <i>en los nuevos estándares educativos así</i></p> <p>27 <i>mismo se implementen las nuevas formas de</i></p> <p>28 <i>distribución de los recursos LCFF</i></p> <p>29 <i>enfocándonos en mejorar y preparar</i></p> <p>30 <i>académicamente a nuestros hijos para su</i></p> <p>31 <i>universidad fomentando un futuro de</i></p> <p>32 <i>bienestar de las familias de nuestra</i></p> <p>33 <i>comunidad.</i></p>	<p>summer, in order to regulate their learning to</p> <p>the appropriate level, so that they are</p> <p>adequately prepared for the following</p> <p>academic year. An outcome that will find</p> <p>itself reflected in the improvement of all</p> <p>students across the school district and in this</p> <p>way we can mutually take part in the new</p> <p>academic standards while the new formula</p> <p>for financial distribution LCFF takes place</p> <p>by keeping our focus on improving and</p> <p>academically preparing our children for their</p> <p>college education thus fomenting a better</p> <p>future and wellbeing for the families of our</p> <p>community.</p>
<p>34 <i>De ante mano agradezco su atención y</i></p> <p>35 <i>compresión a nuestras opiniones como</i></p> <p>36 <i>padres de familia. También reitero que estoy</i></p> <p>37 <i>dispuesto a trabajar en lo que mi</i></p> <p>38 <i>parte corresponde para lograr</i></p> <p>39 <i>conjuntamente la educación que deseamos</i></p> <p>40 <i>para nuestros hijos y les brindemos la</i></p> <p>41 <i>educación que se merecen.</i></p> <p>42 <i>Gracias y buenas noches.</i></p>	<p>I thank you all in advance for your attention</p> <p>and comprehension towards our opinions as</p> <p>parents-of-families. I also reiterate that I am</p> <p>willing to work in whatever my part dictates</p> <p>in order to jointly achieve the education that</p> <p>we all desire for our children so that we can</p> <p>provide them with the education that they</p> <p>deserve.</p> <p>Thank you and good night.</p>

Appendix J: LCAP Final Proposal (Transcribed and Translated)³⁷

1	<i>Buenas tardes a todos y cada uno de</i>	Good afternoon to each and every one of you.
2	<i>ustedes, es un privilegio para mi tener la</i>	It is a privilege for me to have the opportunity
3	<i>oportunidad de expresarles nuestras</i>	to express to you all our concerns regarding
4	<i>inquietudes sobre la educación de nuestros</i>	the education of our children. My name is
5	<i>hijos. Mi nombre es Pedro y soy Padre que</i>	Pedro and I am a father that represents the
6	<i>representa a la clase de Padres Adelante</i>	class of <i>Padres Líderes</i> from the Travis and
7	<i>de las escuelas Travis y Forest Hill, que</i>	Forest Hill school sites, that works in
8	<i>trabaja en colaboración con MALDEF, la</i>	collaboration with MALDEF, the Pathways to
9	<i>oficina de Caminos a la Universidad en la</i>	College office at Palo Duro University and the
10	<i>Palo Duro universidad y el distrito escolar</i>	Coastland School District.
11	<i>de Coastlands.</i>	
12	<i>Estoy aquí para expresarles mi</i>	I am here to express my concerns
13	<i>preocupación hacia los alumnos con bajo</i>	regarding students who are academically
14	<i>rendimiento académico que a veces por</i>	underperforming that at times fall behind
15	<i>razones económicas, salud, familiares ó de</i>	due to economic, health, family situations
16	<i>lento aprendizaje se van atrasando</i>	or due to learning disabilities. It is in light
17	<i>académicamente. Es por eso, mi</i>	of these reasons that I recommend that the
18	<i>recomendación para que con los fondos de</i>	funds derived from the Local Control
19	<i>control local LCAP se ofrezcan programas</i>	Accountability Plan (LCAP) are utilized to
20	<i>de Verano Escolar Académicos que les</i>	offer summer academic programs that will
21	<i>brinde ayuda en las áreas de Inglés,</i>	help these students with English, math,

³⁷ Avi shared with Natalia his group's final hand-written letter, she then typed it and used an electronic platform to share it with the coordinating team. I first translated this group's letter from Spanish to English; the coordinating then offered their suggestions. This is the final agreed upon letter that was read before the school board.

<p>22 <i>Matemáticas, Escritura y Lectura.</i></p> <p>23 <i>Sabemos que esto es de suma importancia,</i></p> <p>24 <i>a nivel elemental proveer una base solida</i></p> <p>25 <i>de educación que prepare a nuestros hijos,</i></p> <p>26 <i>para que en junior high y high school</i></p> <p>27 <i>tengan acceso a clases avanzadas</i></p> <p>28 <i>que los preparen para ir al colegio y la</i></p> <p>29 <i>universidad.</i></p>	<p>writing and reading. We are aware that it is of</p> <p>dire importance for our children in elementary</p> <p>school to be provided with a solid academic</p> <p>base so that in middle school and high</p> <p>school they have access to advance classes</p> <p>that will prepare them to go to college and</p> <p>the university.</p>
<p>30 <i>De antemano agradezco su atención y</i></p> <p>31 <i>comprensión a nuestras opiniones como</i></p> <p>32 <i>padres de familia en este distrito escolar.</i></p> <p>33 <i>También, reitero que como padre estoy</i></p> <p>34 <i>dispuesto a trabajar en lo que a mi parte</i></p> <p>35 <i>corresponde para conjuntamente</i></p> <p>36 <i>lograr el éxito en la educación que</i></p> <p>37 <i>deseamos y que nuestros hijos se merecen.</i></p> <p>38 <i>Muy buenas noches.</i></p> <p>39 <i>Atención</i></p> <p>40 <i>Avi.</i></p>	<p>I thank you in advance for your attention</p> <p>and comprehension to our opinions as</p> <p>parents of families in this school district.</p> <p>As a parent, I also want to reiterate that I</p> <p>am willing to work in whatever my</p> <p>contribution requires so that we can jointly</p> <p>achieve the educational success that we</p> <p>wish for and that our children deserve.</p> <p>Have a very goodnight.</p> <p>Attentively,</p> <p>Avi</p>