

UNIVERSITY OF REDLANDS

Parents' Social and Cultural Capital: One Parent Group's Influence on Student  
Engagement in an Upper Middle Class High School

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Leadership for Educational Justice

By

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August 2014

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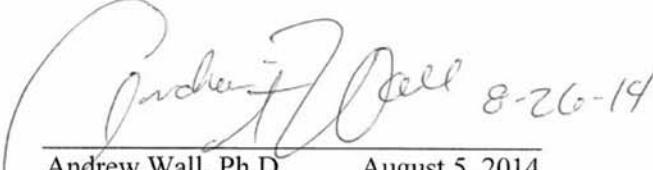
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## ABSTRACT

Parents' Social and Cultural Capital: One Parent Group's Influence on Student

Engagement in an Upper Middle Class High School

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Doctor of Education, 2014

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Parent involvement has been shown to have positive effects on student achievement and engagement, yet the lack of necessary social and/or cultural capital prevents some parents from being involved. Applying a conceptual framework based on Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital, this study examines the social and cultural capital that one parent advisory group possessed and the influence their involvement had on student engagement at an upper middle class high school. This qualitative study used a semi-structured interview protocol and narrative inquiry approach. Using NVivo software, 15 participants' interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes in the areas of social and cultural capital. Twelve themes emerged. Social capital themes included: Group memberships that provided a sense of empowerment and responsibility, social networks that highlighted the importance of the community and knowing the right people, and relationships that were purposeful, caring, supportive, and trusting. Cultural capital themes included: having privileged status, knowing how the system works, setting priorities for action and change, and having high expectations and values. Despite the fact that these parents had an extensive network of social and cultural capital, the findings from this study suggests caring relationships that instill a value in education, and that

high expectations might be the most important form of capital parents need to be effectively involved. Implications and recommendations for practice and future research are discussed.

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother and father, who may not have been your traditional definition of involved parents, but who found alternative ways of being involved. Although they may not have shown their involvement through their physical presence at school via attendance at school events or parent teacher conferences, their support was more evident at home through the setting of high standards and expectations. They never ceased to stress the importance of education.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my mother and father, without whom this would not be possible. Thank you mom and dad for providing me with the privileges most people I knew did not have. I'm sorry if you've ever thought anything you did went unappreciated; I know I could not have done this without your love and support. Thank you for providing me with everything necessary for me to grow up comfortably, I know that never having to worry about whether I could afford to continue going to school was a luxury not everyone was fortunate enough to have. Thank you for imparting your workaholic tendencies on me. You have both been two of the most hardworking individuals I have ever had the honor of knowing and I can only hope to have as much grit and resiliency as both of you. Growing up with immigrant parents was not always easy but you always stressed the importance of education as a currency that would last a lifetime no matter which culture we were living in, so thank you for instilling in me the importance of education and always encouraging and supporting me to go further and do better. I am indebted to you—I love you!

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	x
List of Figures .....	xi
List of Appendices .....	xii
Preface.....	xiii
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Background.....	1
Problem Statement.....	6
Significance of the Study.....	6
Purpose.....	7
Research Questions.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	8
Conceptual Framework.....	9
Summary and Organization of the Study.....	11
Chapter Two: Literature Review .....	13
Habitus, Field, and Capital: An Overview of Bourdieusian Constructs.....	13
Social and Cultural Capital in the Field of Education .....	19
Parent Involvement.....	23
Student Engagement .....	32
Summary.....	35
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	36
Introduction.....	36
Research Design.....	36
Role of the Researcher .....	40
Setting and Population Sampling.....	42
Participants.....	43
Data Collection Procedures.....	47
Data Management .....	51
Data Analysis Procedures .....	51
Assumptions and Limitations .....	53
Summary.....	54
Chapter Four: Results .....	55
Organizing the Data for Analysis .....	55
Social Capital.....	58
Cultural Capital.....	75
Summary.....	83

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, and Implications.....	84
Summary .....	84
Findings and Discussion .....	88
Limitation of the Study .....	95
Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations.....	95
References.....	101

## List of Tables

Table 1. Characteristics of Narrative Inquiry.....	39
Table 2. Characteristics of Participants.....	45
Table 3. Instrumentation: Main and Supporting Interview Questions.....	48
Table 4. Narrative Inquiry Data Analysis Steps .....	52
Table 5. Social Capital — Group Membership.....	59
Table 6. Social Capital — Relationships .....	64
Table 7. Social Capital — Networks & Social Connections .....	72
Table 8. Parental Cultural Capital.....	77

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Visual representation of conceptual framework .....	11
Figure 2. Working codes .....	56
Figure 3. Theme schematic .....	57
Figure 4. Summary of findings.....	92

List of Appendices

Appendix A: General Consent Form .....107

Appendix B: District Administration Consent Form.....109

Appendix C: School Administration Consent Form .....111

Appendix D: Teacher Consent Form.....113

Appendix E: Parent Consent Form.....115

Appendix F: Consent Form for Student Over 18 Years of Age.....117

Appendix G: Consent Form for Student Under 18 Years of Age.....119

Appendix H: Researcher’s Curriculum Vitae.....121

## Preface

The research findings reported in the following study were one of the pieces in a larger three-part thematic research project. The three members of the research team studied the parent group found in the study and their impact on student engagement in order to discover emerging themes in the areas of social class, and social and cultural capitals as they related to social relations and parent involvement. Participant consent and interviews were all conducted together. Interviews were co-transcribed and analyzed with each researcher focusing on a specific conceptual area and its influences on student engagement. This particular study focused on the influences of social and cultural capitals on parent involvement and its effects on student engagement. Dr. Kitty Fortner's study entitled: *Social Class Influences: Student Engagement of Upper Middle Class African American Students* and Dr. Marcus Hanson's study entitled: *The Influence of Social Capital through Social Relations: Student Engagement in an Upper Middle Class High School*, the complements to this study, can be found in the Armacost Library at the University of Redlands or through ProQuest.



## Chapter One

### Introduction

Education in America is currently in a state of transition and there has been increased attention on the benefits of parental involvement and the characteristics or capital possessed by those parents who are involved. Parent involvement has been shown to play a role in student engagement (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Mahatmya, Lohman, Matjasko, & Farb, 2012; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Academic achievement has been linked to student engagement (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Mahatmya, Lohman, Matjasko, & Farb, 2012; Reschly & Christenson, 2012; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Therefore the more engaged and connected students feel to what they are learning the greater the chances of their academic success. It benefits schools to make efforts to involve more parents for this very reason. Many times the extent to which parents are involved is directly related to the social and cultural capital they either lack or possess (Yosso, 2005).

### **Background**

Capital, normally thought of as only money, is any asset or resource that could provide an individual with privileges or advantages. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) believed that there was more than one form of capital; he asserted that forms of symbolic capital like social and cultural capital existed. Bourdieu defines social capital as the:

aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its member with the backing of the collectively-owned capital. (p. 21)

Cultural capital refers to the “relatively rare, high-status cultural and linguistic knowledge, skills, and dispositions passed on from one generation to the next” (Perez, 2009, p. 139). Capital can be acquired from your family or social origin or through education (Winkle-Wagner, 2010); the amount of capital you have can change throughout your lifetime.

Social and cultural capital are a means of access for many individuals. Like money, social and cultural capital can be exchanged for goods; however the goods in this case might be social rewards such as recognition or social mobility (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Social and cultural capital are smaller components of Bourdieu’s larger theory on social reproduction. Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) theory of social reproduction supposed that those who belong to the dominant group or the group in possession of power defined the forms of capital that would be valued. Logically it would follow then that those who determined what capital was of value also possessed that value, thereby rewarding themselves in the process and building on their stores of capital, which serves to keep them in power. Those individuals in power then ensure that they continue to be at an advantage over those who might have had some capital, just not the right kind of capital—the capital that was worth more. “The structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 15) and is an example of what Bourdieu referred to as symbolic violence and serves to reproduce the social structures and inequalities that are found in society (Anyon, 1980; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Nolan, 2009; Schubert, 2012; Swartz, 1945; Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

Schools are one of the prominent institutions where social reproduction is perpetuated. Schools tend to have a hierarchal structure that mirrors the class structures we find in society. Schools value white middle-class norms (Perez, 2009). Students come to school with the capital they have already acquired through social origin or previous education. Many times the capital that some students bring to school are not valued or recognized by the schooling system. The habitus of the student does not match up to that of school. Those students who have the capital that is recognized by the school are then advantaged over those who do not. Parental involvement can be considered one form of cultural capital that is valued by the American school system. Those students who have parents that are involved show higher levels of engagement and achievement (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Bingham & Okagaki, 2012; Epstein, 1992). It is for this reason that current education policy stresses the need for better home-school relationships.

Parents can be involved in their student's education in a variety of ways. Definitions that currently exist are broad enough to include all different ways parents can be considered involved. Some define parent involvement to mean parents are directly involved in teaching their child, while others see parents more as facilitators of their child's motivation to do well (Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012). In a study examining the level of impact of different types of parent involvement on academic achievement of elementary level students, Lee and Bowen (2006) found that all students benefited from any form of parental involvement and that most families are involved with their student at some level. The researchers did however note that some families, mostly those of European American middle class descent, were more advantaged because their form of being involved was more valued or recognized by schools than those forms practiced by

parents of more diverse racial/ethnic and economic backgrounds. Epstein (1992) found that parent involvement at school is highly associated to academic achievement. This implies that parent involvement outside of school is not as significantly recognized to have the same effect. So although some parents are involved with their children's education, they practice it in a form outside of school that goes unrecognized by educators. The families' practices were not in line with the habitus of the school and therefore often went unrecognized and perceived by teachers as lack of caring for their child's education. This places those students at a disadvantage to their peers who practice the accepted practices. Perez (2009) asserts that school provides an unequal playing field for students because educators tend to recognize the capital of the dominant group as the accepted norm "thus they favor students (and families) who possess the cultural forms of the dominant groups" (p. 139). This presents itself as an access problem for these families. Bolivar and Chrispeels (2011) assert that if parents are given opportunities to build on their social and intellectual capitals by way of leadership development, these parents are more empowered to enact change in schools and advocate for their children. Schools need to provide parents with the opportunity to actively participate.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Blueprint for Reform stress the importance of parent involvement (Epstein, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2010). The law requires schools to "organize programs of parental involvement and to communicate with parents and the public about students' achievement and quality of schools" (Epstein, 2005). According to a report by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), the new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP) in California consider parent

involvement one of the “key ingredients of high-quality educational programs (p. 10),” making it one of the state’s eight areas of priority, and requiring that districts set goals to seek parent input and participation (Taylor M. , 2013). Schools constantly seek ways to get parents more involved. Often parent involvement can be seen in abundance at the elementary and high school levels, with a significant decline in involvement at the intermediate level (Eccles & Wang, 2012; Mahatmya, et. al, 2012; Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012). It is not surprising then that we often find students disconnected and disinterested in what is going on at school at this level. If parental involvement could be maintained during the middle years, there might be an increase in student engagement.

Intermediate school being the gateway to high school leaves many students starting high school unprepared to be academically successful. As an educator at the intermediate level, it was of particular interest to this researcher, to find ways to engage students at the intermediate level to better prepare them for high school and college and career readiness. As the parent involvement coordinator at an intermediate site, this researcher was interested in finding ways to engage students through their parents’ involvement. Specifically, how could we increase meaningful parent involvement that helps support student engagement? This researcher sought to find ways of empowering parents with the tools or capital that are necessary to help their students be engaged and successful in education. It is the hope of this researcher that the findings from this study will shed light on the social and cultural capitals that parents may possess that could help raise students’ levels of engagement and furthermore their academic achievement.

## **Problem Statement**

Current education policy mandates parent involvement but does not adequately fund, enforce, or provide guidance on how to make that happen meaningfully (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011; Epstein, 2005). Although everyone knows that student engagement and parent involvement has been shown to be important to student success (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012), disengaged students are often those students whose parents are not actively involved in their education (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Parents often want to be involved (Lamborn, Brown, Mounts, & Steinberg, 1992), the problem is many times parents lack the social and cultural capital needed to successfully navigate the schooling system.

## **Significance of the Study**

Parental involvement “has been identified as a way to close gaps in achievement between more and less disadvantaged children and minority and majority youth” (Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012). Parents of minority youth should therefore take an active role in their students’ education. It is essential to determine what forms of capital are valued by the schools, and that parents may need to possess, in order for them to be meaningfully involved in their students’ education. Not only will this knowledge help to build capital for parents so that they may better navigate the system to support their student but it will also serve to build capital for students thereby possibly reducing the chances that social inequalities will continue to be reproduced.

Considering that parent involvement has continually been shown to positively affect student engagement and achievement (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Jeynes, 2003; Lamborn, Brown, Mounts, & Steinberg, 1992; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Steinberg, Lamborn,

Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992), knowing how parents can be active participants in their student's education could help increase student achievement, especially for at-risk groups. This study will help add to the conversation on parent involvement and student engagement. Educational policymakers can attempt to adequately fund efforts to increase parent involvement once factors in the areas of social and cultural capital are identified. It is the intent of this study to identify some of the social and cultural capital parents need in order to be meaningfully involved and contribute to student engagement.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to discover the influences of social and cultural capitals on parent involvement and student engagement. It was also to identify emerging themes related to social and cultural capital and parent involvement when observing and listening to the authentic voices of individuals. Additionally another objective of the study was to use the findings found on the influence of parents' social and cultural capital on parent involvement and student engagement to make recommendations pertaining to how parents can become more involved in increasing student engagement.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study to analyze what forms of capital parents possessed that influenced how meaningfully they were involved, as well as the influence such involvement had on student engagement:

1. To what extent do parents' social and cultural capital influence parental involvement and student engagement?
2. What common themes related to the influence of parents' social and cultural capital on parental involvement and student engagement emerge when

observing and listening to the voices of teachers, administrators, parents, and students?

3. Based on the study's finding what recommendations can be made about the role of social and cultural capital on parent involvement and student engagement?

The first research question addressed the connections between the social and cultural capital of parents and its influence on parent involvement and on student engagement.

The second research question gave value to authentic voices and made a comparison of the themes that emerged from those different voices as they related to parents' social and cultural capital, parent involvement, and student engagement. The third research question examined the practical applications of the study's findings.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Capital*: a store of useful assets or advantages (capital, 2014).

*Field*: the space where particular norms or dispositions are more valued than others. There are many different fields, what may be considered valuable in one field might not be considered valuable in another.

*Habitus*: a system of dispositions or way of understanding social or cultural norms that has developed based on one's life experiences. "Habitus refers to categories of perception and appreciation in the social realm" (Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

*Social Capital*: the networks, relationships, and social connections that serve to increase the opportunities or resources available to those who have membership in the group. It is the "aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual



acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21).

*Cultural Capital:* the knowledge, skills, education, experiences, and/or connections one has had through the course of his or her life that do or do not enable success” (Howard, 2010, p. 55). Cultural capital can exist in three states: embodied—having to do with dispositions or habitus; objectified—having to do with cultural material objects; and institutionalized—having to do with degrees and certificates (Bourdieu, 1986; Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

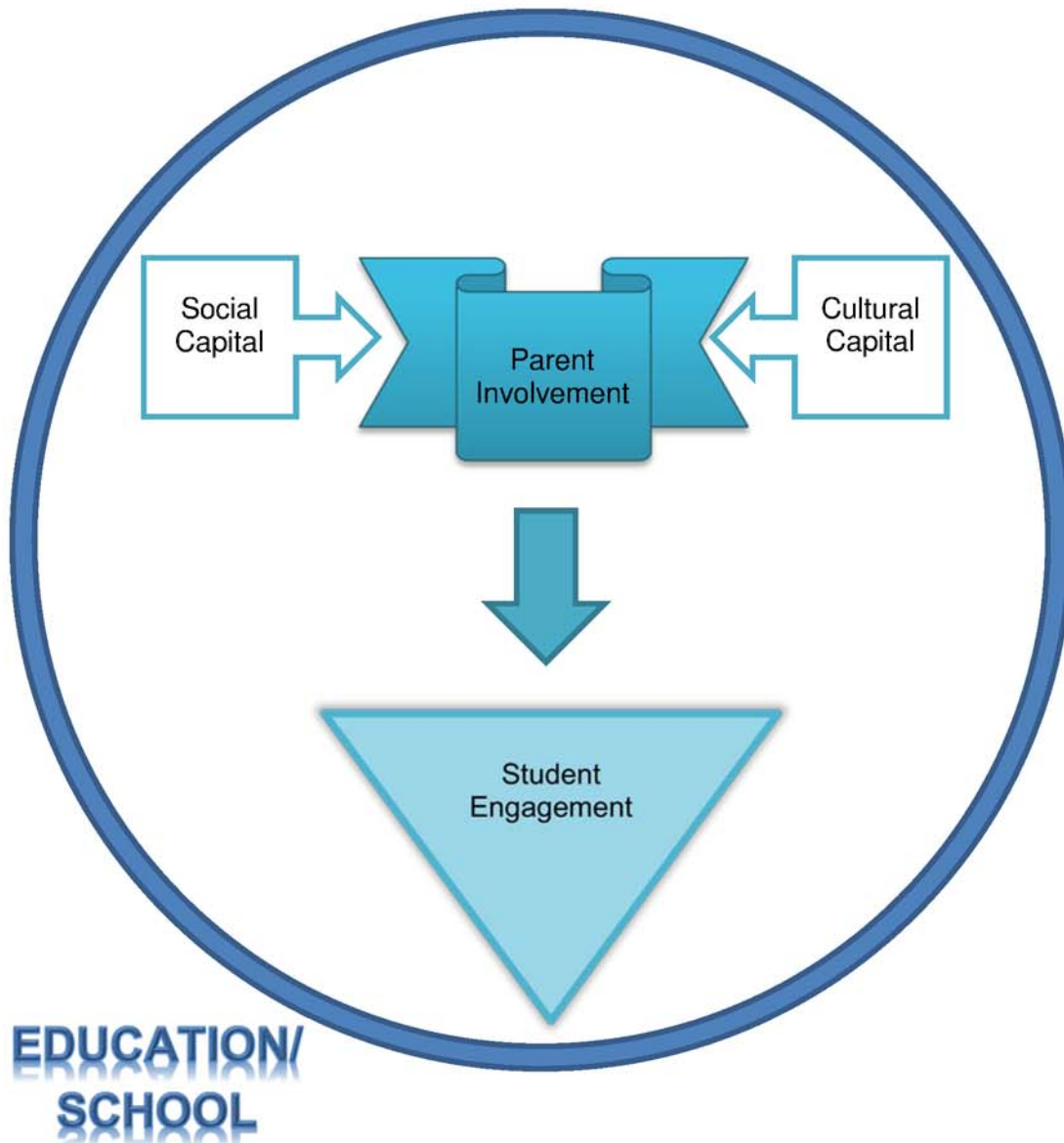
*Parent Involvement:* Parents in this study refer to any familial unit (i.e., guardians, grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, siblings etc.). Parent involvement refers to any form of support that parents provide their student for education. These supports can be in school or out of school. They can span the range of providing students with the appropriate study space at home, having a supporting attitude about the school their student attends, to actively volunteering at their student’s school.

*Student Engagement:* The “outward manifestation of motivation” (Eccles & Wang, 2012, p. 135). A multifaceted construct that by Fredericks, et al. (2004) definition consists of three different types: behavioral engagement—having to do with participation and effort which can be manifested in grades; emotional engagement—having to do with the affective component, how they feel about school; and cognitive engagement—having to do with their long term investment in learning.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework created by the researcher that guided this study can be seen in Figure 1. This conceptual framework was developed using Bourdieu’s concepts

of social and cultural capital as its foundation. Parents possess forms of social and cultural capital that often guide their practices. These social and cultural capital funds allow parents to be involved in different ways. Parents' involvement has been associated with student engagement (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Mahatmya, et.al, 2012; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). This conceptual framework shows that social and cultural capital, through the act of parent involvement, is associated with student engagement. According to Fredricks et al., (2004), student engagement can be measured three different ways—behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. The conceptual framework depicts that social and cultural capitals influence how parents are involved. Types of student engagement are dependent on this involvement. Student engagement is therefore an outcome of parent involvement. How parents are involved has an influence on how students are engaged. This study utilized this conceptual framework to examine the cultural and social capitals of the parents in one parent group and how it influenced their parental involvement practices. Additionally, the study associated different types of student engagement to be a result of those parental practices.



*Figure 1.* Visual representation of conceptual framework

### **Summary and Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters followed by appendices and references. Chapter 1 gave a general overview of the study. This chapter presented background on the study, the problem, significance, and purpose of the study as well as the conceptual

framework, research questions, and any operational definitions. Chapter 2 offers a survey of the literature on student engagement, parent involvement, and social and cultural capitals. Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology used in the study. The steps followed in the qualitative inquiry approach of narrative inquiry will be described here. Chapter 4 provides the steps taken in the analysis of the data and reviews the themes that emerged. Recommendations, implications, and conclusions will be found in the fifth and final chapter. The fifth chapter will be followed by appendices, containing consent forms and references.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

This study looked at the social and cultural capital that parents' possessed and how it influenced their participation or involvement at the local high school and furthermore the influence their involvement had on student engagement there. The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the literature on social and cultural capital, parent involvement, and student engagement.

#### **Habitus, Field, and Capital: An Overview of Bourdieusian Constructs**

The theoretical concepts put forth by Pierre Bourdieu were the foundations to the conceptual framework developed to guide this study. Social and cultural capitals are smaller components of Bourdieu's larger theory on social reproduction. In order to better understand social and cultural capitals roles in this theory of reproduction the constructs of habitus, field, and capital must be discussed.

#### **Habitus**

Habitus is a complex concept that is a central theme in Bourdieu's writings. It can be thought of as the underlying principle that generates a practice or action (Maton, 2012). It is an "unconscious internalization" (Swartz, 1997, p. 104) that "ultimately functions below the level of consciousness and language" (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 9). Habitus is embodied dispositions that one has acquired through socialization. It is "the way a culture is embodied in the individual" (Harker, 1984, p. 118). Habitus is how one perceives the world around them, what one sees as the social and cultural norms, as the "rules' that govern the field of interaction and their place in it" (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 9), which then guides the actions that one takes. Habitus begins to form during early

childhood and develops and changes as one internalizes one's life experiences (DiMaggio, 1979; Swartz, 1997; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). As cited by Dimaggio (1979) and Swartz (1997), Bourdieu defined habitus as "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of *perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks" (Bourdieu, 1971, p. 83), (DiMaggio, 1979, p. 1464; Swartz, 1997, p. 100). Habitus is a part of one's being. "Habitus is both a system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices .... Habitus thus implies a 'sense of one's place' but also a 'sense of the place of others'" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19). Therefore habitus cannot be understood alone, it is the outcome of one's interaction with the field.

### **Field**

Field, also referred to as social space, is the space where particular norms or dispositions are more valued than others. A field is dynamic so at any time the sources of value may vary, they are arbitrary (Dika & Singh, 2002). A field can be thought of as its own "little world" (Thomson, 2012, p. 68) with its own way or running things:

...each field has its own rules or systems of valuation that determine the conditions of entry or inclusion (for example, educational credentials, particular mannerisms or tastes, economic capital) and the social relations in it (for example, who is valued, whose cultural norms are recognized or rewarded). (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 8)

There are many fields and individuals can exist in more than one field at a time. "Field refers to both the totality of actors and organizations involved in an arena of social or cultural production and the dynamic relationships among them" (DiMaggio, 1979, p. 1463). Bourdieu believed that within any field there was always a struggle for power;

every agent was always trying to position themselves so they would be at an advantage (Swartz, 1997). Therefore it was also evident that due to the various positions there was a structure of hierarchies that existed in fields (DiMaggio, 1979). Bourdieu (1989) asserted that those agents that were more closely positioned in a field tended to have similar dispositions, or habitus. The field is where symbolic capital is created and then its distribution controlled (Moore, 2012).

### **Capital**

Merriam-Webster defines capital as a store of useful assets or advantages. In this and most cases, capital usually refers to and is associated with some monetary wealth or value (Moore, 2012). “Capital provides access to a variety of goods, services, and related physical and symbolic commodities” (Tierney, 2006, p. 23). Bourdieu sought to use the term more broadly to encompass other more symbolic forms of wealth individuals have (Bourdieu, 1986; Crossley, 2012; Moore, 2012):

Power and dominance derive not only from possession of material resources but also from possession of cultural and social resources...through the concept of symbolic capital,...[Bourdieu was] drawing attention to the fact that the value of any form of capital depends, in part, upon social recognition. (Crossley, 2012, p. 86)

Calhoun (1993) emphasized that Bourdieu saw all forms of capital as power sources.

Symbolic capital exists in many forms. Yosso (2005) discussed six forms of capital that she felt Communities of Color possessed that were comprised within her concept of community cultural wealth: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant. For the purposes of this paper, social and culture capital will be further described.

## **Social Capital**

Social capital refers to the networks, relationships, and social connections that serve to increase the opportunities or resources available to those who have membership in the group. It is the:

aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its member with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21)

Social capital provides the owner with access to resources by way of whom they know and is maintained through the ongoing exchanges within that network (Bourdieu, 1986). These exchanges can be considered obligations members of the group have between each other. Bourdieu (1986) asserted that the volume of social capital an individual had was dependent upon the size of their network, as well as the amount of capital the individual themselves had within this network to exchange at any given time. Yosso (2005) defined social capital to be “networks of people and community resources...[that] can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society’s institutions” (p. 79). She saw it as a wealth that the Communities of Color possessed. Social capital has been most associated with Bourdieu and Coleman. While both sociologists saw social networks as important, Bourdieu saw it as a mechanism for the dominant class to reproduce their norms while Coleman saw it as a more positive aspect of communities; that it spoke to trust as a norm of communities (Dika & Singh, 2002). Some other definitions of social capital that were found in the literature were “the material and immaterial resources that individuals and families are able to access through their social ties” (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003, p. 323) and “the actual (or potential) resources



developed within a network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances” (Tierney, 2006, p. 22). “Social capital (networks, social obligations, and connections) may help one to locate places (or interactions) in a given field where cultural capital and habitus will be rewarded” (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 13) in other words Winkle-Wagner believed social capital drove the availability of cultural capital.

### **Cultural Capital**

Perez (2009) and Howard (2010) both defined cultural capital through the constructs of Pierre Bourdieu. Perez (2009) stated that “cultural capital as advanced by Bourdieu was defined as relatively rare, high-status cultural and linguistic knowledge, skills, and dispositions passed on from one generation to the next” (p. 139). Howard stated that “he [Bourdieu] defines cultural capital as the knowledge, skills, education, experiences, and/or connections one has had through the course of his or her life that do or do not enable success” (Howard, 2010, p. 55). Furthermore, Tierney (2006) felt cultural capital “pertains to the linguistic and cultural tools useful in obtaining economic and social goods...[it] has less to do with specific skills and more with dispositions that individuals acquire through interactions within social institutions such as schools, churches, museums, and theaters” (p. 23). Cultural capital can be acquired by one of two ways, by social origin by way of one’s family, or through education or schooling (Winkle-Wagner, 2010) and exists in three forms: the embodied, objectified, and institutionalized states (Bourdieu, 1986; Swartz, 1997; Perez, 2009; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). The embodied state, like habitus, begins to accumulate during childhood, and similar to habitus can be considered a collection of dispositions that took time to develop. It is a “labor of inculcation and assimilation” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 18). The objectified

state of cultural capital refers to “objects, such as books, works of art, and scientific instruments, that require specialized cultural abilities to use” (Swartz, 1997, p. 76). Cultural capital in its objectified form is therefore those material objects that represent culture for which an individual would need the knowledge or ability to access or understand. Bourdieu (1986) asserted that that knowledge or access would be through having the embodied cultural capital. The institutionalized form of cultural capital refers to academic qualifications or degrees that are recognized within institutions such as school (Bourdieu, 1986; Swartz, 1997). Cultural capital refers to the culturally based resources individuals possess that may put them at an advantage over others. Examples of culturally based resources include: “cultural awareness, knowledge about educational institutions (schools), educational credentials, and aesthetic preferences (such as taste in music, art, or food)” (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 5). Cultural capital can be seen as a form of power (Bourdieu, 1986; Swartz, 1997; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Like social capital, Bourdieu (1986) felt cultural capital was a tool used for reproducing the dominant groups social norms, in so far as it was the “hereditary transmission of capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 19).

### **Habitus, Field, and Capital: The Relationship**

Bourdieu argued that habitus, field, and capital existed in a relationship such that actions or practice was a result of the intersection of the three (Bourdieu, 1986; Swartz, 1997; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Practice was the interrelationship between habitus and field, cultural capital served as a multiplier for habitus. Bourdieu often likened the field to a game, so Winkle-Wagner (2010) used a metaphor to better understand how the Bourdieusian constructs interacted. Winkle-Wagner (2010) used a card game for the

metaphor. The game being played is the field. The cards in the game represented cultural capital. The cards were either dealt to you (the capital you received from your family) or exchanged or picked up during the game (what you acquired through education). Some of the cards you held were more valuable in that particular game and might not be as valued if you were playing a different game. So if you possessed the valued cards in that game you had an advantage over other players who did not hold those cards. How you approached the game, your habitus, was dependent on your understanding of the game and its rules. Finally, social capital appeared as an advantage a player had due to having known someone who gave them an inside tip or having had a connection to the dealer. When the game or field changed all the rules changed and the cards you held and people you knew, your capital in the previous game, which may have been valuable before could no longer be valued in the new game. So in every game there were those who were advantaged and those who were disadvantaged and all the players were approaching the game in ways that would hopefully put them in an advantaged position—what Bourdieu saw as the power struggle in every field. Bourdieu emphasized the existence of this system of field, habitus, and capital and the power struggle evident in the field of education.

### **Social and Cultural Capital in the Field of Education**

Schools, like all other fields, are governed by their own set of rules, with their own way of doing things. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) would say that schools possessed their own habitus. In education the habitus mirrors the dispositions of white middle-class norms and traditions. Therefore as an institution schools tend to value, recognize, as well as teach the norms that are also valued by many middle-class families;

it is the place where middle-class dispositions are nurtured (Schutz, 2008). Bourdieu found this to be problematic and a large contributor to the social stratification seen in society.

### **Social Reproduction Theory**

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) offered this theory as an explanation as to why schools served to be the site of reproduction of the inequality evident in society. Durkheim, as referred to by Egan (1992), saw the purpose of schooling as the process of socialization. School was the institution where people were taught the dominant hegemonic culture. Bourdieu felt that schools for this reason served to reproduce the class structures that were found in society because they taught to a set of norms that was really only accessible to those students who were accustomed to the norms that matched those of the school. The habitus of the school lent itself well to the habitus of certain students, namely those from middle class families. School and societal norms were structured to promote the dominant white middle-class hegemonic culture, placing certain groups at an advantage over others when they were unable to conform to the “rules” of schooling. Middle class students had the capital, through their upbringing, that positioned them for better success in schools. For working-class families the habitus of the education system was dissimilar to the one that they had been inculcated with and therefore even though they possessed their own stores of capital, were not seen as arriving at school “ready” because their forms of capital would go unrecognized by the institution. These students and their families are seen as lacking in cultural capital, because the cultural capital they have does not match up with the ones that are valued in schools (Howard, 2010). This placed them at a disadvantage to those students who had cultural capital that was valued

or recognized by the school system. Here it is evident that within the school system hierarchies existed. The advantaged position of those who had the “right” capital placed them at the top of the hierarchy. The schooling system, teaching in a manner that better matched the habitus of those already advantaged students, continued to perpetuate the unequal positions. Although all students acquired cultural capital from school, those who started out with capital that was valued, built upon that foundation they had already established, while those who were considered to have been devoid of culture were essentially building their capital at the cost of losing what they had already started with. As a result, those who were advantaged continue to be advantaged, and the others would always be below them in the hierarchy. Bourdieu did not see the disadvantaged catching up to the advantaged group or a leveling of the power structures in existence because the capital acquired in schools was simply a multiplier of what individuals had already started with (Harker, 1984). So with each consecutive generation, the advantaged class would continue to pass along their advantaged status to their kin, and thus the social classes seen in society would continue to be reproduced (Anyon, 1980; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Nolan, 2009; Schubert, 2012; Swartz, 1945; Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

### **Symbolic Violence**

Bourdieu saw the dynamic in schools as a reproduction of the power relations evident in society . The dominant continued to dominate, while those dominated continued to be dominated. He found this relationship oppressive in nature . Similar to Freire (1970), Bourdieu felt the oppressed often did not realize they were oppressed nor the oppressors aware they were oppressors; this relationship was just accepted as the norm. He saw this as an act of symbolic violence. Bourdieu felt schools were the setting

for the reproduction of this veiled power relation and were dependent upon the power relation in order to continue serving its structured purpose of socialization thereby legitimizing the act of symbolic violence it was committing upon its constituents, in this case the students (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977):

In any given social formation the dominant educational system is able to set up the dominant pedagogic work as the work of schooling without either those who exercise it or those who undergo it ever ceasing to misrecognize its dependence on the power relations making up the social formation in which it is carried on, because (1) by the means proper to the institution, it produces and reproduces the necessary conditions for the exercise of its internal function of inculcating, which are at the same time the sufficient conditions for the fulfillment of its external function of reproducing the legitimate culture and for its correlative contribution towards reproducing the power relations; and because (2) by the mere fact of existing and persisting as an institution, it implies the institutional conditions for misrecognition of the symbolic violence it exerts, i.e. because the institutional means available to it as a relatively autonomous institution monopolizing the legitimate use of symbolic violence are redispensed to serve additionally, hence under the guise of neutrality, the groups or classes whose cultural arbitrary it reproduces. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 67)

DiMaggio (1979) emphasized that this misrecognition of the oppressive nature found in the system is a result of repeatedly socializing children of different classes differently.

Anyon (1980) addressed this same issue in her discussion on the hidden curriculum:

“knowledge and skills leading to social power and regard (medical, legal, managerial) are made available to the advantaged social groups but are withheld from the working classes to whom more ‘practical’ curriculum is offered (manual skills, clerical knowledge)”

(para. 1). Winkle-Wagner (2010) argued that symbolic violence was a form of social exclusion due to the limiting aspect of the preferences individuals had. “Those in dominated classes accept their domination in part through what *appear* to be a series of chosen preferences or tastes, physical gestures, or cultural artifacts” (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 15). Bourdieu believed that your preferences were seen as a greater indicator of

your class association regardless of how much capital you were able to acquire. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1979) asserted while discussing symbolic power, that one who uses symbolic violence was using the power to impose their idea of social reality onto others, even though it was subjective in nature. Symbolic violence therefore occurs in schools when we indoctrinate students with the dominant hegemonic culture or award and recognize students only on the capital that is valued by the dominant group. Parent involvement can be considered a form of cultural capital for students, how parents are involved or recognized for being involved by schools could be considered a form of symbolic violence.

### **Parent Involvement**

“Parent involvement has been identified as a way to close gaps in achievement between more and less disadvantaged children and minority and majority youth” (Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012). It therefore comes as no surprise that current education policy reflects the importance of parent involvement (Epstein, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2010). NCLB “includes important requirements for schools, districts, and states to organize programs of parental involvement and to communicate with parents and the public about students’ achievement and quality of schools” (Epstein, 2005). California’s LAO reported that in order to provide students with high quality education, districts are required to set goals in key areas, including parent involvement, when developing their funding and accountability plans (Taylor M. , 2013). Schools are continually looking for opportunities for parents to get involved. In fact any school participating in Title I programs are required to have some form of a parent or family involvement committee as

one of the stipulations to receive federal monies. Elementary school parents have been shown to be more involved than secondary school parents (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Eccles & Wang, 2012; Mahatmya, Lohman, Matjasko, & Farb, 2012; Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012).

### **What It Looks Like**

Parent involvement can appear in a variety of forms. Parent involvement occurs on a spectrum from making sure your child had breakfast to being a member of the school board (Sheldon, 2002). Some define parent involvement to mean parents are directly involved, while others see parents as more of facilitators to their child's motivation to do well (Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012). Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris (1997) defined parent involvement as "the dedication of resources by the parent to the child within a given domain" (p. 538) and said there were three types. The three types of involvement in their study were behavior which concerned parent participation at school (i.e., attending events) or at home (i.e., helping with homework), cognitive-intellectual that concerned doing intellectually stimulating activities (i.e., discussing current events), and personal that concerned knowing what was going on at school.

In Sheldon's (2002) study on the predictors of parent involvement, he assigned two definitions for parent involvement, one for the home and one for at school. His definition for parent involvement at home was similar to Grolnick et al.'s (1997) definition of parent involvement but provided more detail; he defined it as "parent-child interactions on school-related or other learning activities and represents the direct investment of a parent's resources in her or his child's education" (Sheldon, 2002, p.



302). He thought of parent involvement at school to be activities like “interacting with teachers and other school personnel” (Sheldon, 2002, p. 302).

Different studies have focused on different components of parent involvement. One study focused on four types of involvement done by parents of eighth graders. Factors of parent involvement considered in the study were communication—talking about school with your kids, parents’ aspirations for their kids, actual participation in school activities, as well as supervising their children (Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012). Epstein (1992) specified six types of parent involvement that addressed the overlap of the family, school, and community spheres: basic obligations of families (i.e., positive home conditions), basic obligations of schools (i.e., communication), involvement at school (i.e., volunteering), involvement in learning activities at home (i.e., monitor at home and assist with teacher or school guidance), involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy (i.e., participating in PTA/PTO), and collaboration and exchange with community organizations (i.e., schools participate with organizations in the community).

### **Why Or Why Not**

Several studies explored the predictors of parent involvement and found that several factors would make parents more likely to be involved. Grolnick et al., (1997) used a multi-level model to examine the factors that influenced parents involvement in their children’s schooling. Although Grolnick et al. (1997) indicated that the factors associated with parental involvement were complex they identified three sets of factors that influenced parent involvement. The three factors were parent and child characteristics, family context, and teacher behavior and attitudes. The types of

involvement they studied were the behavior (involvement in school), cognitive (participating in cognitively stimulating activities), and personal (being informed about what was going on with their child). They found that family socioeconomic status (SES) was a strong predictor of behavior and cognitive involvement but was not associated with personal involvement suggesting that “the more affective types of involvement may occur equally at all parental occupational and educational levels” (Grolnick et al., 1997, p. 546). Single mothers were less involved on all three dimensions, but when SES was held constant they were only lower in the behavior dimension. Grolnick et al., (1997) hypothesized that it was probably difficult for single mothers to get to the school during the day and recommended that schools look for other types of involvement that do not require parents to be available during the day. They also found that child and parent characteristics were strongly related to cognitive involvement, in that, if a parent saw their child as being difficult they were less likely to engage in cognitively stimulating activities with their child, and if they saw themselves as being successful in playing the role as teacher they were more likely to participate in those activities. School involvement was negatively effected when the context was difficult or there was lack of social support. In the area of teacher behavior and attitudes, Grolnick et al., (1997) found that “teacher practices have their strongest impact when other factors (e.g., context, attitudes) are optimal” (p. 547). Furthermore, they asserted that eventhough teachers may find success in their efforts to include parents, “these attempts may not reach those most in need” (Grolnick et al., 1997, p. 547). As evident from their findings, there are many factors to consider when trying to explain parents’ involvement.

Several studies found that teacher practices significantly effected parents' inclination to participate. Teachers needed to make an explicit effort to involve parents; parents needed the teacher to communicate that they have a role (Epstein, 1992; Grolnick et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Although Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005) conducted a study on why parents became involved and Hornby and Lafaele (2011) conducted the opposite study of the barriers that prevented parents from being involved, the two studies had similar findings. Both studies highlighted the fact that parent beliefs played a large role in whether they decided to be involved or not. They found that if parents believed that it was part of their responsibility to be involved and they felt that they were capable of really helping they were more likely to be involved. Parents wanted to feel welcomed and invited to participate or come to the school, they also wanted to know more about how exactly they could help. Parents' life contexts effected how involved they were because that determined if they had the time or skills to be involved and in what capacity they could be involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Similarly, Sheldon (2002) found that if parents believed that all parents should be involved, they were more likely themselves to be involved. Furthermore Sheldon (2002) asserted that networks mattered and the greater the networks parents had the more likely they were to be involved. In other words, the more social capital these parents had the more involved they were likely to be.

### **Links to Capital**

Ishimaru (2012) asserted that building relationships (social capital) between the principal and parents and community members helped empower parents to act for change, to better access resources, and to become partners in their children's education.

Fostering these relationships also helped to eliminate deficit thinking that many educators have, by recognizing the social and cultural wealth capital (Yosso, 2005) that these groups were able to contribute, to better help their students be successful at school. “When educators build genuine connections between the home and the school and validate the ‘funds of knowledge’ in the larger community...they build true connections and relationships with families; connections that are mutually rewarding and satisfying” (Lopez, Gonzalez, & Fierro, 2010, p. 110). Relationships with parents and community members help to bridge schools to the larger organization of society, and help give parents and community members forms of capital to navigate the educational system they might not have had.

In their study on the impact of different types of parent involvement on academic achievement of elementary school students, Lee and Bowen (2006) determined that although all students benefited from some form of parental involvement, not all forms of involvement were recognized or valued by the schools. Those of European American middle class families were more valued by the schools than those of more diverse racial/ethnic and economic backgrounds. Epstein (1992) found that parents and teachers do not always agree on whether a parent is considered to be involved or not; teachers would say parents are not involved while parents at the same school would say they were. This implied that, similar to Lee and Bowen (2006), although some parents are involved with their children’s education, they practiced it in a form that went unrecognized by schools; these parents were seen to not care and places these students as comparatively disadvantaged to their peers. Schools “favor students (and families) who possess the cultural forms of the dominant groups” (Perez, 2009, p. 139) which results in schools

being an unequal playing field for students because educators tend to recognize the capital of the dominant group as the accepted norm. This presents itself as an access problem.

All studies showed that schools needed to provide parents actual opportunities to be meaningfully involved. Bolivar and Chrispeels (2011) asserted that leadership development can help parents be better advocates for their child as well as empower them to make changes at school when they encounter them. Leadership development would help parents build their social and intellectual capitals.

Lareau (1987) and Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) found that social class played a role in how involved parents were in their children's schooling in that it spoke to the social and cultural capital that parents had that was either recognized or unrecognized. Lareau's (1987) study looked at two schools in different communities; one working-class white and the other professional-class white (she only interviewed white families in order to remove race as a confounding factor). She found that parents' beliefs and resources were different between the two schools resulting in the different relationships evident between the school and home in these two communities. Parents in the working-class community saw school and home as two separate spheres while parents in the professional community saw the two overlapping significantly and therefore appeared to be more involved the way the teachers viewed involvement. Lareau (1987) found that:

parents' educational capabilities, their view of the appropriate division of labor between teachers and parents, the information they had about their children's schooling, and the time, money, and other material resources available in the home all mediated parents' involvement in schooling. (p. 79)

While Lareau (1987) focused more on cultural capital funds affected by social class,

Horvat et al., (2003) focused more on the effects of social class on parents' social capital

by way of their social networks. The researchers found that the networks families had in different social classes effected how families dealt with schools when presented with conflicts at school. Middle class family networks tended to be extensive and richer in resources than the networks found in the working-class families. Working-class families had networks but their networks tended to be more family focused and independent of others who were more associated to the educational field. As a result, when a problem presented itself at school the middle-class families tended to respond collectively as well as call upon authority figures to help them address the problem or challenge school officials while working class families reacted more independently and did not have as much influence (Horvat et al., 2003).

In a study done by Dufur, Parcel, and Troutmen (2013), social capital created at home and cultural capital at school were examined to see if they had differing effects on academic achievement. The study found that social capital in both contexts was helpful with social capital in the family being slightly more influential (Dufur, Parcel, & Troutman, 2013). This reaffirms that family involvement is important, but furthermore, that social capital plays a role. These studies asserted that social and cultural capital may play an important role in determining the capacity and level of parent involvement in schools as well as its influences on student achievement and engagement (Dufur et al., 2013; Horvat et al., 2003; Lareau, 1987).

### **Effects on Achievement and Engagement**

Parent involvement has been shown to play a role in student engagement (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Mahatmya, Lohman, Matjasko, & Farb, 2012; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Jeynes (2003) did a meta-analysis of the effect of parental involvement on

the achievement of minority students. He found that the academic achievement of all minority groups he studied was significantly impacted by parent involvement. Jeynes (2003) felt that it was important to not only look at parent involvement as a factor, but exactly what components of parent involvement resulted in the positive effects on achievement and engagement. Jeynes (2003) asserted that parent involvement might have the greatest impact on student achievement if cultural factors were removed.

Parents are students' first teachers, and therefore their beliefs or how they view education, influences how their children perceive the value of school as well as how they view their own academic abilities (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Lamborn, Brown, Mounts, & Steinberg, 1992). Bempechat and Shernoff (2012) felt that research suggested:

...at least two fundamental reasons that parental involvement influences engagement and motivation. The first is the strong association between parental relations with their children and overall psychological well-being, which positions parental involvement as a primary protective factor against disengagement. The second is the more direct influence of caring and supportive relationships with parents. (p. 323)

Raftery, Grolnick, and Flamm (2012) saw engagement as the “outward manifestation of motivation” (p. 345) and believed that “parents are salient facilitators of engagement” (p. 343). They suggested that schools could benefit from active collaboration with parents, particularly if they guided parents on how to promote academic success at home.

Lamborn, Brown, Mounts, and Steinberg (1992) asserted that “parents who actively participate in school activities and who support learning as an end in itself instill in adolescents an intrinsic interest in education and a willingness to persist at academic endeavors” (p. 153). Lamborn et al., (1992) felt that a more authoritative parenting style combined with involvement had more impact on academic engagement than just involvement alone. Additionally, parents' “expectations are associated with student

engagement” (Bingham & Okagaki, 2012) implying that all parents can be involved in some capacity regardless of status; all parents can set expectations that promote student success at school. Overall all researchers agreed that parental involvement at all levels of schooling was a positive thing. Research indicated that parent involvement positively affected student engagement across all ethnic groups and socio economic groups; the effect was greater in some groups over others, but overall all groups benefit from parents being involved (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Jeynes, 2003; Lamborn, Brown, Mounts, & Steinberg, 1992; Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012).

### **Student Engagement**

Interest in student engagement arose out of a need to curb dropout rates and then was explored as a means to help students complete school (Marks, 2000; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). It has therefore been a platform for school reform (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). There are many definitions of what student engagement is. Some scholars have compared it to motivation. Skinner and Pitzer (2012) asserted that engagement is the action form of motivation. Newmann, Wehlage, and Lamborn (1992) believed “engagement stands for active involvement, commitment, and concentrated attention, in contrast to superficial participation, apathy, or lack of interest” (p. 11). Although there was not really a consensus on the various components of engagement, there was an agreement that engagement does have an effect on how students experience school and education. Engagement was positively correlated to student achievement, both academically and non-academically (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Reschly & Christenson, 2012).



Studies have focused on and made suggestions on what factors are necessary to have greater student engagement (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Marks, 2000; Martin, 2007; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012; Taylor & Parsons, 2011). A sense of relatedness (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012), competence, and autonomy (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012) were some factors that effected student engagement. Additionally, Marks (2000) found that while personal background had a minimal effect on student engagement, positive feelings toward school “as reflected in school success, solidly predicts engagement; negative orientation, as reflected in alienation, just as solidly predicts disengagement” (p. 173). Marks (2000) also found that a positive school environment where authentic instructional work was taking place brought about greater engagement in students. The five aspects that Taylor and Parsons (2011) suggested create student-engaging classrooms reflected some of Marks (2000) findings. Like Marks (2000), Taylor and Parsons (2011) asserted that learning that is relevant, like authentic learning, and a positive school environment, where students feel safe to take risks, were optimal for student engagement. Furthermore, Taylor and Parsons (2011) suggested that technology rich learning environments, a culture where teachers are learning with students, and collaboration amongst teachers and students and teachers and teachers through professional learning communities would all better engage students.

### **Measuring**

Factors used to measure student engagement differed amongst researchers. Often, engagement was simply measured using academic achievement. Based on the definition they used for engagement, researchers looked at different components to measure the level of engagement a student has. Although there is not one definition universally used

for engagement, many of the studies referred back to Fredrick et al.'s (2004) multifaceted view of three different types of engagement—behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012).

**Behavioral, emotional, and cognitive.** Mahatmya, Lohman, Matjasko, and Farb (2012) provided more in depth definitions of Fredrick et al.'s (2004) construct of the three types of engagement as follows:

1. Behavioral engagement draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities. It is usually defined in three ways. The first entails positive conduct, as well as the absence of disruptive behaviors such as skipping school. The second definition concerns involvement in learning and academic tasks and includes behaviors such as effort, persistence, concentration, attention, asking questions, etc. A third definition involves participation in school –related activities such as athletics or school governance.
2. Cognitive engagement draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills.
3. Emotional engagement encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school, and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work. It refers to students' affective reactions in the classroom, including interest, boredom, happiness, sadness, and anxiety. (p. 47)

This model of measuring student engagement was used for this study.

## **Summary**

This survey of the literature provided an overview of social and cultural capitals in its theoretical setting, parent involvement, and student engagement. Student achievement was an indicator of student engagement. Parents were a large factor in engaging students, but, as evidenced by some of the literature, many parents were still absent from schools. Some attributed this absence to a lack of appropriate social or cultural capital. The parent group examined in this study positively affected student engagement by their active involvement in students' schooling. This parent group was an example of what having social and cultural capital can do for parent involvement and student engagement. Therefore they provided an optimal setting for applying the conceptual framework based on Bourdieu's theory.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 3 describes the qualitative research design used to examine the influence of social and cultural capitals on parents' ability to be involved in student engagement. The purpose of this inquiry was to uncover emergent themes associated with the social and cultural capital necessary for parents to be actively involved in student engagement. By listening to the lived stories of the authentic voices of the 15 participants in this study, the researcher hoped to determine to what extent social and cultural capital, as they pertain to parent involvement, influenced student engagement. This chapter is divided into subsections that provide explanations and information on such components of the methodology as the research design, population and sampling, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and limitations. The chapter closes with a short summary of the methodology and describes how it leads into the analysis of data collected.

#### **Research Design**

The present study utilized the qualitative research approach of narrative inquiry. Quantitative research often does not answer the “how” and “why” questions that qualitative research is better at addressing. According to Creswell (2013) “we conduct qualitative research because we want to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue” (p. 48). “Narrative inquiry is a particular type – a subtype – of qualitative inquiry” (Chase, 2011, p. 421). Narrative inquiry is a qualitative approach that uses storytelling to make meaning out of life

experiences. The parent advisory group featured in this study sought to provide motivation for students and resources for parents in order for students to be successful in the educational process. The qualitative approach of narrative inquiry was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to discover *how* they went about doing this through hearing the authentic voices of participants from conducted interviews. Through the stories told by participants, the researcher in this study gained a deeper understanding of how this group was able to make an impact on student success and engagement.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

“The study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative inquiry was not a new practice but seemed relatively new as a research methodology (Clandinin, 2006). It was used by sociologists and anthropologists during the first half of the 20th century and by feminists and sociolinguists in the second half to share life histories and personal narratives (Chase, 2005). Chase (2005) described five analytic lenses used by narrative researchers; these lenses often intersected. These lenses consisted of viewing stories as (a) forms of discourse or ones that create meaning, (b) verbal action or ones that accomplish something, (c) self and reality construction within the narrator’s social or cultural setting, (d) socially situated or in other words that the story pertains to a particular time, place, purpose, and audience, and (e) interpretive—when the researcher takes on the role of the narrator (Chase, 2005). Narrative studies can be differentiated two different ways—by data analysis strategy or by type (Creswell, 2013). A thematic data analysis strategy was used in this study where the researchers analyzed what was said for emergent themes. The type of narrative used in this study would be classified as an oral history that

“consists of gathering personal reflections of events and their causes and effects from one individual or several individuals” (Creswell, 2013, p. 73). The authentic voices of the participants in this type of research reflected the sociological concepts of social and cultural capital being researched.

Creswell (2012) highlighted some informal procedural steps that can be followed when conducting a narrative inquiry. The first step was to determine that narrative inquiry would be the best approach to answer the research question. Once that was determined the following steps can take place:

- Select individuals who have life experiences to share and spend time gathering their stories through multiple forms of information
- “Consider how the collection of the data and their recording can take different shapes” (p. 74)
- Situate participant stories within participants’ personal experiences, culture, and historical contexts
- Analyze the participants’ stories by restorying, “the process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework” (p. 74) usually establishing chronology
- Look for themes or categories to help better describe and understand the meaning of the story
- Collaborate with participants to co-create the meaning of the story, “adding a validation check to the analysis” (p. 75)

Narrative inquiry does not follow a “lockstep approach” (Creswell, 2012, p. 73).

Narrative inquiry does however have some characteristics that distinguish it from other

qualitative approaches as outlined in Table 1. Narrative inquiry focuses on “exploring the life of an individual” (Creswell, 2012, p. 104), is best fitted to a study that has a story that needs to be told, draws “from the humanities” (Creswell, 2012, p. 104), studies one or more individuals by “using primarily interviews and documents” (Creswell, 2012, p. 105), and analyzes the “data for stories, ‘restorying’ stories, and developing themes, often using a chronology” (Creswell, 2012, p. 105).

Table 1

*Characteristics of Narrative Inquiry*

Characteristics	Narrative Research	Researcher’s Application Of Qualitative Inquiry
Focus	Exploring the life of an individual(s)	Exploring the life of several individuals via authentic voice.
Type of problem best suited for design	Needing to tell stories of individual experiences	Needing to understand the story of the individuals involved/affected by this parent advisory group.
Discipline background	Drawing from the humanities including anthropology, literature, history, psychology, and sociology	Drawing from the sociological concepts of social and cultural capital of parent involvement on student engagement.
Unit of Analysis	Studying one or more individuals	Studying the oral histories of each participant.
Data collection forms	Using primarily interviews and documents	Individual interviews, field notes, and documents used to better understand participants’ experiences.
Data analysis strategies	Analyzing data for stories, “restorying” stories, developing themes, often using a chronology	Identify common themes that emerge in different participants’ stories helping to better explain the meaning of the story.
Written report	Developing a narrative about the stories of an individual’s life	A narrative report sharing the findings from the stories told.

*Note.* Adapted from “Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches” by J. W. Creswell, 2013, pp. 104-105.

## **Authentic Voice**

Narrative inquiry focuses on the stories told by participants. Ultimately, the researcher wanted to capture the story of this parent advisory group as told by the authentic voices of individuals associated with the group. Individuals' voices are situated and associated with the world of which the participants are a part of. "Voice is inevitably and at once the articulation of a defined self and the animation of socially and culturally mediated activity....voice is by its nature infused with the values and ways of being of the world of the other" (Sperling & Appleman, 2011, p. 81). For Bakhtin, utterances, or what people say, have multiple layers that have a dialogic relationship; utterances are dual voiced (Knoeller, 2004; Lee, 2004). An utterance belongs to the person who said it but what is said is a result of the experience had by the individual, that was influenced by, or was in response to, what others had said. In this study the participants told the researchers a story from their perspectives, that Bakhtin would already consider to be dual voiced, and then the researchers further interpreted those stories from the lenses used in the conceptual framework. For this reason, it was not only important to realize that the participants' stories were situated in a particular social context, but equally important for the researchers, as co-constructors of the story, to position themselves in the study.

## **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is the "key instrument" (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). In this study the researcher consisted of a three-member team. The researchers conducted interviews with participants using open-ended questions that were developed by the team. The researchers then analyzed and interpreted the stories they heard for emerging themes. It was important to remember, that "all research is interpretive; it is guided by the



researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 22).

### **Background of the Researcher**

Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) propose that a central element in narrative inquiry is justification, which comes in three forms. One of the forms is personal justification or the importance of "situating yourself in the study...by writing something we call narrative beginnings" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 25). Although we were a team of researchers, we each analyzed the stories we heard through different lenses and frameworks. The primary researcher for this study of social and cultural capital as it pertains to parent involvement on student engagement, was a female Asian American intermediate teacher working in a rural community where over 60% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch. This researcher's primary role at the school site was as an intervention teacher. In this capacity this researcher looked for ways to improve academic achievement primarily through channels of student engagement. This researcher was also the parent involvement coordinator and was interested in finding ways to get parents at the school site more involved in their students' education. This researcher was interested in knowing more about how the parent group being studied was able to empower parents to be active participants in the education process. This researcher was curious to find out if the individuals involved in making this parent advisory group successful, possessed social or cultural capital that stakeholders at her site might have been lacking which contributed to low levels of parent involvement.

## **Setting and Population Sampling**

### **Setting**

The site where the research took place was a ninth thru twelfth grade secondary high school located in southern California. Approximately 4,000 students attended the school. Based on the school profile found on their website, over 80% of the student population was Caucasian or Latino, about 10% Asian or Filipino, less than 10% was African American, and about 1% was other or unknown. There were over 300 teachers and staff at the school. The 2012 Census report states that the average household income for a family in this area between 2008 and 2012 was \$78,982, classifying the area as upper middle class (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). As publicized on their school website, the school offered a rigorous curriculum that offered over 20 different honors or AP courses as well as over 50 extracurricular groups and activities that students could have participated in.

### **Sampling**

Purposeful and convenient sampling was used for this qualitative study. The researchers selected the site and participants for the study because “they [could] purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2012, p. 156). The central phenomenon in this study was the impact the parent advisory group had at this high school on student engagement. The researchers wanted to better understand the impact in order to possibly replicate it at other schools. The population from which the participant sample was selected, was nonrandom consisting of administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and students who were or are now somehow associated to the parent advisory group or the high school

being highlighted in the study. Specifically, the researcher used the following criteria in choosing participants:

- Participants were associated with the parent advisory group being studied. OR
- Participants had participated or been involved with events or clubs sponsored by the parent advisory group. OR
- Participants had worked with teachers, parents, or individuals associated with the parent advisory group. OR
- Participants were associated with the high school where the study took place.

Keeping with the purposeful and convenient sampling strategy, the researchers were willing to interview any participant who was willing and able to participate and who met one of the above criteria. These criteria were chosen because these participants would be able to provide information related to a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the impact this parent advisory group has had on student engagement at this particular high school.

### **Participants**

The population from which the sample of participants was found consisted of administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and students. From this population a sampling of 15 participants were asked to participate in the study. Members from each subgroup were included in the selected sample.

### **Working With a Gatekeeper**

Upon approval of the Institutional Review Board at the university, the researchers met with the assistant to the superintendent at the district the researchers planned to conduct research in to get the appropriate permissions. The assistant to the superintendent

served as the gatekeeper, the key informant who allowed the researchers into the group (Creswell, 2012). She granted the researchers access to conduct research within the district and put the researchers in contact with possible participants. The researchers had both verbal and written communication with the gatekeeper.

### **Participant Characteristics**

Participants fell into one of five categories. Participants were considered an administrator, teacher, parent, community member, or student. The 15 participants interviewed participated in the study voluntarily. Each participant met at least one of the selection criteria stated earlier. Participants were considered members or non-members. Members were the individuals who were directly involved with the parent advisory group at some time or another. Table 2 gives an overview of the characteristics of the participants in the study.

**Administrators.** Three district level administrators participated in the study. Participant 1 and Participant 2 were previously site level administrators at the high school where the study took place and helped the group while they were there; for this reason they were considered members. All administrators were over 50 years of age and were considered part of the upper class. The two administrators that were once site level administrators at the focus high school were Black, while the district administrator, who was also the gatekeeper, was White. All administrators held graduate level degrees. The average number of years the administrators were associated with the school was 14 years. Participants 1 and 2 were directly involved with the parent advisory group under study during their time as site administrators.

Table 2

*Characteristics of Participants*

Participant Number	Classification	Sex	Age Range	Status / Class	Highest Level of Education Obtained	Race / Ethnicity	Years Associated with School	Member
1	Administrator	F	50 +	Upper	Masters	Black	9	Yes
2	Administrator	M	50+	Upper	Masters	Black	6	Yes
3	Administrator	F	50+	Upper	Masters	White	27 <sup>d</sup>	No
4	Teacher	M	36-49	Upper Middle	Masters	Black	13	Yes
5	Teacher	M	50+	Upper Middle	Masters	Black	8	No
6	Community Member	M	50+	Upper Middle	Associates	Black	10	Yes
7	Parent	M	50+	Upper	Bachelors	Black	7 <sup>p</sup>	Yes
8	Parent	M	50+	Upper	Bachelors	Black	7 <sup>p</sup>	Yes
9	Student	M	15-20	Upper Middle	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Hispanic	4	No
10	Student	F	15-20	Upper	11 <sup>th</sup> grade	White	3	No
11	Student	M	15-20	Upper	11 <sup>th</sup> grade	White	3	No
12	Student	F	15-20	Upper Middle	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Hispanic	4	No
13	Student	F	15-20	Upper Middle	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Black	4	Yes
14	Student	F	15-20	Upper	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Black	4	Yes
15	Community Member	F	21-35	Upper	Masters	East Indian	15	Yes

*Note.* A member indicates that an individual has been directly involved with the parent advisory group studied; <sup>d</sup> = years with the district; <sup>p</sup> = years associated with the parent advisory group

**Teachers.** Two teachers were interviewed for this study. Both teachers were Black males who held Masters Degrees. The average number of years the teachers were associated with the school was 10.5 years. Participant 4 was directly involved with the parent advisory group the researchers focused on. Participant 5 was not directly involved with the parent group but was familiar with their mission.

**Parents.** Two parents were interviewed for this study. Both parents were black males whose students do not attend the high school where the setting of this study took place. Both individuals were educated professionals in managerial positions for major corporations. Participant 7 was a regional director for a commercial company and Participant 6 was a regional manager in public affairs for a major public utilities company. Both parents serve on the executive board of the parent advisory group studied.

**Community members.** Two community members were interviewed for this study. Participant 6 was an African American retired firefighter and entrepreneur. He has been associated with the school since it first opened and is one of the founding members of the parent group. While he has no children that attend the school, he is actively involved in the activities through the parent group and coaching. Participant 15 was a business owner in the community. She is an alumnus of the high school in the study. She works closely with the parent group as well as the students, when the time permits, and has helped them secure guest speakers for lunch events. Both community members were considered members for this study due to their direct involvement with the parent group.

**Students.** Six students were interviewed for this study. The students were juniors or seniors at the high school where the study took place. Four of the students, Participants 9 thru 12 were not directly involved with the parent advisory group. These students were

members of the larger school community and were all members of the junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) chapter at this high school, but since they were not directly involved with the parent advisory group being studied, they were considered non-members. Participants 13 and 14 were the president and vice president of Black Student Union (BSU), the high school club that was directly associated with the parent advisory group and are therefore considered members.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Once the research team made contact with some possible participants, interviews were scheduled at sites of convenience. We explained the study to participants and obtained informed consent for their voluntary participation, this included reassuring them that they may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants signed the appropriate consent form; participants less than 18 years of age had to obtain the signatures of their parents as well (Appendix A). Participants were then interviewed using the instrumentation found in Table 3. Interviews were recorded with electronic devices and tablets from which a transcript of each conversation was produced. Field notes were taken of the observations made during the interviews. Documents were collected at interviews if they were available. The interviews took place over a two-week period in the first quarter of 2014. Each interview was between 30-90 minutes in length.

Table 3

*Instrumentation: Main and Supporting Interview Questions*

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Asked to all participants:

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1. Tell me about your school and what it offers (expected responses covering the school curriculum, delivery of instruction, language medium of instruction (bilingual or English only with native language), school climate, demographics (diversity, free and reduced lunch, etc.)
  - a. Tell me about yourself. (Looking for background, work experience, education level, socioeconomic status, educational experience.)
  - b. How do parents learn about this school?
  - c. What is the role of the parent advisory group in this?
2. Tell me about the type of learning that is happening in this school.
  - a. What does it look like?
  - b. What types of interactions are taking place?
  - c. What types of supports are in place for this learning to be successful?
  - d. Are there any challenges that to this type of learning?
  - e. What is the role of the parent advisory group in this?
3. Tell us about the achievement of students. Share your perception on whether or not family income or social status has an effect on the achievement of students in this school, and why.
  - a. Tell me about the teacher in this school
  - b. Who do you believe contributes to the achievement of students?
    - i. What does that look like?
    - ii. How are they supported to do this?
  - c. What is the role of the parent advisory group in this?
4. Share some traditions (cultural practices) and activities that you do in school and any effects on children?
  - a. What traditions and activities are practiced at this school
  - b. What effect do you see them having on student involvement and student's relationships (with peer, adults, family)
  - c. What is the role of the parent advisory group in this?
5. Name some challenges that the school faces.
  - a. What takes place to make parents feel welcome?
    - i. What does that look like?
  - b. What supports are in place for student, teachers, parents, admin, or other stakeholders?
  - c. What is the role of the parent advisory group in this?

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Table 3, continued

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Asked to all participants:

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6. Tell me what you are proud of about your school; what do you like and don't like about your school. Tell us about it.
    - a. What is the role of the parent advisory group in this?
  7. What do you think are the community resources that are helpful to student learning? Share how you make use of them for student engagement and learning.
    - a. What does it look like?
    - b. Tell us about how people gain access to these resources and make use of them.
    - c. If no, then why?
    - d. What is the role of the parent advisory group in this?
- 

Asked to parents and pupils only:

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8. Do you feel welcomed in this school? Tell us about your impression on how the school personnel welcome you and involve you in the school's activities? Are the teachers approachable? Explain.
    - a. What is the routine that you go through if you want to talk to a teacher?
    - b. In what ways/opportunities are available for you to express your concerns about the school?
    - c. What is the role of the parent advisory group in this?
  9. Tell us how you spend your time at home. Share with us how you communicate at home? Type of conversations?
    - a. Parents: When your child is not at school what do you do together? What do you talk about?
    - b. What is the role of CPAG in this?
    - c. Students: What do you do outside of school? What do you talk about?
      - i. If parents, what about your friends?
      - ii. If friends, what about your parents?
    - d. What is the role of the parent advisory group in this?
  10. Please share anything else that you would like to about the school. About the parent advisory group?
-

## **Validity of Instrumentation**

The instrumentation used in this study had been field-tested on over 100 participants. The instrumentation was used in 2011 by a team of 10 doctoral students and two faculty members from the University of Philippines and one faculty member from the University of Redlands who conducted research that examined the influences of funds of knowledge, social and cultural capital, and social class on student engagement. The study took place at selected school sites in the Philippines where over 70 teachers, parents, students, and administrators were interviewed using the same instrumentation. The doctoral students and faculty from the University of Philippines that was involved in this research presented their preliminary findings in the Philippines at the International Conference on Teacher Education in July of 2012. Additionally, the instrumentation has been used since the initial study in 2011 in the United States. Several students at the University of Redlands have used the instrumentation for their doctoral dissertations. The interview questions were used on over 50 participants to similarly examine the influences of funds of knowledge, social and cultural capital, and social class on student engagement. From this research, two of the resulting papers were accepted for presentation by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in 2013 and 2014. The interview questions were further developed collaboratively by the research team to meet the needs of this study, for example, the additional question that focused on the role of the parent advisory group for each question. The questions created the platform from which the themes emerged that answered the three research questions of the study.

## **Data Management**

“Narrative researchers have an ethical duty to protect the privacy and dignity of those whose lives we study” (Josselson, 2007, p. 537). For this study all data was safeguarded for privacy. For anonymity, names were removed from transcripts and the final report. Pseudonyms for individuals, groups, and institutions (i.e., Parent 1) were used for anonymity. Transcriptions of interviews as well as any digital field notes were kept secure at all times on a password protected computer to which only the researchers had access. A digital copy of paper field notes was also saved on the password protected computer and the originals shredded. The researchers did “all that [was] humanly possible to keep material confidential” (Josselson, 2007, p. 542).

## **Ethical Concerns**

An ethical stance in narrative inquiry involves minimizing harm to those who are being studied (Josselson, 2007). This study had minimal risks. Participants were not asked to do any extraordinary tasks from what they already do. There was no deception, participants had free consent to participate or leave the study at any time, and all data gathered was safeguarded for confidentiality and privacy.

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

Once interviews were completed, they were transcribed and analyzed. Data analysis followed the general steps outlined by Creswell (2013). The five steps included data organization, reading and memoing, describing and classifying the data for codes and themes, and then interpreting and representing the data (Creswell, 2013). The transcripts were analyzed and coded for common themes that emerged pertaining to social and cultural capital aspects of parent involvement.

Table 4

*Narrative Inquiry Data Analysis Steps*

- 
1. Data Organization: Create and organize files for data
  2. Reading, memoing: Read through text, make margin notes, form initial codes
  3. Describe the data into codes and themes
  4. Classify the data into codes and themes
  5. Interpret the data: Interpret the larger meaning of the story
- 

*Note.* Adapted from “Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches” by J.W. Creswell, 2013, pp.190-191.

Interview questions were transcribed into Microsoft Word and then imported into NVivo version 10.0. NVivo software for qualitative research was used to execute the first four steps of the five step process shown in Table 4. NVivo is software that allows you to collect, organize, and analyze content from interviews using search, query, and visualization tools (QSR International, 2014). While NVivo does not analyze the data for researchers, “the major benefit of computer technology is that it can assist the researcher in looking at the data creatively from a range of perspectives that would otherwise not have been explored” (Andrew, Salamonson, & Halcomb, 2008). Open coding, “coding the data for its major categories of information” (Creswell, 2013, p. 86) was used in the initial data analysis. Axial coding, where “the researcher identifies one open coding category to focus on and then goes back to the data and creates categories around” (Creswell, 2013, p. 86) that category, was used to further analyze the data. NVivo assisted the researchers in the coding of data. The data was coded into nodes and then those nodes were further collapsed into logical hierarchies that allowed the researcher to

better interpret the data (Appendix C). Initial nodes and categories were discussed and created by a team of three researchers. Coding was validated by two other researchers in addition to the primary researcher ensuring that there was a high degree of confidence and reliability for the three transcripts that were coded separately. The researchers reached consensus on codes for 12 out of the 15 interviews, or 80% of participants' recorded transcripts.

Once data was appropriately coded in the NVivo software, step five, or interpreting the data, involved finding patterns and grouping codes from earlier into broader themes. The themes were then organized to make sense of the data. The conceptual framework presented earlier on in chapter 1 was used to guide interpretation of the data. Connections between the emergent themes and the conceptual framework were made. Field notes were also reviewed in the analysis of the data. All data was triangulated for validity.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

It was assumed in the study that participants are voluntarily participating and furthermore were being honest and truthful when telling their stories. Researchers also made the assumption that the participants were a representative sampling of the population studied. Limitations did exist in this study. The sample size was small and given the fact that the population sampled was specific to persons directly associated with the parent group the researchers were studying, located at one specific school, and in one specific area and time period, limited the scope of the study and the ability for the researchers to generalize the findings for all populations. It is unlikely that another group will have the exact same population and demographics that would allow them to have the

same experiences as the participants in this study had. The results were not skewed by bias, the Halo, or the Hawthorne effects.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to better understand to what extent the social and cultural capital components of parent involvement influence student engagement.

Narrative inquiry as the qualitative approach for this research was appropriate, because it allowed us to hear the authentic voices of those who were directly involved with the organization to help us make meaning of what had occurred. The appropriate pathway addressing ethical concerns was followed; an IRB was submitted and approved, the gatekeeper provided us with access, participants consented to participating in the study, and all data was safeguarded for confidentiality and privacy. The study has practical significance because the district where the setting of this study takes place will be using the findings of the study. The researcher hoped that the themes that emerged from the stories shared would help provide insight into how parents can be supported with the necessary capital in order to actively be involved in increasing student engagement.

## Chapter Four

### Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the research for this study on the influence of the social and cultural capital components of parent involvement on student engagement. Using NVivo software and qualitative research methods, themes emerged from listening to the authentic voices of 15 participants in the categories of social capital and cultural capital when speaking about the parent advisory group that was led by five influential African American males. The chapter is organized into three major sections: (1) organizing the data for analysis, (2) social capital, (3) cultural capital. The two latter sections contain subcategories of the themes that emerged from analysis of the data. Influences on student engagement are discussed for each emergent theme.

#### **Organizing the Data for Analysis**

Utilizing NVivo software for qualitative research, transcripts of the 15 interviews were imported and then openly coded. Recall from the previous chapter that NVivo uses “nodes” as labels for codes. Initial nodes were established by viewing the data through the lens of the conceptual framework presented in chapter 1. Specifically, the researcher listened for concepts contained within the utterances that were associated to Bourdieu’s idea of social and cultural capital as previously defined. Initial nodes included such things as building bridges, care and concern, sense of belonging, and recognition. There were about 40 initial nodes. From these initial categories, the researcher grouped common ideas into larger themes found within the categories of social capital and cultural capital. Figure 2 shows the working codes as the nodes or ideas were reorganized and collapsed

to form the larger themes. Figure 3 shows the general schematic for the developed themes.

CULTURAL CAPITAL	SOCIAL CAPITAL
<b>KNOWING HOW TO NAVIGATE THE FIELD</b>	<b>GROUP MEMBERSHIP</b>
Climate	<b>EMPOWERING</b>
Comfort	Building Capacity
Information Dissemination	Empowerment
Knowing the system	Sense of Belonging
Lack of skill	<b>RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHERS</b>
Sense of Belonging	Accountability
<b>PRIORITIES FOR ACTION &amp; CHANGE</b>	Responsibility
Change & Action	<b>NETWORKS &amp; SOC. CONNECTIONS</b>
Giving back	<b>IMPORTANCE OF THE COMMUNITY</b>
Making time	Community - It takes a village
Opportunity	Community Support
<b>PRIVILEGED STATUS</b>	Resources
Privilege	<b>KNOWING THE RIGHT PEOPLE</b>
Role models	Access
<b>VALUES &amp; EXPECTATIONS</b>	Building Bridges
Attitudes	Connections
Dedication	Role models
Expectations	<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b>
Passion	<b>CARING</b>
Predispositions	Care & Concern
Priorities	Relationship
Responsibility	You Matter - Are Valued
Values	<b>PURPOSEFUL</b>
	Change & Action
	Communication
	Relevance
	<b>SUPPORTIVE</b>
	Administrative Support
	Parental Support
	<b>TRUSTING</b>
	Relationship
	Trust

Figure 2. Working codes

Note. Terms located in the white cells were part of the group of initial codes developed.



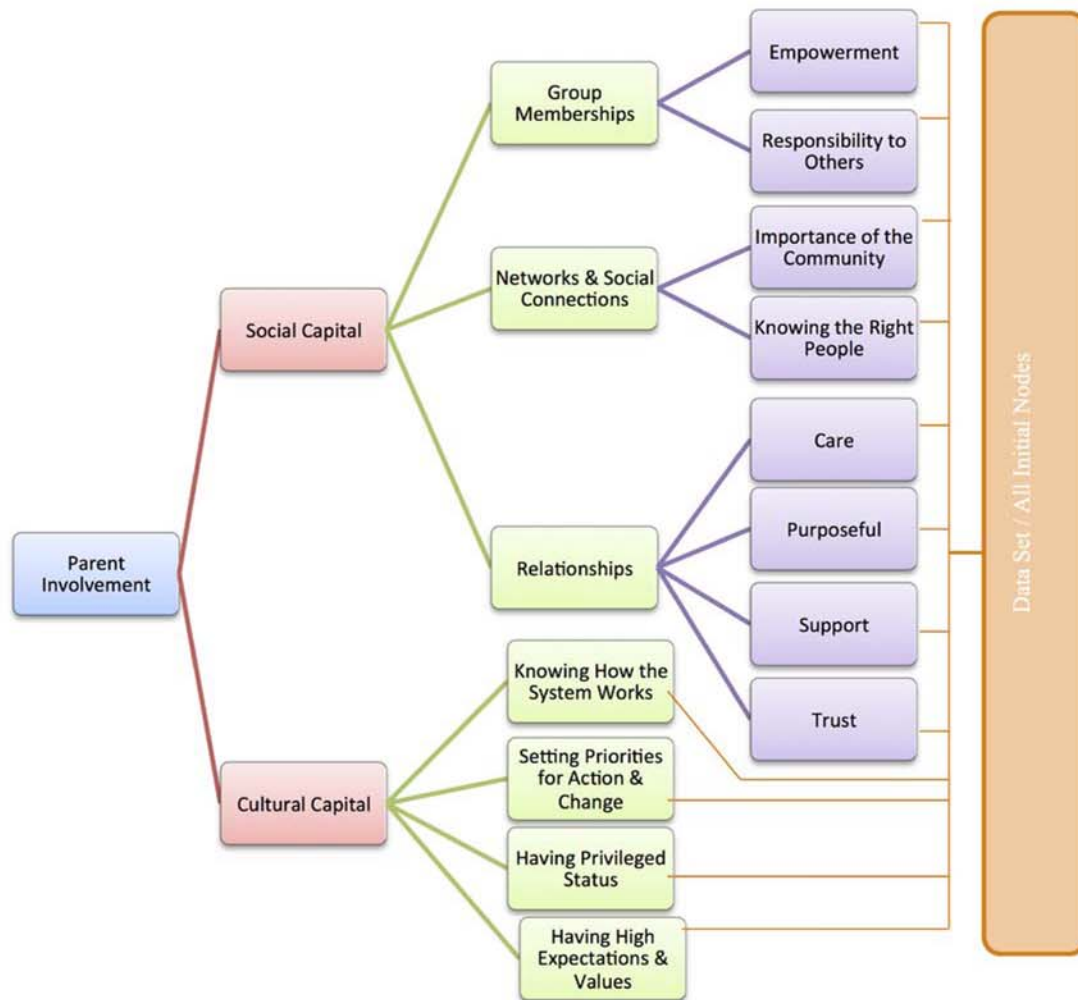


Figure 3. Theme schematic

Social capital was divided into the three subareas: (1) group membership, (2) networks and social connections, and (3) relationships. Eight themes emerged within these subareas of social capital. There were two themes in the subarea of group membership that centered on the ideas of empowerment and responsibility to others. An additional two themes found in the subarea of networks and social connections focused on the importance of the community as well as knowing the right people. The remaining four emergent themes in the subarea of relationships were that they were purposeful, caring, supportive, and trusting. Four themes emerged in association to cultural capital: (1) knowing how to navigate the field, (2) setting priorities for action and change, (3) having privileged status, and (4) having high expectations and values. These twelve themes as well as evidence of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional measures of student engagement, as it pertains to the involvement of the parent group, are discussed in the rest of this chapter.

### **Social Capital**

Social capital was defined earlier as the networks, relationships, and social connections that serve to increase the opportunities or resources available to those who have membership in the group. Group membership, the networks and social connections parents have, and the relationships they form with others provide parents with increased opportunities to become involved with their students' education, which research has shown, and this study confirms, positively influences student engagement.

### **Group Membership**

Participants in this study were designated as members or non-members based on their association or lack of association with the parent advisory group being studied.

Those who were members expressed a sense of responsibility to others and empowerment for being a part of the group. Table 5 provides some examples of what participants had to say pertaining to group membership and its influences on student engagement.

Table 5

*Social Capital — Group Membership*

Examples of Influence of Group Membership on Student Engagement		
Theme	Evidence	Influence on Student Engagement
Responsibility to Others	<p><i>“We wouldn’t have BSU without [parent advisory group]” ~Student</i></p> <p><i>“It empowers the parents and the community to say it’s our responsibility. They’re ours.” ~Teacher</i></p> <p><i>“If you do not participate at BSU as an officer or whatever, or come to the meetings – you can’t reap the benefits...” ~Parent</i></p>	<p>Behavioral Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students’ grades improved.</li> <li>• Students’ participated in BSU</li> <li>• Students became peer tutors</li> <li>• Students knew someone was checking in on them so they had a sense of accountability resulting in greater efforts on their part.</li> </ul>
Empowerment	<p><i>“They feel empowered to go to the school. Because a lot of times it’s that empowerment feeling, feeling welcome.” ~Administrator</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t want to go to the school district and say, ‘fund me a bus please, fund me this or that.’ We got it. We can do this. It empowers the parent” ~Teacher</i></p>	<p>Emotional Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students had positive feelings about school because they felt there were people there they could depend on</li> </ul> <p>Cognitive Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students felt they needed to help their peers to achieve</li> </ul>

**Responsibility to others.** Members of the parent advisory group felt a sense of responsibility for caring for students. Participants 1, 2, and 4, all district personnel, at some point in their interview made reference to the fact that parents were not placing blame or pointing fingers at anyone for the failures of their students but in fact were looking to take responsibility and action to help the students. Participant 4 who was a teacher but also a parent stated “we decided it is our responsibility, not the schools. I mean we’re the primary responsible for the education of our kids.” They wondered what they as parents could do to turn things around. Participant 7, who was a parent, asserted that although they initially felt responsible for just their own kids these parents extended their realm of accountability to include members of Black Student Union (BSU) and later all students at the school.

In addition to feeling responsible for students’ academic success, members felt a sense of accountability to each other. Membership in the parent group was not taken lightly. The leaders of the parent group did not just let anyone be a part of their group. They wanted parent participation, but more importantly they wanted members who were truly committed to the vision of helping students succeed:

Just because you show up doesn’t mean you’re really committed to what’s going on. And as a matter of fact, the rule is, in order for you to be considered serious, you have to attend meetings on the first and third Saturday for the next year in order for you to even be considered an official member. And that’s just to be an official member of the group; we’re not even talking about being an officer on the board. (Participant 8, Parent)

Similarly, Participant 6, a community member and parent, said:

If you don’t last a year then we know where your heart is at, because you’re not getting paid for it anyway, and if you can’t afford to come on your free time to learn then we know it’s not where your heart is at.

These parents' sense of responsibility set an example for students to hold a level of accountability for themselves and their peers, which directly affected student engagement.

An increase in student engagement could be seen, especially for students who were members of BSU, the student organization directly associated with the parent advisory group. Behavioral engagement was evidenced in the increase in student achievement seen by the narrowing of the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students as well as in the level of participation students had with the school and the organization. Students felt the sense of membership and accountability for themselves and their peers. This showed that these students as members of BSU were cognitively and emotionally engaged. Students were cognitively engaged when they made the investment to work hard to academically achieve, furthermore they were emotionally engaged because they felt a sense of obligation to also help keep their fellow classmates accountable. This sense of accountability to the group can be seen when Participant 14, the current president of BSU stated that:

We try real, real hard to push *our* students academically. That's really what our focus is now. Just the other day we called out any students who had a D or an F. We asked them what's going on? What can we do to help you? Is it a family situation? Do you need tutoring? We offer tutoring Tuesday after school. Come into this room. Come let us help you.

Group membership gave parents as well as students who were members a sense of responsibility that positively affected student engagement.

**Empowerment.** Group membership also provided members with a sense of empowerment. Knowing that they were a part of a group that had a common mission that they were all working toward, enabled these parents to seek avenues of change as well as

try to build that capacity in other parents. These parents felt a sense of belonging to something bigger, that served a greater purpose, and they wanted to share that with others. Membership in the group allowed these men to feel welcomed to go into the school and try to take control of a situation that they felt they had some responsibility for. The members of the organization also felt empowered to address the board of education with what they saw as part of the solution to a serious problem.

These parents sought to educate other parents on ways to become more involved and invested in their students' future, they sought as well to catch the interest of students in becoming members of their group. For parents, the advisory group put on parent workshops that helped to educate parents on the A thru G system for being on track to go to college in California. For students, the parent advisory group invited guest speakers to speak to students during lunch, while providing students with pizza for lunch. These parents encouraged active involvement by both parents as well as students as evidenced by what Participant 4, a teacher and also member of the parent group, said:

We want the kids to, on the outside to be looking in, going, 'Boy they've got something cool over there. They've got something good over there happening. I want to be a part of that...what's going on over there?' ...so we want to create this bubble of influence...

Their "bubble of influence" did serve to actively engage students who were involved in attending these lunchtime meetings. These students chose on their own to come to the meetings and listen to what the speaker had to say. Student participation was an indicator of behavioral engagement.

### **Relationships**

Many relationships were created or strengthened between multiple parties as a result of the impact this parent advisory group sought to make on student achievement.

The relationships were integral to the group executing their mission. Essential relationships for parent involvement found in this study were relationships between school/administration and parents, parents and parents, and parents and students. From the stories shared by participants all these relationships tended to have some degree of purpose, care, support, and trust. Some sample statements which support these themes as well as their influence on student engagement can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

*Social Capital — Relationships*

Examples of Influence of Relationships on Student Engagement		
Theme	Evidence	Influence on Student Engagement
Purposeful	<p><i>“I found [the other members of the parent group] because we were talking about it in the stands at the basketball game. And we said this is my problem too.” ~Community Member</i></p> <p><i>“As parents they were seeing, well. They weren’t eligible. They’re not making the grades. So they started out asking questions.” ~Administrator</i></p>	<p>Behavioral Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students’ grades improved</li> <li>• Students showed effort in academic tasks because they knew someone cared and would be following up.</li> <li>• Students participated in BSU and sports</li> </ul> <p>Emotional Engagement</p>
Care	<p><i>“I’m here because I care about you, and this is how this is going to affect your life, and you need to change this.” ~Administrator</i></p> <p><i>“Once you feel a little success then it becomes more contagious. You know there are people behind them rooting them on. So then it comes down to a caring adult paying attention to the student.” ~Administrator</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students had positive ties with the school because they knew someone cared.</li> <li>• Students were interested in school due to the incentives the parent group had to offer them.</li> <li>• Students felt supported.</li> <li>• Students felt school was a safe place where people they could trust were.</li> </ul>
Support	<p><i>“My parents, my mom and dad are really supportive in what I do. Making sure that I get things done, on top of me that I achieve my own goals when things go wrong.” ~Student</i></p> <p><i>“So when I met these guys I gave them carte blanche access to the campus” ~Administrator</i></p>	<p>Cognitive Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students attended after school tutoring in order to better their understanding of content</li> </ul>
Trust	<p><i>“We’re breaking down suspicion and building bridges.” ~Administrator</i></p> <p><i>“Once we help them to understand the probability of them making the NFL, the NBA, becoming a rapper or Beyoncé, is slim to none, they kinda sort of start to listen.” ~Parent</i></p>	



**Purposeful.** All the relationships in this study appeared to have a purpose. The parents in this parent advisory group formed relationships with the ultimate purpose of positively affecting student outcomes. They formed relationships in order to gain access, tap into resources, communicate information, and create change. From the very beginning, the formation of the parent group was on purpose. These parents were concerned about the eligibility of their student athletes and this was the foundation for them to collaboratively seek ways of changing this dismal outcome. “The premise for our getting started was to take care of our African American kids” (Participant 2). The founding fathers of the parent group were talking in the stands at a basketball game and happened to find what Participant 6 referred to as “like-minded fathers” who bonded over similar concerns about their sons: “We just happened to get together and that [is] how it started.”

While the parent-to-parent relationship that was formed to create this parent advisory group served a common good, some parent-to-parent relationships appeared more one-sided. Outside, parents often formed relationships with the parent members of this parent advisory group for the purpose of reaping the benefits for their own students, not so they could contribute to the efforts being made by the group. When the parent advisory group presented a workshop inviting other parents to join them in their mission, outside parents would simply inquire as to what things the group members could do for *their* child:

People are very myopic and selfish. I mean they may be concerned about their particular kid, but they don't have a broader concern about, you know, how well the class is doing, or how well the school does, or what's going on in the community. (Participant 7, parent)

In this instance, relationships were worthwhile when they served to benefit certain parents, however the parent advisory group members did not fault students for their parents' selfish motives and sought to help all students who might need it or wanted it because "this is about the students and their achievements" (Participant 8, parent).

The parent-student relationship forged by these men was therefore also intentional for these were the individuals they were hoping to serve and those they hoped would gain the most benefits from their aid. The relationships they formed with students helped students to feel more connected to the school, and to know that there were adults, and not merely being kept accountable by their parents. This relationship was particularly integral to the success of the parent group in raising the level of all types of student engagement.

**Care.** A consistent theme found throughout all the relationships formed by these men was the ethic of care. Participant 8 asserted that they (the members of the parent advisory group) cared about each other and are there for each other—that is evident when you see these men gather together. Aside from the care seen in the relationships they have with each other, the sense of care is evident in their relationships with students. All of the men that made up the parent advisory group had no children at the high school. They continued to volunteer their time because they cared about the well being of all students and the students were well aware of this as was evidenced by the following statement made by Participant 13, who was a student:

They committed themselves to being the village elders, despite the fact that they no longer have a personal investment in the program, which tells the student they do care about you. It's not about them anymore. Their kids aren't here. They're not gaining anything. They're a non-profit. They don't get paid. It's solely for the good of these students.

Participant 13 also asserted that for some students, those whose parents were not as involved in their students' lives, knowing that "some parents, even if it's not their own, are watching out for them, caring about them" was appreciated.

One component of caring for students was making them feel like they mattered, that they were valued. Almost all participants made reference to the fact that these parents would pull students aside to speak to them personally and let them know we care, we are watching you, and we know you are capable. Participant 6, a long-standing member of the parent group, used an example of a graduate who had been one of the kids who had been under their guidance. He said they had brought him up and told him that he would make it and that he would do well. The student went to Yale; "he's doing great."

The parents in the advisory group displayed their ethic of care through mentorship as well. Participant 6 explained that:

We are all taking at least one kid and personally mentor one kid and help them to do better in school. And show them that somebody actually cares for them other than just about what they can do for them.

Another way the parent advisory group showed they truly cared was through recognizing the students for their achievements at the end of each academic year at their annual awards banquet. Participant 15, an involved community member, felt that this banquet was not only important to the parents but particularly to the students because she felt that it made them think, "Ok, I did something important, and people care about me. I'm not just invisible to the community." Students knowing that they had these relationships full of care and concern served as an impetus for them to work hard and make their parents, as well as these parents, proud. These students were deeply engaged. In fact, Participant

10, a student, attributed student success or engagement to having both teachers and parents saying “you can do this, and following up – actually showing that they care.”

**Support.** Evidenced alongside the care that was a large part of the parent and student relationship, was the supportive nature of these relationships. Supportive relationships came in many forms; most notable were the relationships between the parents and school administration, including teachers, those between member parents and non-member parents, and those between parents and students.

Participants made unmistakably clear that the support given by teachers, school administration, as well as the district administration was integral to the ability of this group to effect change. Participants 1 – 8 and 15 (all non-students) all made at least one, if not more references, to the fact that you needed to have the support and backing of everyone from the superintendent down to the teachers at the school. Although there was some suspicion from teachers in the beginning about who these men talking to students on campus were, Participant 6, a member parent, felt that “the teachers just seem to be more receptive to us”. Furthermore, Participant 6 said “Now they actually call. They call or when we show up they are happy to see us...Actually when a teacher is having problems with a kid the first thing they do is call [a member of the parent group].” So in this situation, there was a two-way supportive relationship. The school (administration and teachers) supported the parent group by welcoming them onto their campus while the parents supported the school by helping to work directly with at-risk students.

Non-member parents were supported by the parents of the advisory group also. Participants 1, 2, and 4-7, administrators, teachers, and parents, all addressed ways the parent group has educated the greater parent community. The parent advisory group held

parent workshops where they showed parents how to hold their students accountable and stay on top of their grades using the online grading system, how to ensure that their students were on the path to educational success, and educated them on A through G requirements. Although parents liked the benefits offered, the parent group did not receive as much support from non-member parents in terms of involvement as they would have hoped. While these men in the parent group were trying to inform them of the things they could do to help support their students, “the problem was that parents wanted us to do everything for them” (Participant 6), which in a sense did not help to support the parent group.

The parent group was initially formed to help students be more successful in their academic careers. In order to do this the parent group had many support channels in place for students. According to Participant 14, a student, the parent group sponsored everything BSU did. Their support did not go unappreciated by students: “You know they do so much for us and it sucks that they go unrecognized sometimes” (Participant 14). The encouragement these men provided students was another form of support, a form of support that affected students’ behavioral engagement in that it served as the stimulus for some students to work harder at school.

**Trust.** The last theme that seemed to mark all of the relationships found in the conversations of this study was trust. The administrators and parents needed to have trust in their relationships; the students and parents needed to have trust in their relationships; and even the parents needed to have trust in their relationships with other parents.

Trust was evident in the relationships that were formed because without trust the administrators would never have allowed this parent group onto the campus and to be

involved with students at the level that they were. Participant 3, a district administrator, alluded to the fact that there had to be some trust on the part of the district because “their willingness or non-willingness to sit and listen plays a huge factor” in the work that these parents sought to do and had these parents been “greeted with a closed door or attitude then they would have had a different outcome.” Participants 4 and 6, founding fathers of the parent group, stated that there was a lack of trust between the parents and the administration. Participant 4, a teacher, saw himself as a bridge between the two. He had to make parents realize that the fact that the administration was allowing him to do this showed their trust in the group and in essence they, the parents, needed to reciprocate that trust in the administration.

Without trust other parents would not call upon the members of this group when they needed help or guidance. Participant 4, being a teacher, would receive calls from parents of eighth grade students whose kids were getting ready to enter into the high school “excited that there’s somebody there who is going to take care of their son or daughter” (Participant 4). They were entrusting the care of their child to these men; this showed trust. Participant 4 would go to students’ homes to sit and talk with parents; parents had a level of trust in him or they would not have allowed him into their homes. Participant 1, an administrator, said that they were “breaking down bridges of suspicion and then building positive relationships.”

Trust was evident in parent and student relationships because students would not have felt compelled to work hard or felt they needed to answer to these men who were essentially strangers to them if there was not a level of trust that existed. They trusted that these men cared for them and wanted them to do well. Participant 6 said that when they

started doing grade checks on students they “were surprised as to how soon the kids started to change when they found out that someone truly cared about their grades.”

It is worth noting that aside from the relationship the parents of the parent group had with students, all the students interviewed for this study had fairly involved and supportive parents. One student (Participant 14) said that “Anytime I do something, getting an award they’re always there. I can always count on them to be there.” All students felt parent or family support was an important factor for student achievement. When asked what he believes contributes to student achievement, Participant 9, also a student, emphasized the importance of a support system at home:

...to be successful...surround themselves with successful people and have a good attitude. I think that would be a big boost in being successful academically or wherever they’re headed to, even at home. Like if they have a good support system at home, parents or whoever is raising them. That will, that helps a lot...my parents, my mom and dad are really supportive in what I do...I think that’s an important factor, one of the most important factors in being successful in high school.

Purposefully formed supportive and caring relationships built on trust had clearly influenced student engagement in all areas for students at this school.

### **Networks and Social Connections**

Many networks and social connections were found to be necessary for the parent group to do many of the things they were doing for the students at this high school. The networks and social connections members had, or made, allowed them to utilize valuable resources the surrounding community had to offer as well as provided them with access that not all individuals would be privy to. The importance of the community as well as knowing the right people were prevalent in the networks and social connections members had in this study. Table 7 provides some references made by participants relating to

networks and social connections as well as the influences these connections’ residual effects had on student engagement.

Table 7

*Social Capital — Networks & Social Connections*

Examples of Influence of Parental Networks & Social Connections on Student Engagement		
Theme	Evidence	Influence on Student Engagement
Importance of the Community	<p><i>“They secure donations from all over: Costco, Sam’s Club support their efforts. One of the power companies supports their efforts.” ~Administrator</i></p> <p><i>“So the community is involved...They give us things that we can use to say to the kids ‘well done’...” ~Teacher</i></p> <p><i>“It takes a village to raise a child” ~Administrator; Student; Parent group’s motto</i></p>	<p>Behavioral Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students’ grades improved.</li> <li>• Students’ efforts improved.</li> </ul> <p>Emotional Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students showed more interest in doing well because of incentives provided by the community and the parent group.</li> <li>• Students had more favorable attitude toward school because they knew everyone was looking out for them.</li> </ul>
Knowing the Right People	<p><i>“...Contacts in the communities, so we’re able to get face time with key organizations, the superintendents, the city council, and other people and stuff like that, so um we benefitted from that.” ~Parent</i></p> <p><i>“You need somebody on the inside, somebody on the inside who’s familiar with the campus and who has access to the school district.” ~Parent</i></p> <p><i>“I’ll give you my sign on, I have access to everything. I said here, take it.” ~Administrator</i></p>	



**Knowing the right people.** It's not what you know, but who you know; this old adage could not be any truer for this group of parents. From the very inception of this parent group, these men made use of the connections and networks they had in order to implement the changes they saw necessary. Participant 6, once a parent and now a community member, spoke about meeting Participant 4 for the first time and realizing that they had a lot in common including their goals for Black men. They had made the decision that they were going to help their students but they would not have been able to have the access they gained if not for the fact that Participant 4 was a teacher at the school to begin with. Participant 8, a parent, stated that:

You need a teacher who not just cares about his students but loves his students and doesn't want to see any of them fail. And is dedicated and is willing and can put in the time to follow up with these kids....you need someone on the inside who's dedicated.

Participant 4 was this insider. Although Participant 4 had greater access than these parents did alone, there were still limitations. Participant 4 was spending long hours calculating GPAs, something that could be easily taken from a computer database if he had the access level, which he did not. In order for the parent group to be involved at a level where they could impart change, they needed access to all student grades and information, something even their insider did not have access to. However, participant 4 being a member of the school community knew the administrators within his professional network that would have the access and could help him.

Participants 1 and 2, administrators in the district, having the access and being believers in the project these men wanted to implement became their allies. Participant 2 told them "I'll give you my sign on, I have access to everything...here, take it."

Participant 1 talked about how part of her job with the parent group was to remove some

of the hurdles they needed to jump; “I was part of the district so I knew who to go to.” Participant 1 helped the parent group gain the support of the school board and superintendent by providing them with information needed to present at the school board meeting. As a result of utilizing the network and connections they had, these men gained the permissions to be on campus and to pull students out of class to address their low grades and show them they cared. The access they gained through their networks allowed them to form the relationships discussed earlier, that allowed them to impart the positive changes previously mentioned. These connections were beneficial to the parent group but more importantly served as the spring-board for long term benefits on student achievement and student engagement.

**Importance of the community.** “It takes a village to raise a child; that’s their tagline” (Participant 13, student). The “village,” as they called it, consisted of not only school officials and parents but also all the members of the local community. Ties in the community provided the parent group with opportunities to utilize untapped resources. Community members and local businesses donated everything from money to cases of water for the guest speaker lunches to small prizes, like discount coupons to local establishments. Community members not only donated articles, many donated their time and services. Some community members awarded students for good grades with services like haircuts and manicures, while others donated their time to come and be guest speakers at lunchtime. The parent group felt that community members bridged school to the real world, thus making it more relevant to students. Furthermore, they wanted students to redefine what it meant to be successful:

We bring in other guest speakers, men primarily, and women as well to say OK, you don’t have to be a pro athlete or you know a top-level entertainer in order to

be successful. Here's an example of a guy who's an architect. Here's an example of woman who's a judge. Here's someone else who is in law enforcement or works in, you know, the fire department, etc. etc., just giving them, you know, a broader perspective and view of the opportunity and also trying to change the paradigm of what it means to be successful. (Participant 7, parent)

These guest speakers served as positive role models for students. Participant 13, a student, said that these guest speakers would "get [students] rolling, would get people encouraged," a clear indication of increased student engagement.

Additionally, the community would show their support at the banquet, where students were recognized for their achievements, which was held at the end of the school year. Prominent figures from the community would attend:

There's a lot of high profile people that come to that. So the mayor comes every year. The superintendent is always there. So it's just really meaningful, to have the city leadership be there....I think especially to the students when they have exposure to people like that...it makes them think, ok, I did something important and people care about me. I'm not just invisible to the community. (Participant 15, community member)

Community involvement sent the message to students that they mattered, that people cared if they succeeded or not and pushed them to work harder and strive for academic excellence so that they might be invited to this event, since only those with a 3.0 GPA or higher are invited. The networks and connections to the community positively influenced student engagement behaviorally and emotionally.

### **Cultural Capital**

Cultural capital as Bourdieu defines it is the "knowledge, skills, education, experiences, and/or connections one has had through the course of his or her life that do or do not enable success" (Howard, 2010, p. 55). According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital exists in either the embodied, objectified, or institutionalized forms and like other forms of symbolic capital can be accumulated over time. The parents in this study had a

rich supply of cultural capital that enabled them the opportunity to help students be more engaged. From the narratives shared, the types of cultural capital that seemed most important to parent involvement could be grouped under four different headings. The four themes that emerged were: having privileged status, knowing how the system works, setting priorities for action and change, and having high expectations and values. Each theme and its influences on student engagement can be found in Table 8 and will be further explored in the rest of this chapter.

Table 8

*Parental Cultural Capital*

Examples of Influence of Parental Cultural Capital on Student Engagement		
Theme	Evidence	Influence on Student Engagement
Knowing How the System Works	<p><i>“In institutions there are so many rules and hierarchy of things that and they don’t know because they’re parents. Someone who is within the system has to help them navigate that system.” ~Administrator</i></p> <p><i>“We made it a point to understand what she needed to take in order to be eligible to be able to go to college.” ~Parent</i></p>	<p>Behavioral Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students’ grades improved</li> <li>• Students showed effort in academic tasks because they knew that academics were important.</li> <li>• Students showed more effort because they knew someone could and would be checking on them.</li> </ul>
	<p>Setting Priorities for Action &amp; Change</p> <p><i>“We are responsible for our kids and so we’re going to get together and we’re going to form a group to change the prevalent attitude of the kids at the school.” ~Teacher</i></p> <p><i>“When there is a concern or an issue or what not we want to work with the administration to fix that concern” ~Parent</i></p> <p><i>“What we see is an opportunity to enhance, enrich, to guide, to provide perspective, and hopefully generate a sense of urgency and compellingness for these students to do well in high school.” ~Parent</i></p>	
Having Privileged Status	<p><i>“I got the chance to meet some pretty influential black men, upstanding good fathers. They set a good example for me for my kids too” ~Administrator</i></p> <p><i>“Everybody’s got really nice homes over there, it’s not ghetto...they will come to school with parents, well-paid, you know great jobs...” ~Parent</i></p>	<p>Emotional Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students had positive ties with the school because their parents had positive ties with the school.</li> <li>• Students were interested in being recognized for their academic achievements.</li> <li>• Students felt more connected to the school and their parents.</li> </ul>
	<p>Having High Expectations &amp; Values</p> <p><i>“My dad always told me that education was the key to choices” ~Community Member</i></p> <p><i>“So it’s reinforced in our home. You are going to college. We do expect you to do well. We don’t ever expect you to be a disciplinary issue.” ~Administrator &amp; Parent</i></p> <p><i>“Be proud of who you are” ~Teacher</i></p>	

## **Having Privileged Status**

The men who made up the parent advisory group were all educated professionals. The members consisted of a judge, an AP teacher, a regional director for a major corporation, a retired firefighter and entrepreneur, and a regional manager for a fortune 500 utility company. Participant 2, an administrator, described them as being “very professional” and as “influential Black men, upstanding good fathers.” A few of the participants referred to the community they lived in as “advantaged.” Participant 6, a member of the group, said that “most of the people [at the high school] are middle income and they have no reason to have be disadvantaged, we have some disadvantaged kids on campus but not as many as we thought or on other campuses.” Comparatively speaking, the area where the high school in the study was located, as well as the men in the group, was affluent. The upper class status of the area, and also that of the parents, afforded this group some advantages not all individuals would be privy to.

These men had a lot of embodied and institutionalized cultural capital. Their privileged status enabled them to be respected and taken seriously by school officials. This allowed them the opportunity to come onto campus and work with students. The social networks they had from their privileged statuses allowed them to utilize community resources and provide incentives for student learning. Their networks also allowed them to have access to quality guest speakers who served as role models for students. “Role models that show it’s not about how smart you are but about how hard you are willing to work” (Participant 6, community member). The first banquet was paid for out of the pockets of these men. Participant 7 made reference to the fact that Participant 8 (both members) had contacts in the communities due to his job which

allowed the parent group to “get face time with key organizations, the superintendents, the city council, and other people and stuff like that.” Due to the cultural capital as well as social capital these men possessed, students were able to benefit in many ways. Not only did students receive recognition and rewards for working hard, the increased level of student engagement was evidenced by the narrowing of the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students; the gap was “virtually eliminated” (Participant 5, teacher). Furthermore, more of their students are going to college, and prestigious schools.

### **Knowing How the System Works**

Part of being privileged and being educated, these parents were familiar with the way the school system was run. Not all parents were as fortunate. Participant 14, a student, said “You know some people come from uneducated families—parents that didn’t go to college. They don’t understand what the process is.” So this parent group “tried to educate the parents on A through G, to go to college” (Participant 2, administrator) as well as give them the basic skills of parenting “because a lot of our parents don’t have the skills” (Participant 1, administrator). They tried to build the capacity of other parents and provide them with resources they might not normally have had access to. The parent group provided these parents with a network of support and helped them build their cultural capital funds in the process. By knowing how to navigate the system, parents could better help and hold their students accountable. Parents would feel more comfortable working within the school’s system if they were more informed; they could be more involved if they better understood how things worked. As Participant 5, a non-member teacher, stated “Let’s face it, a parent that is actively involved in their

son's or daughter's education, that son or daughter stands a chance of doing well in school." When students felt a sense of accountability to their parents or other adults, they worked harder—student engagement increased.

### **Setting Priorities for Action and Change**

Although these men were working professionals, they found the time to impart change in the school. Several participants asserted that the parent group set out to change student attitudes and the overall culture of the school to one where academics superseded all other things. What they saw was “an opportunity to enhance, enrich, to guide, to provide perspective, and hopefully generate a sense of urgency and compellingness for these students to do well in high school” (Participant 8, parent). Participants 6, 7, and 8, members of the group, all addressed the need to give back. Participant 6 said “We all feel the need to give back. We all feel the need that we have to help others along the way. We were helped in some situation or form. So don't forget how you got there.” Participant 7 stated “I... also wanted to give back, to give, to be able to help other young people who maybe didn't have that push or wasn't getting any encouragement, to also do well.”

Participant 8 delved further into his explanation for wanting to give back, saying:

As I got older I realized I am where I am today because people took the time to give me guidance, give me some information, show me some things, exposure to a better way of life. And I guess as I got older, I made a promise that if I ever got to a position where I could do that I would reciprocate that to the best of my ability by giving back to my community, to make life a better place the world a better place,...and I figured what better place but the students, whose lives you can get them on the right path and get them going.

For all of these men the passion and dedication came from a desire to give back. These men no longer had children of their own at the high school, but continued to volunteer their time and efforts because it was important to them that students succeeded. Staying



on top of students' progress was a priority these men made. Aware that someone cared enough about them to call them out when they were doing poorly or to ensure that they were eligible to play that sport, students began to make greater efforts. As Participant 14, a student, stated "when someone is putting pressure on you, of course you're going to want to do better. You're just automatically, you're like, ok, let me pick up from what I'm doing, let me pick this up." Student engagement was positively influenced by their decision to take action and make changes at this school.

### **Having High Expectations and Values**

The words "expectation" or "expectations" is said 37 times by eight different participants during their interviews. It is mentioned an additional 20 times during an informal group discussion. It was obvious that these parents felt that setting expectations was important to the success of all students. Participant 8, a parent, said "That is the key. You've got to set the expectation." Participant 4, a teacher, said "to do well is just the expectation," he also later stated that you were also expected to do well by the community. Participant 2, an administrator, felt that the level of expectations for students should be raised and Participant 7, another parent, said that "if you don't have high expectations of your kids, they're not gonna ever reach the highest levels." Participant 13, who was a student, felt that her parents were supportive and encouraging, however she said "it's not even that it's encouragement. It's expectation." These parents set high expectation for their own children as well as all the students they had decided to help at this high school. Low scores and failure were not an option.

Education was important to them, it was something they deeply valued and they wanted to instill the same value in students. "My family cared about education that I got a

good education, so that was always paramount...To learn. To get an education and to do well. Not just to take the class, but to you know, to do well” (Participant 7, parent). These men wanted students to know that it is ok to be smart; it’s cool to be smart” (Participant 2, administrator). Not only did they feel education should be an important value to have, they felt a sense of responsibility to be the ones that instilled that belief in students. Participant 4, a teacher, exclaimed: “These kids are our responsibility and we’re unapologetic about that!” Participant 7 repeatedly said that he felt that “80% of the accountability for a student’s success rests with the parent, not with the instructor.” Parents needed to be held accountable as much as the students were expected to.

These parents had strong beliefs about the importance of getting a good education and they showed that in the amount of time and effort they put into working with students and their teachers, working with the community to help students see the relevance in getting a good education, as well as by putting on an annual academic awards banquet at the end of the year. As Participant 4, a teacher, posed “when do we say to our kids, ‘job well done academically? When do we do that publicly? And make it a big thing, as big as sign in day for these athletes.” The annual banquet that recognized academic achievement and academic growth was their way of doing just that. Students worked hard all year in hopes that they would earn an invitation to the banquet. Once there, students were proud to share their accomplishments with their parents. For the parent group, this banquet was often the one event that drew parents in to be involved in at least being proud of their student. This banquet demonstrated how the parent group positively influenced student engagement by setting high standards and instilling worthy values.

## Summary

By listening to the authentic voices of the 15 participants in this study, it was evident that this parent group had a positive impact on student engagement. Parent involvement, whether it was students' own parents or another parent figure, positively influenced student engagement. Recruiting parents to be involved was a difficult task, the participants in this study repeatedly told the researchers that they had not had luck in enlisting other parents' help; it was always just the five or six that were already involved. These parents had sufficient social and cultural capital resources to affectively navigate the education system to find ways to positively impact students. The social and cultural capital that these parents possessed allowed them to be actively involved parents at this school. A direct result of these parents involvement was that student engagement increased in all areas of engagement—behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. This was evidenced by such things as students actively participating in school activities like BSU and sports, an increase in effort and achievement by students, students' positive feelings towards school, and students' investment in their learning by doing such things as attending tutoring.

## Chapter Five

### Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

This chapter contains the summary of findings for the study conducted on the influence of social and cultural capital on parental involvement and student engagement. The chapter is organized into four major sections: (1) a summary of the study conducted, (2) presentation and discussion of the findings, (3) limitations of the study, and (4) conclusions, implications, and recommendations for the study.

#### **Summary**

This study examined the social and cultural capital of members belonging to a parent advisory group in a southern California high school. Specifically, the study focused on how the social and cultural capital of these parents influenced their involvement in school and furthermore how their involvement influenced student engagement.

Every person possesses some supply of social and cultural capital, but depending on what field the individual is situated in the capital they possess may not be valued. Capital, normally thought of as money, is any asset or resource that could provide an individual with privileges or advantages. Bourdieu broadens the term capital to include more than monetary wealth; he asserts that there are symbolic forms of capital that exist that allow individuals to be wealthy in different ways. Two of these forms of capital are social and cultural capital. Based on Bourdieu's definition, social capital can be defined as the capital or potential capital or resources that is contained within our networks or relationships, "in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its member with the backing of the collectively-owned capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21).

Cultural capital refers to the “relatively rare, high-status cultural and linguistic knowledge, skills, and dispositions passed on from one generation to the next” (Perez, 2009, p. 139) or the tools individuals have that allow them to access different parts of society.

Social and cultural capital serve as channels of access for many individuals, those who may not possess a lot of economic capital as well as those who already do. The wealth in social and cultural capital is that it can sometimes be exchanged for economic capital but most often it can be exchanged for social rewards such as recognition or social mobility (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Social and cultural capital are layers in Bourdieu’s larger theory of social reproduction. Bourdieu and Passeron’s theory of social reproduction basically asserts that those who are of the dominant group determine what are valued forms of capital, and in institutions like education, those who possess the valued forms of capital are rewarded for having the correct forms of capital which match the habitus of the schooling system. Individuals are in essence rewarded with more capital. Thus those in power continue to be at an advantage over those who may not possess the *correct* form of capital—the form that is recognized as valuable. This serves to reproduce the social structures and inequalities that are found in society (Anyon, 1980; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Nolan, 2009; Schubert, 2012; Swartz, 1945; Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

Educational institutions provide the setting for social reproduction to occur. When students arrive at school, they bring with them their own shares of social and cultural capital, which they acquired from their families or prior schooling. In schools, social capital is exhibited as the different relationships that exist (i.e., teacher and student,

parent and teacher, etc.) while cultural capital is seen in the dispositions and skills students have. Students who have the capital that matches what is valued by the habitus of the schooling system are positioned for success, while those students whose capital is not seen as valuable are now comparatively disadvantaged. Schools value white middle-class norms (Perez, 2009). Just as society has an inherent class structure, schools tend to have a similar structure within their walls, working in many ways to reproduce the structure we see in society. In this sense, every student has been placed in a “class,” and the manner in which they are educated serves to have them fill the role that has been assigned to them, a role that becomes predetermined based on the capital they possess. “Students in different social-class backgrounds are rewarded for occupational strata—the working classes for docility and obedience, the managerial classes for initiative and personal assertiveness” (Anyon, 1980). Parental involvement is one form of cultural capital that is valued by our school system. Students whose parents are involved are considered at an advantage over those students whose parents are not; those students who have parents that are involved show higher levels of engagement and achievement (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012; Bingham & Okagaki, 2012; Jeynes, 2003).

Parental involvement “has been identified as a way to close gaps in achievement between more and less disadvantaged children and minority and majority youth” (Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2012). It is therefore important that parents, especially those of minority and underrepresented groups, take an active role in their students’ education. The problem is that for many parents, lack of information or lack of valued capital, prevents them from actively participating at school. It is therefore important to determine what forms of capital are valued by the schools and that parents may need to

possess in order for them to be meaningfully involved in their students' education. Not only will this knowledge help to build capital for parents so that they may better navigate the system to support their student but it will also serve to build capital for students thereby possibly reducing the chances that social inequalities will continue to be reproduced.

In this particular study, a group of African American fathers realized that their students were becoming ineligible to participate in sports due to low academic achievement. These parents decided to take action and get involved. They formed the parent advisory group focused upon in this study. Their involvement resulted in increased levels of student engagement. The following research questions guided this study to analyze what forms of capital these parents possessed that allowed them to meaningfully be involved and influence student engagement:

1. To what extent do parents' social and cultural capital influence parental involvement and student engagement?
2. What common themes related to the influence of parents' social and cultural capital on parental involvement and student engagement emerge when observing and listening to the voices of teachers, administrators, parents, and students?
3. Based on the study's findings what recommendations can be made about the role of social and cultural capital on parent involvement and student engagement?

In order to answer the research questions above the qualitative research approach of narrative inquiry was utilized. The researchers interviewed 15 participants, which

included administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and students, using open-ended semi-structured interview questions. Using this interview structure allowed the authentic voices of participants to tell the story. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed and imported into NVivo software. Nodes were created in NVivo for coding; approximately 40 initial codes were created. Consensus was reached by three researchers on the initial codes ensuring reliability of coded data. The initial codes were further collapsed and grouped until 12 themes emerged in the areas of social and cultural capital. These themes were further analyzed to address the research questions and will be discussed in the following section.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Research Question 1**

Social and cultural capital of parents significantly influences how parents are involved, in other words it influences the capacity in which parents can be involved. The parents in the study were influential men who were educated professionals. Their privileged status afforded them a comfort level when interacting with the school. This might not be the case for all parents, especially less advantaged parents. They were familiar with the school system and did not feel uncomfortable approaching school administrators when they saw a problem they felt was necessary to address, in this case the low achievement of African American males. Their comfort level within the system allowed them to gain greater access into the school in order to perform grade checks and keep students accountable, in essence, to effect change in the system. Parents who might not have the same stores of capital might not feel as comfortable coming to school or being more involved or might question if their involvement would make any difference.



Participant 15 alluded to this when she said “maybe there are parents who feel intimidated, they are not educated and they feel like they cannot positively influence their child.” These parents might not feel that their involvement could make any impactful changes.

The social and cultural capital of parents influenced student engagement in an indirect way through the actual parent involvement. Parents’ social and cultural capital did influence student engagement to a minor extent when it was associated with the incentives and guest speakers that the parent group was able to provide. The social networks that these parents had, allowed them access to prominent figures in the community who could serve as quality guest speakers and positive role models for students. The guest speakers directly impacted student engagement. Students could better relate to the guest speakers and that was often a motivating factor for students. The prizes that these men could afford to secure for academic achievement directly influenced student engagement; with incentives like iPads, students were driven to be successful. So these parents’ social and cultural capital provided them with the opportunity to structure their involvement in this manner that greatly impacted student engagement, as was evidenced by the growth in GPAs for African American students from an average of 1.7 to 3.4 and a narrowing of the achievement gap from 29% to 4%, not to mention the overall increase in student participation. Their social and cultural capital also allowed them to be involved to a greater scale than other parents might normally be able to; they were able to effect change on many students as opposed to a few or only their own.

While parents’ social and cultural capital influenced *how* parents were involved, the researcher does not believe it influenced whether a parent *could* be involved or not.

The case might be that the more capital you possess the more able you are to effect change and advocate for students on a larger scale. However, based on the findings of the study it would appear that parents' expectations, values, and sense of caring were more important. These attributes or dispositions are a form of embodied cultural capital that these men acquired throughout their life and through formal education. They valued education, set high expectations, and cared deeply about student success. It was their value system that drove them to action. They sought out to instill the same value system in students. It was evident how much they cared about the students. For quite some time, none of these men had children of their own at the schools. This showed their dedication and passion for students' well being. Students knew they cared also, as evidenced by the statement made by Participant 13: "Despite the fact that they no longer have a personal investment in the program, which tells the students, they do care about you."

Even though many students were motivated by the rewards being offered, much of the increased engagement stemmed from knowing that someone was watching out for them and holding them accountable. This is important to note because although it is beneficial to have the amounts of social and cultural capital these parents had, a parent could simply have the one form of embodied cultural capital, that of the dispositions to value education, believe in setting high expectations, and caring enough for their student to follow-up and hold them accountable in order to effect change on their own child. It might not be enough for a parent to affect change on the scale that this parent group was able to, but it shows that parents can still make a difference and they can still be involved, just in a different capacity.

## **Research Question 2**

Twelve themes emerged related to the influence of parents' social and cultural capital on parental involvement and student engagement when observing and listening to the voices of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community members. There were four themes that emerged in the realm of parents' cultural capital which influenced parental involvement and student engagement. The four themes were (1) knowing how the system works which addressed the importance of parents being informed, (2) setting priorities for action and change which spoke to the desire to want to help others and give back, (3) having privileged status which speaks to the access that they are afforded, and (4) having high expectations and values which reflected the parents' dispositions. Themes 1, 2, and 4 spoke to the embodied form of cultural capital while theme 3 spoke to institutionalized cultural capital. The other eight themes that emerged related to the influence of parents' social and cultural capital on parental involvement and student engagement, fell under one of the three components of social capital which included: empowerment and responsibility to others under the component of group membership, importance of the community and knowing the right people under the component of networks and social connections, and care, purposeful, support, and trust under the component of relationships. A summary of the themes that emerged and their influences on parent involvement and student engagement can be found in Figure 4.

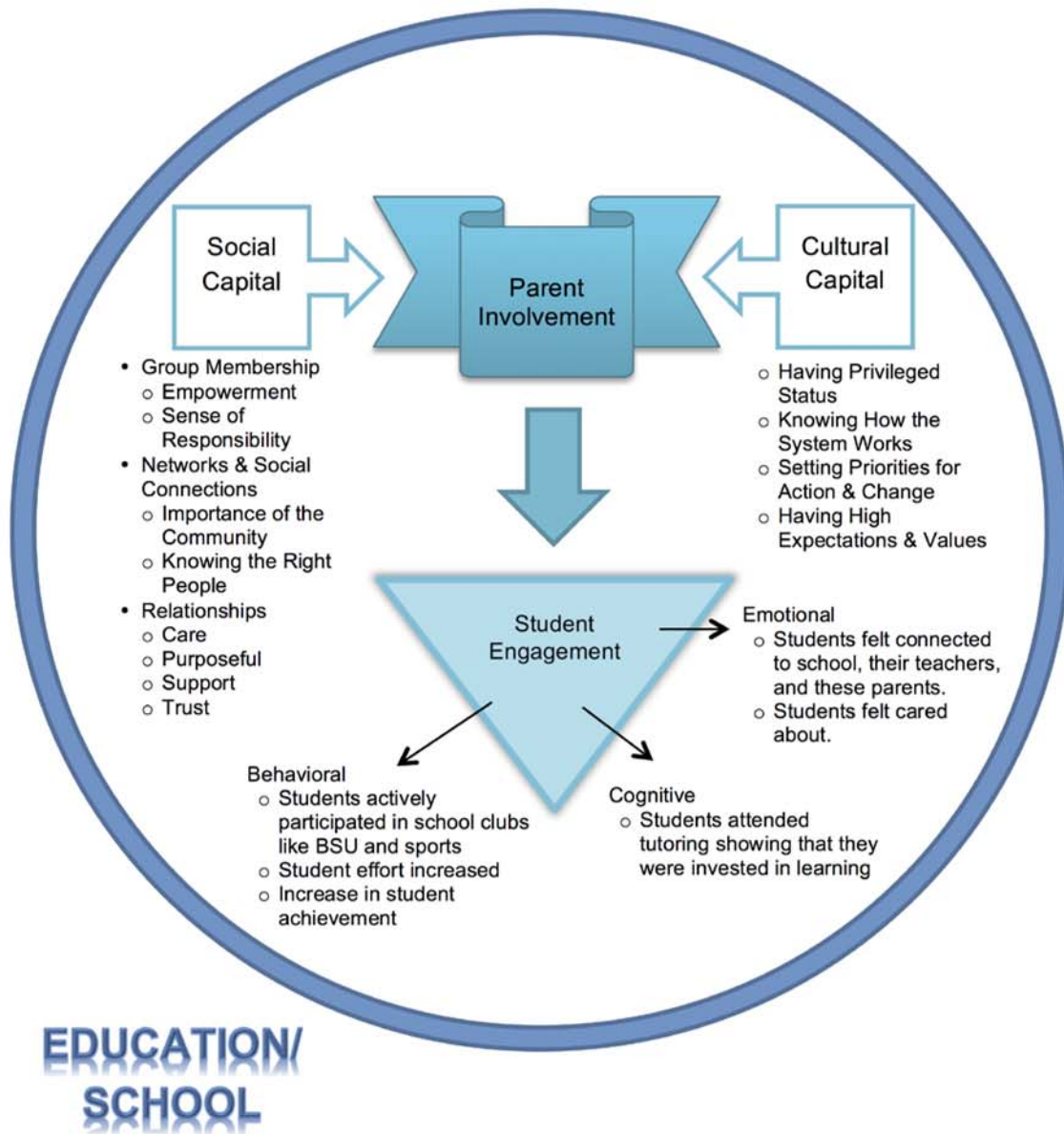


Figure 4. Summary of findings

### **Research Question 3**

This study found that parents' social and cultural capital influences how parent involvement is implemented; it influences how it looks. This study also found that to an extent parents' social and cultural capital indirectly influences student engagement. The study also shed light on the fact that caring relationships that instill a value in education and high expectations might be the most important form of capital to enable the most effective practices of parent involvement. Additionally, the study highlights that quality is more important than quantity because a school only needs a few dedicated parents to make a big difference, as evidenced by this group of five or six men. Based on these findings the researcher recommends:

1. School officials organize a parent informational meeting, inviting parents to come learn about their students' rights and privileges. This will help enrich parents' cultural capital and enable them to better support their children by empowering parents with the knowledge of how the system works. Knowing how to navigate the system will help parents be better advocates for their students. Community members or school officials create a parent center where parents can access information on school happenings as well as meet to discuss school happenings with other parents. This will enrich the parents' cultural and social capital allowing them to become more actively involved.
2. Community members or school officials create a parent center where parents or other community members can access information on school happenings as well as meet to discuss school happenings with others. This will enrich both the cultural and social capitals of parents. Parents will have the opportunity to

stay informed and more actively involved. Events at the parent center would provide parents with the opportunity to meet and build social networks with other likeminded parents which would emphasize knowing the right people and relationships that empower parents.

3. School officials survey parents, students, and the community about how they feel parents are currently involved, asking the different stakeholders to elaborate on the things they do to be involved with their child's education. Ask students how they feel their parents being involved or lack of involvement has affected their learning and engagement. Ask stakeholders for recommendations on how they could be more involved or what things would help them to be more involved. Schools should use this data to build on what already exists and shape programs to meet their parents/community needs. They should also use this data to recognize all the different forms of involvement, some they may not have considered before in order to create culturally relevant programs. Culturally relevant programs will help recognize all parents efforts at involvement, helping to acknowledge parents for the efforts they do make and thereby further empowering them to continued to be involved. This would remind parents that they *do* in fact make a difference no matter what form of involvement they choose to practice, especially when they may feel that they do not or cannot.
4. School officials should offer workshops for parents either run by school staff or other parents that provide parents with refresher lessons on content that is relevant to their students. Some parents felt that once students were at the

secondary level their students knowledge of the subject matter had far exceeded their own skill level or their memory where they could be helpful.

By giving parents refreshers on content we are providing them with the tools and confidence to continue to be involved with their student's education, we are reminding them that they DO make a difference even when they think they are not.

5. Researchers conduct a quantitative study using empirical data to validate the findings found in this study.

### **Limitation of the Study**

Several limitations existed in this study. The sample size was small and specific to one group of persons, located at one specific school where the SES was relatively high, in one specific area in southern California, during a specific time period. These parameters limited the scope of the study as well as the ability to generalize the findings for all populations. Other limitations included a short window for data collection, barriers to securing locations for interviews, and inclement weather, which caused some interviews to be cancelled. The instrumentation had some limitations—some of the questions were difficult for student participants to answer. Recording devices had some limitations also; one made low-quality recordings while another one would time out and needed to be restarted.

### **Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations**

This study found that parents' social and cultural capital influences *how* parent involvement is presented—in other words it influences the capacity to which parents can be involved. This study also found that to an extent parents' social and cultural capital

indirectly influences student engagement. It influenced student engagement in an indirect way because it manifested itself through parent involvement by way of incentives and guest speakers that the parent group was able to provide.

Parents play an integral role in student engagement and overall student success. The more parents are involved and care about their students' progress in school the more engaged students seem to be. This is evidenced in students' improved grades and increased efforts. Those parents who possess the social and cultural capital that best matches that of the school's habitus are at an advantage over those parents who might not. They are better able to navigate the schooling system and better advocate for their child's needs. The parents in this study advocated for *all* students' needs.

Parent involvement can come in various forms; the spectrum can range from a parent simply asking their child how their day was to what was found in this study: something more intense and large scale. This parent group demonstrated that schools do not need to have large numbers of parents involved to make a difference but that a few dedicated individuals could make a large difference. The keyword here was dedicated. Participants repeatedly expressed that what happened here at this school, with this group, could not be replicated. The foundational ideals of the group could be adapted at another school to meet the needs of whichever school was trying to implement it. However, it was stressed multiple times that this needed to be a grassroots movement. As Participant 1 stated "give parents the concerns, see who will pop up and say, 'What can I do to contribute to this and to fix it?'" Participants asserted that there had to be a parent or a group of parents who saw a problem and truly wanted to make the change and spearhead finding the solution. It could not be an established program that was simply missing a



parent or teacher to run it. As Freire (1970) stated “The revolution is made neither by the leaders for the people, nor by the people for the leaders, but by both acting together in unshakable solidarity” (p. 124). Therefore, once this individual or group of individuals makes the decision to be as transformative as what this parent group was able to do, school administration needs to support their efforts.

Although it was beneficial that these parents had a multitude of social and cultural capital, it appeared that caring relationships built on support and trust which sent the message that education was important ,and that doing well was an expectation, were more effective at raising student engagement. This indicates that their privileged or advantaged status did not have total bearing on their ability to be involved parents. If parents do not feel they have the capacity to be involved on a large scale, like the parents in this study were, this study shows that they can still be involved on a small scale and be equally effective at engaging students. Parents need to care about their students’ education, which can be shown by holding students accountable, setting expectations—preferably high expectations—and instilling the sense of “education is important for the success of my future.” Participant 7 believes in the “80/20 rule;” he believes that 80% of the accountability for a student’s success rests with the parent and 20% with the instructor. Thus, parents should make sure they themselves are responsible and hold themselves accountable by following up with students.

Schools can help parents by making greater efforts to ensure that parents stay informed on how they can help keep students accountable. Schools should hold parent workshops that will arm parents with the social and cultural capital needed to access the educational field, allowing them to better support their students. Schools should make all

attempts at creating a welcoming environment so that parents, once armed with the tools to do so, feel more comfortable accessing the educational field. Part of creating a welcoming environment and keeping parents informed is communication. During an informal group discussion, Participant 4 made an interesting comment about teachers and teacher education programs:

The teachers who are coming out of the programs at wherever, they lack a component that is essential and that is teaching that interaction with parents....they're afraid to call them...not everyone is comfortable with it, but if you want to go into this profession you have to. It's just a necessity.

Based on what Participant 4 and the fact that the teacher is usually the bridge between the school and parents, teacher education programs might want to consider adding a component to their certification programs which addresses interactions with parents or other adults in the educational field.

Current educational policies like NCLB and LCAP stress the importance of schools making efforts at involving parents by tying funding to the requirement that schools make efforts at involving parents. Policymakers who stress the importance of parent involvement need to make funding a part of the policies in place in order to properly support schools in eliciting active parent involvement. Policy should take into consideration what schools will need to do to support parents in order to meet requirements and appropriately allot sufficient funds to ensure that successful programs develop. Furthermore, policies should contain clear accountability measures to hold schools accountable for not only setting goals but enforcing them.

Knowing what engages parents and what will increase their levels of involvement will benefit student engagement and in turn student achievement. Future research should focus on what influences parent engagement or what factors prevent parents from being

involved. Perhaps a comparative research study on another parent group that has been successful at raising student engagement in a less affluent area than the parents in this study should be conducted. This study should focus on what social and cultural capitals are similarly and distinctly possessed by each successful group will allow researchers to determine exactly what forms of social or cultural capital are necessary for parents to be effectively involved, without socioeconomic status being a factor. Similarly, another study should look at the similarities and differences of how teachers and families perceive involvement, focusing on culturally relevant forms of capital that may help parent engagement that may be going unrecognized by schools.

Lastly, despite the fact that this parent group was successful at what they sought out to achieve, they had a difficult time trying to increase parental involvement. They put on more than one parent workshop or event, and either had no one show up or parents show up with no intent of helping but rather to find out what the parent group could do for them. Participant 6 found it interesting but problematic that “the parents are detached from the kids. It is one of the biggest problems we have in our culture. The parents seem to be detached.” This is a prevalent problem that many schools are currently dealing with. Assumptions are often made that parents are involved who live in affluent areas and that it is no surprise that there is a lack of parent involvement in less advantaged areas, however this study would not validate that assumption. While most of the student participants interviewed did have involved parents, parents were only involved in their child’s life and were not necessarily in a relationship with the school. Seeing as students are more engaged when their parents are involved, the question becomes how do we get parents involved? Perhaps studying additional successful models, particularly at the

secondary level, of parent involvement will help shed light on how to engage parents to remain involved beyond the elementary years.

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Appendix A  
General Consent Form

CONSENT FORM: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Participant:

I have been invited to participate in the study of social class, cultural and social capital, funds of knowledge, language, and student engagement being conducted by doctoral students from the University of Redlands. Specifically, the study will focus on the influence of [REDACTED] Parent Advisory Group ([REDACTED]) on student engagement. The objectives of their study are: 1) to understand the influence of social class, cultural capital, language, and funds of knowledge in school and schooling practices, 2) to identify the emerging themes related to social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in selective educational settings by observing schools and listening to the authentic voices of its constituencies, and 3) to make recommendations about student engagement based upon the findings on the influence of social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in schooling.

In this invitation, I understand that I am giving the research team the opportunity to interview me. I further understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose not to participate without penalty and am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Francisco Silva, Chair of the IRB University of Redlands, at francisco\_silva@redlands.edu.

Thanks you for your participation

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I have read and understand this consent form. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B

District Administration Consent Form

CONSENT FORM: DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Dear Participant:

I have been invited to participate in the study of social class, cultural and social capital, funds of knowledge, language, and student engagement being conducted by doctoral students from the University of Redlands. Specifically, the study will focus on the influence of [REDACTED] Parent Advisory Group ([REDACTED]) on student engagement. The objectives of their study are: 1) to understand the influence of social class, cultural capital, language, and funds of knowledge in school and schooling practices, 2) to identify the emerging themes related to social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in selective educational settings by observing schools and listening to the authentic voices of its constituencies, and 3) to make recommendations about student engagement based upon the findings on the influence of social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in schooling.

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Thanks you for your participation

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I have read and understand this consent form. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C

School Administration Consent Form

CONSENT FORM: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Dear Participant:

I have been invited to participate in the study of social class, cultural and social capital, funds of knowledge, language, and student engagement being conducted by doctoral students from the University of Redlands. Specifically, the study will focus on the influence of [REDACTED] Parent Advisory Group ([REDACTED]) on student engagement. The objectives of their study are: 1) to understand the influence of social class, cultural capital, language, and funds of knowledge in school and schooling practices, 2) to identify the emerging themes related to social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in selective educational settings by observing schools and listening to the authentic voices of its constituencies, and 3) to make recommendations about student engagement based upon the findings on the influence of social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in schooling.

In this invitation, I understand that I am giving the research team the opportunity to interview me. I further understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose not to participate without penalty and am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Francisco Silva, Chair of the IRB University of Redlands, at [francisco\\_silva@redlands.edu](mailto:francisco_silva@redlands.edu).

Thanks you for your participation

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I have read and understand this consent form. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Appendix D  
Teacher Consent Form

CONSENT FORM: TEACHER

Dear Participant:

I have been invited to participate in the study of social class, cultural and social capital, funds of knowledge, language, and student engagement being conducted by doctoral students from the University of Redlands. Specifically, the study will focus on the influence of [REDACTED] Parent Advisory Group ([REDACTED]) on student engagement. The objectives of their study are: 1) to understand the influence of social class, cultural capital, language, and funds of knowledge in school and schooling practices, 2) to identify the emerging themes related to social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in selective educational settings by observing schools and listening to the authentic voices of its constituencies, and 3) to make recommendations about student engagement based upon the findings on the influence of social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in schooling.

In this invitation, I understand that I am giving the research team the opportunity to interview me. I further understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose not to participate without penalty and am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Francisco Silva at, Chair of the IRB University of Redlands, francisco\_silva@redlands.edu.

Thanks you for your participation

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---

I have read and understand this consent form. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E  
Parent Consent Form

CONSENT FORM: [Parent Group] PARENTS

Dear Participant:

I have been invited to participate in the study of social class, cultural and social capital, funds of knowledge, language, and student engagement being conducted by doctoral students from the University of Redlands. Specifically, the study will focus on the influence of [REDACTED] Parent Advisory Group ([REDACTED]) on student engagement. The objectives of their study are: 1) to understand the influence of social class, cultural capital, language, and funds of knowledge in school and schooling practices, 2) to identify the emerging themes related to social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in selective educational settings by observing schools and listening to the authentic voices of its constituencies, and 3) to make recommendations about student engagement based upon the findings on the influence of social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in schooling.

In this invitation, I understand that I am giving the research team the opportunity to interview me. I further understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose not to participate without penalty and am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Francisco Silva at, Chair of the IRB University of Redlands, francisco\_silva@redlands.edu.

Thanks you for your participation

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---

I have read and understand this consent form. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix F

Consent Form for Student Over 18 Years of Age

CONSENT FORM: STUDENT (OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE)

Dear Participant:

I have been invited to participate in the study of social class, cultural and social capital, funds of knowledge, language, and student engagement being conducted by doctoral students from the University of Redlands. Specifically, the study will focus on the influence of [REDACTED] Parent Advisory Group ([REDACTED]) on student engagement. The objectives of their study are: 1) to understand the influence of social class, cultural capital, language, and funds of knowledge in school and schooling practices, 2) to identify the emerging themes related to social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in selective educational settings by observing schools and listening to the authentic voices of its constituencies, and 3) to make recommendations about student engagement based upon the findings on the influence of social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in schooling.

In this invitation, I understand that I am giving the research team the opportunity to interview me. I further understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose not to participate without penalty and am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Francisco Silva at, Chair of the IRB University of Redlands, francisco\_silva@redlands.edu.

Thanks you for your participation

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---

I have read and understand this consent form. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

### Consent Form for Student Under 18 Years of Age



CONSENT FORM: STUDENTS (UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE)

Dear Participant:

I have been invited to participate in the study of social class, cultural and social capital, funds of knowledge, language, and student engagement being conducted by doctoral students from the University of Redlands. Specifically, the study will focus on the influence of [REDACTED] Parent Advisory Group ([REDACTED]) on student engagement. The objectives of their study are: 1) to understand the influence of social class, cultural capital, language, and funds of knowledge in school and schooling practices, 2) to identify the emerging themes related to social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in selective educational settings by observing schools and listening to the authentic voices of its constituencies, and 3) to make recommendations about student engagement based upon the findings on the influence of social class, cultural and social capital, language, and funds of knowledge in schooling.

I further understand that my (son or daughter) \_\_\_\_\_ has been invited to participate and will be interviewed. I hereby give my permission for the above named child to participate in the study. I understand that the information gained will not affect my child's standing in school in any way, that my child may choose to participate or not to participate without penalty, and that my child is free to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Francisco Silva at, Chair of the IRB University of Redlands, francisco\_silva@redlands.edu.

Thanks you for your participation

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516.884.0609

---

I have read and understand this consent form. By signing this form, I (student) agree to participate in this research project. By signing this form, I (parent) agree for my child to participate in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Student Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Parent Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Appendix H

### Researcher's Curriculum Vitae

**Education**

Doctor of Education (Ed.D) Leadership for Educational Justice  
*University of Redlands, Redlands, CA* 2014

Master of Science Education (M.S.Ed.) with Distinction: Elementary Education  
 Advanced Certificate: Middle Childhood Education  
*Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY* 2005

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.): Art Studio, Minor Spanish  
*S.U.N.Y. College at Geneseo, Geneseo, NY* 2002

**Certifications Held**

Preliminary Administrative Services Credential - Certificate of Eligibility  
 California Clear Multiple Subject Teaching Credential  
     w/ Supplementary Authorizations for Introductory Science & Introductory Art  
 California Clear Single Subject Teaching Credential – Foundational Math  
 California Clear Crosscultural, Language, and Academic Development Certificate (CLAD)  
 NYS Professional Teaching Certification, Childhood Education Grades 1-6

**Positions Held/Work Experience**

Program Improvement Specialist / Response to Intervention Teacher; Site Data Specialist; Site Testing Coordinator; Lead Teacher; Classroom Teacher - Math and Science Gr 7 & 8; Home School Teacher  
*La Contenta Middle School, Yucca Valley, CA*  
*Morongo Unified School District, Twentynine Palms, CA* 2007-2014

Tutor  
*American Center for Learning, San Diego, CA* 2006-2007

Substitute Teacher – K thru 8  
*Great Neck Public Schools, Great Neck, NY*  
*Bay Shore Union Free School District, Bay Shore NY* 2003-2006

**Committees Served**

School Site Council  
 Family Involvement Committee - Coordinator  
 Critical Care Team (CCT) - Coordinator  
 Leadership Team  
 Master Scheduling Team  
 AVID Site Team

**Honors/Recognitions**

Masonic Lodge Award for Outstanding Performance in Education 2014