THE COMMUNITY REVIEWER PROGRAM: AN EXAMINATION OF A PARENT
EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN DETROIT

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

K-12 Educational Administration-Doctor of Philosophy

2015

ABSTRACT

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This descriptive, embedded case study sought to explore the phenomena of how to improve and create effective partnerships between urban parents and urban schools. The study examined a novel parent involvement program in Detroit that involved over 500 urban parents. The program, called the Community Reviewer Program, trained parents and community members to assess and evaluate the quality of schools in the city of Detroit through the use of citywide school visitations and evaluations. The purpose of the study was to describe the Community Reviewer Program and to examine how participation in the program influenced parent's experiences with their children's schools. To better understand the program and its influences on participants, I conducted ten months of formal and informal program observations, obtained and analyzed program documents, and conducted in-depth pre- and post interviews with nine parents who participated in the program. The Community Reviewer Program reflected a theory of action and a program model emphasizing parent and community access to transparent information on school performance trends, new experiences for parents as school quality reviewers, and the development of relationships and interactions among and between urban parents, schools, and program organizers as a way to build parent's social capital and positively influenced their interactions with their children's schools. Findings suggests schools and programs must recognize urban parents as assets rather than liabilities, utilize new and diverse forms of parent involvement, and design programs and initiatives to meet the specific needs of parents.

To my family and my ancestors who made sacrifices that I may never know. Also, to the parents who participated in this study. I am truly appreciative of your sacrifices and your continuous pursuit of a better life. " I am what I am because of who we all are."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This case study examined a novel parent involvement program in Detroit that successfully involved over 500 urban parents. The program, called the Community Reviewer Program, trained parents and community members to assess and evaluate the quality of schools in the city of Detroit through the use of citywide school visitations and evaluations. The purpose of this study was to describe the Community Reviewer Program and to examine how participation in the program influenced parent's experiences with schools. To better understand the program and its influences on participants, I conducted ten months of formal and informal program observations, obtained and analyzed several program documents, and conducted nine in-depth pre- and post interviews with parents who participated in the program.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the background and context that framed the study. Then, I discuss the problem, purpose of the study, research approach, and provide an overview of the program context and background. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the rationale and significance of the research study.

Background and Context

During the last three decades, there has been a national focus on the role that families play in their children's educational development (Georgiou, 2007; Mapp, 2003). Researchers continue to find evidence that higher levels of involvement by parents are correlated with a number of positive child outcomes including increased academic performance, student motivation, student attendance, and student attitude (Epstein, 2001; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). As a result of this link between parent involvement and student outcomes, school, parent, and community partnerships are a primary component of successful schools

(Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2001).

Families of all incomes, educational, racial, and cultural groups care about their children's education and are involved in supporting their children's education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). However, not all parents are engaged and involved with their children's schools in the same ways or at equal rates. Low-income and racially diverse urban parents are less involved in traditionally recognized, at-school parent involvement activities than white, middle-class parents (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lazar & Slostad, 1999; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000). Traditionally recognized forms of parent involvement are often described as parent-teacher conferences and associations and parents volunteering at schools.

Parent involvement literatures highlight several characteristics that influence parents' at-school involvement trends (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Mitchell, 2008). Parent and family characteristics influence the types, frequency, and levels of at-school parent involvement (Georgiou, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006) and are predictors of parent involvement behaviors that can act as facilitators or hindrances of involvement (Georgiou, 2007). The most commonly documented family characteristics in the parent involvement literature include; social class (Brantlinger, 2003; Lareau, 2001, 2003), cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Lee & Bowen, 2006; McNeal, 1999; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009), race and ethnicity (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Lareau & Horvat, 1999), social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 2001) and parents' self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995).

Families who possess social, racial, and cultural characteristics that align closely with schools have a benefit that those whose characteristics are not as aligned (Bourdieu, 1986; Brantlinger, 2003; Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2003). White, middle-class

families possess race, class, cultural and social capital characteristics that align with those valued most by American schools. Therefore, they are more likely to be involved with their children's schools (McNeal, 1999; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Alternatively, urban parents often possess race, ethnicity, social class, and cultural norms that do not align as closely and are not as valued, making it tougher to form effective at-school partnerships and collaborations. Due in part to this lack of alignment, many urban parents engage less in traditionally recognized forms of at-school involvement and are less likely to form productive relationships with schools and school personnel.

The school itself is also a barrier to at-school involvement for urban parents. The most widely accepted and utilized policies and strategies of parent involvement focus on behaviors, such as volunteering at schools and attending meetings at schools, that are more easily accomplished by middle and upper-income parents and disregard the needs of low-income and racially diverse families (Mapp, 2003; Delgado- Gaitan, 1991; Noguera, 2006). Most at-school parent involvement activities are school-centered and are generally restricted to a few types of activities and programs (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). School-centered programs are programs established by the school and serve school-determined interests (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). These activities and programs often include parent-teachers conferences or parent-teachers associations and focus on volunteering or giving parents guidelines for how to assist their children with academic development. Although these types of programs are important, they are school-centered and often cast urban parents as social, cultural outsiders rather than full members welcomed into schools as valuable helpers. Urban families, like other low-income and racially diverse families, struggle to feel welcome in the traditional school-centered parent

involvement programs and are consequently less likely to form productive relationships with schools (Lareau, 2003).

Although family characteristics and the school environment are often described as barriers or hindrances to urban parent involvement, if valued, enhanced, or improved they can help increase parent involvement. For example, self-efficacy can be improved, social and cultural capital can be enhanced, and a welcoming school or program environment can be created. Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), Lareau (2003) and Noguera (2004), suggest that providing parents with access to experiences that enhance social capital—to knowledge, power, and resources, can aid in improving the relationships and partnerships between parents and schools and the at-school involvement trends of parents. In the context of education, social capital refers to the resources that parents have to draw upon when they interact with and navigate their children's schools and other educational settings. Parents with more capital are better advocates for their children's education and are more likely to be involved with their children's schools (Coleman, 1988, McNeal, 1999).

Social capital can be acquired through membership in social networks and structures such as Parent Teacher Associations and parent involvement programs. Through these relationships, parents can gain knowledge about effective at-home academic activities and the importance of being involved in at-school activities. Coleman (1988) found that parents with more social capital better understood the norms and expectations of schools, allowing parents to feel more welcome in schools, supporting higher rates of parent involvement and student success. He (1988) argued that social capital could be increased if schools create intentional processes and programs for social closure among parents and school personnel.

Noguera also (2004) argued that urban schools could develop social capital within low-income parents and communities by working closely with parents and community members to create programs that allow them to gain access to new relationships within the school building and within the community. However, many schools do not have intentional processes or programs for social closure; as a result there is a lack of alignment between the norms and expectations of parents and schools causing low at-school involvement rates.

Due to home-school disconnection, researchers and educators have sought to develop the conditions that support urban schools, families, and communities to form more productive relationships and partnerships that support and encourage student achievement (Epstein, 2001; Mitchell, 2008; Jordan et al., 2001). Parent involvement programs are a common method for involving parents in schools and parent involvement programs and models that are not school-centered can encourage urban parents to participate in their children's education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Henderson & Mapp (2002) examined 51 parent involvement studies and found that access to parent involvement programs had a positive impact on the at-school involvement rates of parents. Programs that successfully engage families from diverse backgrounds exhibit three key practices; they recognize, respect and value diverse families and their needs, they focus on building trusting relationships among teachers, families, and community members, and they share power and responsibility between schools and families (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). These programs value parents as assets rather than labeling them as problems. Through these programs, schools can be transformed from places where only certain groups of students benefit to place where all children succeed and benefit (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007).

Problem Statement

Schools and parent involvement programs often struggle to successfully engage and create effective partnerships with urban parents (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Henderson, et. al, 2007). A primary reason for this is that schools and programs often view urban parents as liabilities rather than assets. Many school personnel rely on deficit thinking (Yosso, 2005) and perceive urban parents as being unsupportive, uninvolved, and as barriers to their children's education (Jackson & Remillard, 2005). The deficit thinking and preconceived notions about urban parents hinder efforts to build effective parent involvement programs and partnerships. Lazar & Slostad (1999) argue that urban parents are not involved with schools due to the schools' perceptions and isolation of them.

Additionally, schools often rely on traditionally recognized forms of involvement that disregard the needs of urban parents. Most parent involvement activities are school-centered and are generally restricted to a few types of activities and programs (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). These types of involvement are more easily accomplished by middle and upper-income parents and disregard the needs of low-income and racially diverse families (Mapp, 2003; Delgado- Gaitan, 1991; Noguera, 2006). Although these types of programs are important, they are school-centered and often cast urban parents as outsiders.

Due to these rigid views of parent involvement, schools often do not recognize the alternative ways that many urban parents are involved with schools and with their children's education and often assume that some parents do not value and are not involved with their children's education. To address these issues, this case study examined a parent involvement program that recognized urban parents as assets and that meaningfully engaged parents in new

forms of parent involvement. If increased parent involvement and engagement is to be harnessed, new models of parent involvement must be examined.

The parent involvement program was led by a school-community organization in Detroit that rethought parent involvement and created a new program that expanded beyond volunteering and academic engagement activities. The organization shifted away from school-centered involvement techniques and focused on methods that empowered parents and community members through the value and use of their opinions and voices. This is much different from the traditionally recognized forms of involvement such as parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher associations, and volunteering in schools. The school-community organization valued and recognized participants as assets and designed the program to meet their specific needs.

The goal of the Community Reviewer Program was to empower participants at the individual and community level. At the individual level the program seeks to empower parents to make better school choice decisions. At the community level, the program seeks to empower participants to pressure Detroit schools to be more responsive and accountable. The program seeks to accomplish these goals by training parents and community members to assess and evaluate the quality of schools in the city of Detroit through the use of citywide school visitations and evaluations. The unique program model fostered and promoted participants' access to transparent information, new experiences with schools, and new relationships in order to build parent's social capital and empowered them to make more informed school choices decision and to pressure Detroit schools to be more responsive and accountable.

There is a need for research that examines parental involvement programs that can meaningfully engage low-income and racially diverse groups and that help urban schools and

parents form more effective relationships. Access to effective parent involvement initiatives can provide urban parents and families with access to empowering knowledge and skills such as enhanced social capital and improved self-efficacy that can aid in improving their relationships with schools and increasing the educational outcomes for their children.

Purpose of the Study and Research Approach

The purpose of this case study was to describe the unique program model and its underlying logic, its early outcomes after three years, and whether it influenced parent's interactions and orientations with schools. Three primary research questions gave direction and provided continued focus during the study:

1. What strategies and practices did Excellent Schools Detroit utilize to create the Community Reviewer Program?

2. How do parents describe their experience participating in the parent involvement program?

3. How might participation in the program influence urban parents' experiences and interactions with their children's schools?

With approval of the university's institutional review board, the researcher studied the experiences and perceptions of nine participants of the Community Reviewer Program, conducted ten months of formal and informal program observations, and obtained and analyzed several program documents. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the study's methodology and research questions in more detail.

Program Background and Context

The program was developed as part of a larger effort to increase school accountability to the local community and to improve parent and community-member access to information about

the quality of schools in Detroit. Like other urban cities, Detroit parents exercise school choice and can send their children to the school of their choice. In spite of the many school choice options in Detroit, there a substantial dearth of quality schools in Detroit. In 2012, only 40% of elementary students attending schools in Detroit were proficient in third grade reading on the state mandated standardized tests and only 16% were proficient in third grade math (Data Driven Detroit, 2012). High schools in Detroit also lack academic quality. In 2012, only 2% of Detroit students scored a college ready 21 on the ACT (Data Driven Detroit, 2012). Although parents are school "shoppers" and can select the school of their choice, schools are still not accountable to the local community and parents and continue to inadequately educate their children academically. Consequently, parents and community members have very little influence over the unaccountable, ineffective school system.

The examined program was developed to combat these issues by empowering local parents and community members. The program gives participants access to empowering resources and knowledge that support parents to make better school choice decisions and to hold the city's schools accountable for chronic low student achievement. Parents who are more knowledgeable about the school's expectations and norms and the way in which schools operate are more likely to be involved with their kids schools and are better advocates for their children than parents who lack such skills (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Additionally, urban parents that can identify quality schools are better advocates for their children and are better equipped with the tools and knowledge to select quality schools and to demand that their children's schools provide an adequate education for their children. Through the use of school visits and evaluations, the program examined gives parents access to positive experiences with schools that supports the development of new knowledge and skills that influence participants' future interactions with

schools. Parent involvement programs that support access to new knowledge and skills are theorized to empower parents to be better advocates and make better-informed decisions regarding their children's education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The rationale for the study emanates from the researcher's desire to uncover ways to encourage and support the at-school involvement of urban parents. Research over several decades demonstrates that higher levels of parent involvement are related to academic success for students. However, many urban parents and families have been unable to benefit in part due to the lack of effective partnerships between urban parents and urban schools. Understanding why these trends exist and overcoming these issues is crucial to increasing the involvement of these parents. This study supports those efforts by examining a parent involvement program that recognized and valued urban parents as assets and empowered them to become more involved at schools and better advocates for their children's education. An increased understanding of how to support the at-school involvement of urban parents will not only improve relationships and partnerships between urban parents and schools but will also improve the academic outcomes for urban children.

This chapter has provided an overview of the background and context of urban parent at-school involvement. I discussed why urban parents and urban schools often struggle to create effective partnerships and how that affects the at-school involvement rates of urban parents. I also discussed the purpose of this study and provided an overview of the study's research questions.

In chapter two, I review previous research on at-school parent involvement and factors that influence at-school parent involvement. The chapter closes with a description of the study's

conceptual framework. In chapter three, I discuss the city and program context and the study's methodological approach. I also discuss the research questions and why a case study is an appropriate methodological approach. Next, I describe the data collection methods, data analysis, and limitations. I conclude chapter three with a discussion of my positionality as a researcher and the trustworthiness of the study.

In chapter four and five, I present the study's findings. Chapter four focuses on the program findings. I provide an overview of the study's participants, describe the program model, its theory of action, and early program outcomes. Chapter five provides the findings specific to the program experiences of the study's participants. In chapter five, I describe how participation in the program influenced parent's interactions, dispositions, and behaviors with schools. This study concludes with chapter six where I utilize the findings and relevant literature to answer the study's research questions, provide a conclusion, and discuss implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this case study is to describe the Community Reviewer Program and to examine how participation in the program influenced parent's experiences with schools. The study sought to describe the unique program model and its early outcomes, and to assess whether parents' experiences with the program enhanced their senses of empowerment and influenced their orientations toward interacting with schools. To place the program in context, the researcher completed a review of current literatures on different types and forms of parent involvement, factors that influence parent involvement—with a particular look at urban parents—and perceived benefits of parent involvement. A review of these topics provided a comprehensive understanding of the current literature on urban parent involvement. In an effort to clarify and frame multiple components of the study, I provide some definitions of terms and phrases that are continuously utilized in this study before I delve into the literature review.

Key Terms

There are several terms within the study that need to be clarified before reviewing current literature. Some of these terms can be defined in a variety of ways. These definitions provide some clarity about the usage of these terms in the context of this study.

Urban parents and families: A person who lives in a city or metropolitan area who is the caretaker of a child. This study is specifically about urban parents in Detroit who are often, but not always low-income and racially diverse.

Parent involvement: A concept used to describe parents, families and other caregivers' behaviors and practices with their children's educational development inside and outside of their children's school.

Family involvement: There are diverse family types, and a child's caregiver is not necessarily a parent. This concept encompasses families and other caregivers' behaviors and practices with children's educational development inside and outside of schools. In this is paper I utilize parent involvement and family involvement interchangeably.

Community involvement: Behaviors and practices with children's educational development inside and outside of schools by local residents or organizations who live in the neighborhoods around schools whom may or may not have children in the school, but have an interest in the school.

At-school parent involvement: Parents, families, and other caregivers' behaviors and practices with their children's educational development at their children's school. These practices encompass attendance at the school and communication with school staff.

Review of Literature

The literature review is organized to inform and support the study's purpose and research questions. I conclude the chapter by discussing how the literature informed and helped shape the study's proposed conceptual framework.

History of School- Parent Relations and Parent Involvement

Parents are more welcome at schools than ever before, and they are perhaps more influential. However, there is still a struggle in American urban schools for effective collaboration between urban parents and schools (Cutler, 2000). In order to understand the use of parent involvement in American public schools, it is helpful to recognize the history of the relationship between schools and the families of the students they serve.

Historically, the home and the church were primarily responsible for the education of students. Before the American Revolution, families and churches controlled the education of

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children and few families participated in an organized educational system. Families who did participate controlled the hiring of teachers, selection of curricula and had majority of the guidance of their children's education (Epstein, 1995). In the mid-nineteenth century, a shift occurred in the education of American youth from the home to the school. This shift reflected new demands for a public education system and increases in industrial and urban development (Hiatt-Micheal, 2001; Cutler, 2000). Through the leadership of Horace Mann and others, development of a public schools system began in almost every state (Hiatt-Micheal, 2001). Simultaneously, many families migrated from the countryside to urban cities to join in the industrial revolution and many immigrant groups came to American cities in search of work. Industrial development led to a large increase in the population of school-aged children and increased the demand for the expansion of public schools. Through this shift, schools became the primary provider of education to students. Parents were expected to teach good behavior and family, ethnic, and moral values while schools were expected to teach education curricula (Cutler, 2000).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, bureaucratic reforms accelerated to address compulsory schooling and the expansion of secondary schooling, giving educators increased control over student's lives. Equally, the home-school relationship began to change. After World War I, many schools began to form stronger alliances with parents. Although educators drove the social and instructional development of schools, they believed that mothers and fathers could be a valuable part of the American educational system and wanted to work with families in the activities of education. Cutler (2000) stated, "Bureaucratic reform led educators to contemplate how parents could be transformed from vocal adversaries to loyal advocates by building them into the school's organizational framework" (p. 3). For example, many schools began to offer

parent education, pediatric examinations, and other social welfare services. These initiatives welcomed parents into schools and many parents began to accept the school as a partner with the home (Cutler, 2000). Parents began to form mothers' clubs and other parent associations (Hiatt, 1994). These associations gave the parents a small presence in schools (Cutler, 2000).

In 1897, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (NCPT) founded and developed the standards for Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). The PTA began to grow as many state organizations were developed in the mid-twentieth century. PTAs serve three functions: promotion of social activities, development of school policy and service as a community organization (PTA, 2005). The goal of the PTA was to improve the lives and futures of all children. Today the PTA is the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the nation. The PTA now serves as the primary parent involvement program in schools across America.

In the 1960s, another dramatic change occurred in the relationship between homes and schools. Programs associated with a "war on poverty" and the "great society" drove a national focus on poverty, child development, and family stability (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). Through this focus came federal legislation aimed at tackling these issues including the implementation of the federal Head Start, Follow Through, and Title I programs in preschools and in the early elementary grades. Through these programs, the federal government legitimized parent involvement by mandating parent advisory councils and programs in schools. Later, the 1970s Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) also required parent advisory councils to assist with the development of programs for low-income children in response to poverty in the cities and the alienation of poor families in the public schools (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). Lastly, the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act served as the reauthorization of the ESEA, and the concept of family and community involvement was threaded throughout the legislation and

will continue to be a part of educational federal legislation. Through these initiatives, the topic of parental involvement programs and organizations began to gain prominence (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

Federal legislations and mandates encouraged and provided concrete actions and responsibilities for schools to work in conjunction with families. Legislation has forced schools to create mechanisms for engaging poor and working-class families and stimulated ongoing research and debate of how to effectively and strategically engage low-income, racially diverse, and urban parents in schools. The federal mandates and the parent involvement research confirm the importance of parental involvement and parent involvement programs in the American educational system (Barton & Coley, 2007).

Parental Involvement Activities and Frameworks

Parent involvement is a concept used to describe parents, families and other caregivers' behaviors and practices with their children's educational development inside and outside of their children's school. The practice of parent involvement in education encompasses a wide range of philosophies, ideas, goals, and activities. There is no consensus among researchers and educators of a shared definition or description of the practices or activities that constitute parent involvement (Keith et al., 1998). Researchers rarely utilize one common description of parental involvement and educators rarely utilize one specific form of parental involvement activities in their schools. Although there is no single form or method of parental involvement, the conventional idea of parent involvement brings up images of parents helping out in classrooms, managing fundraising activities, helping their children with homework and participating in PTA meetings (Hong and Ho, 2005; Keith et al., 1998).

Parent involvement is commonly described as certain behaviors and practices at-home or

at-school that capture parents' interactions with their children's education. Traditionally, there have been two broad categories of recognized and researched parent involvement: at-home and at-school practices. At-home activities can range from help with homework to the existence of a home environment that supports learning in school (Jordan et al, 2001). At-school involvement ranges from participating in parent-teacher conferences to serving on school leadership advisory boards.

Although there is no common description of parent involvement, researchers and professionals utilize frameworks as a method of describing parent involvement practices and activities. Most frameworks incorporate five features: parent expectations; a home structure for learning; educational communication between parents, schools, and students; parent participation in school activities; and parent participation in school decision-making (Keith et al., 1998).

The most commonly used framework is Epstein's *Six Types of Involvement* framework of *parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making,* and *collaborating with community* (see Appendix A). Epstein's framework, which stretches across home and school activities, was designed to conceptualize and organize common practices that constitute parent involvement with the intention of informing and improving parent involvement practices (Epstein, 1995). It has been adopted by many schools and professional groups including the National Parent Teacher Association and is used to develop comprehensive programs for school, family, and community partnerships (PTA, 2005).

The first type, *Parenting*, involves helping families establish home environments that support children as students. Through this type, schools can help parents establish home conditions that support children's education at each grade level; such as helping parents establish an at-home library of books that are appropriate to the child's reading abilities. *Communicating*

involves designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about student's needs, progress and school programs and opportunities. Schools and families can establish weekly forms of communication that meet he needs of both parties. *Volunteering* includes recruiting and organizing parent help and support that may range from volunteering in classrooms to volunteering for safety patrol or the parent resource room. *Learning at Home* activities provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with educational activities, decisions, and planning. *Decision Making* includes involving parents in school decisions and developing parent leaders and representatives. Lastly, *Collaborating with Community* involves identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Although, this is the most commonly utilized framework in education, Epstein herself states that the framework presents challenges that must be met in order to adequately implement it (Epstein, 1995). The framework is merely a roadmap for schools. Epstein (1995) states, "Although all schools may use the framework of six types as a guide, each school must chart its own course in choosing practices to meet the needs of its families and students" (p. 707). The framework can be interpreted and utilized in different ways, leading to varying expectations and descriptions of behaviors and activities that qualify as parent involvement. The six types of involvement can guide a comprehensive program of partnerships, including involvement at home and at school. However, the results will depend on the types of involvement implemented and the quality of the implementation (Epstein, 1995).

Less Recognized Forms of Parent Involvement

Many researchers argue that some parents are involved with schools in ways that are not often recognized and valued by school personnel. In the book, *Beyond the Bake Sale: The*

Essentials Guide to Family-School Partnerships, Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies (2007) argue families engage in parent involvement activities that are often not recognized or supported by schools and educators. They (2007) state, " While some parents readily join the PTA and help organize bake sales, families from other cultures may have different traditions" (p. 123). For example, in his study of migrant workers whose children perform well in school, Lopez (2001) found that the parents considered themselves to be highly involved but defined involvement as teaching their children to value education through hard work. They took their children with them to work in the fields and gave them consejos (advice) about how limited their opportunities would be if they dropped out of school (as cited by Henderson et. al, 2007; p. 124).

Diamond (2004) and Huntsinger & Jose (2009) have similar studies that describe the involvement of Asian families. It is often argued that Asian students do well in school because their parents are more invested in their education. However, when examining Asian parents' participation in traditional forms of at-school involvement, they tend to be the least involved group and attend school events least often. They argue this is because Asian parents have a different model for how to be involved with their children's schools. They make substantial investments in the at-home education context by utilizing one-on-one tutoring, workbooks from their native country and drill and practice methods. Asian parents also rely heavily on their school networks outside of schools to support their children's education.

Several studies highlight how African American parents are involved with schools in ways that are not often recognized by schools. For example, in his study of black families Diamond (2000) found that some of their educational beliefs and strategies for involvement contrast sharply with traditional forms of parent involvement. While some of the participants in his study were involved in traditional at-school activities such as volunteering at school and

serving on committees, he found that many families used extended family networks, religious involvement, and communal childrearing to support involvement with their children's education.

Additionally urban parents are often involved with community-based organizations and community organizing efforts that center on improving the educational outcomes for children. A goal of community organizing efforts is to develop a neighborhood's ability to identify its own issues and to support them with finding resources to solve the problems. Henderson et. al (2007) stated, " This kind of community capacity can help not only improve the safety and economic vitality of neighborhood but also, as it evolves, to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the schools" (p. 5).

Many schools do not recognize these forms of parent involvement. Because of their limited categories of parent involvement, educators often assume that some parents do not value and are not involved with their children's education. Diamond (2004) states, "We can't go in with this single vision...of what parent involvement looks like or we miss the fact that all parents want to be involved. There just may be a different script for how they do it" (as cited in Henderson et. al, 2007; p. 125).

Factors that Influence Parent Involvement

Urban parents and urban schools face a number of barriers when trying to engage and partner with one another. These barriers not only include demographic, psychological, and logistical obstacles, but also barriers generated by the school itself. Parent involvement literature highlights several family characteristics that influence parents' at-school involvement trends (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Mitchell, 2008). Parent and family characteristics are predictors of parental involvement behaviors that can act as facilitators or hindrances to the types, frequency, and levels of at-school parent involvement (Georgiou, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

The most commonly documented family characteristics in the parent involvement literature include race and ethnicity (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Lareau & Horvat, 1999), social class and economic status (Brantlinger, 2003; Lareau, 2001, 2003), culture and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Lee & Bowen, 2006; McNeal, 1999; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009), social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 2001) and parents' self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995). In addition to family characteristics, other factors such as urban parent and school personnel's perceptions of one another (Davies, 1993; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000) logistical factors (Brantlinger, 2003), and the school environment also influence parent involvement (Henderson & Mapp 2002; Henderson et. al, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995).
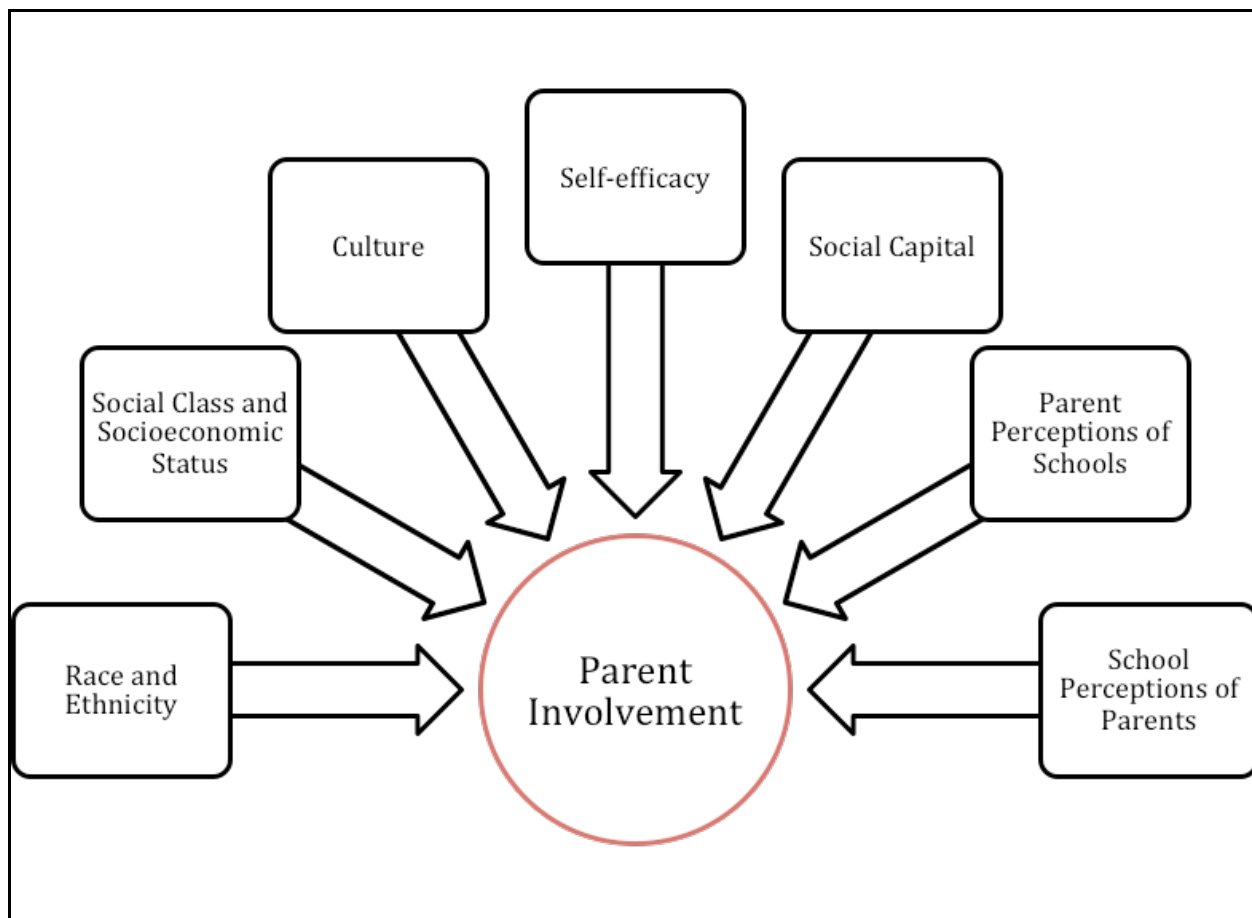
Figure 2.1 Factors that Influence Parent Involvement

Families who possess characteristics that align closely with schools have a benefit to those whose characteristics are not as aligned (Bourdieu, 1986; Brantlinger, 2003; Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2003). White, middle-class families possess characteristics such as race, class, and cultural and social capital that align greatest with and that are valued most by American schools. Therefore, they are more likely to be involved with their children's schools (McNeal, 1999; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Alternatively, urban parents generally have characteristics that do not align as closely. For example, many urban parents often possess different race, ethnicity, social class and cultural norms than the school personnel who are responsible for educating their children, making it tougher to form effective at-school partnerships and collaborations. Additionally, urban parents often face more logistical barriers to being involved in at-school activities, and they have cultural and social capital that does not align with and is often not valued by urban schools. Due to these differences, many urban parents engage less in at-school parent involvement and are less likely to form productive relationships with schools and school personnel (Jordan et al., 2001).

The Influence of Race and Ethnicity

Parent involvement positively influences the educational outcomes of students, regardless of race or ethnicity (Mapp, 2002). However, levels of at-school participation have been shown to vary by race and ethnicity and certain types of parents and families participate more in certain types of involvement (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). McNeal (1999) found that at-school parent involvement strategies such as volunteering and parent-teacher organizations are more prevalent among European American families than among African American, Hispanic and Asian American families, families with low socioeconomic status, and single parent families.

A comparative study that examined Chinese American and European American parents

from similar socioeconomic backgrounds revealed that race and ethnicity influence the levels of involvement and types of involvement of the parents (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). The study utilized Epstein's Six Types of Involvement specifically focusing on communicating, volunteering and learning at home. The study found that while European American parents were more likely to participate in school-based practices like volunteering; the Chinese American parents had higher levels of participation in at-home learning. Chinese American parents utilized systematic forms of one-on-one tutoring, texts from libraries, workbooks from their native country and drill and practice methods that did not always align with the methods of instruction at their child's school. However, European American parents, were more likely to volunteer at their child's school while engaging in more informal practices at home such as play-based methods of instruction and incentives for reading books (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Chinese families have higher rates of at-home parent involvement, while whites have higher rates at-school parent involvement (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009).

In Lareau & Horvat's (1999) study of parent involvement patterns of African Americans and whites, they suggest that it is more difficult for African American parents to become involved. Lareau & Horvat (1999) write, "Although social class seems to influence how black and white parents negotiate their relationships with schools, for blacks race plays an important role, independent of social class, in framing the terms of their relationship" (p. 38). Lareau & Horvat (1999) suggest that African American parent's struggled more to meet compliance with the institutional standards of schools and the demands of educators. Conversely, Lareau & Horvat (1999) state, " Whiteness represents a largely hidden cultural resource that facilitates white parents compliance with the standard of deferential and positive parental involvement" (p.

49). African American parents lack this resource; it is more difficult for them to meet the demands and standards of schools and educators (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

The Influence of Social Class and Socioeconomic Status

Research suggests that parent's social structure location also shape their interactions with schools. One of the most often cited finding is that middle-class parents participate in their children's education at higher rates than their poor and working-class counterparts (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Lareau, 2001). Through their location in the social class structure, middle class parents are more likely to have access to material resources, such as a disposable income, and flexible work schedules that better facilitate school-based engagement than working and poor class parents (Bratlinger, 2003; Lareau, 2001). Also, the social class values of middle-class families align more easily with the values of American schools. American schools rely on certain social structures and authority patterns in their relationships with families. Lareau (1987) writes, "The standards of schools are not neutral; their requests for parental involvement may be laden with the social and cultural experiences of intellectual and economic elites" (p. 74). Families living in poor socioeconomic conditions often find it difficult to be involved in schools, because of their lack of flexible time and resources and their lack of alignment and understanding of middle-class values and standards.

In *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, Lareau (2003) examines the cultural logic of child-rearing practices among middle, poor, and working class families. The child-rearing techniques of families influence their relationships with schools. Lareau (2003) finds that families whose child-rearing techniques are more closely aligned with schools benefit when interacting with schools and when trying to become involved with their children's schools.

Among middle class families, Lareau (2003) identified a child-rearing style called *concerted cultivation*, in which parents are actively engaged in the development of their child's skills, talents and opinions. Such parents tend to assign their children to very active schedules full of extra-curricular activities, communicate with their children using limited directives, and are more likely to intervene when their child encounters struggles or conflicts. When concerning educational institutions, middle-class parents use criticism and intervene on the behalf of their children; these parents also training their children to take on this role (Lareau, 2003). Students who are raised in such households are more likely to develop a sense of entitlement that is evidenced in a number of ways (Lareau, 2003). For example, children from such households are more likely to challenge authority and are encouraged to be proactive when they encounter problems or struggles. Their parents model these behaviors and often engage in these practices in front of their children (Lareau, 2003).

These behaviors closely align to the expectations and philosophies of American schools. Lareau (2003) writes, " Middle-class children were trained in 'the rules of the game' that govern interactions with institutional representatives." This creates an advantage for this group. Therefore, these parents and students are well suited and feel more comfortable interacting with schools, and these parents are more often involved in schools.

Among poor and working class families, Lareau (2003) identified child-rearing practices that she described as *accomplishment of natural growth*. These parents tend to focus on providing basic needs for the child including food, shelter, and safety. These children are granted more autonomy over many aspects of their daily lives and interactions. Often, the daily activities of these students outside of school include hanging out with family members, particularly other children. The parents use directives and the children rarely question or challenge the adults.

These families exhibit a dependence on institutions and are less likely to challenge those within such institutions (Lareau, 2003).

According to Lareau (2003), the consequence for these actions is an emerging sense of constraint on the part of the parents and the children. Lareau (2003) writes, "For working-class and poor families, the cultural logic of child rearing at home is out of synch with the standards of institutions." This influences their parent involvement with schools and makes it harder for them to be involved with schools. For example, many poor families find it difficult to join PTA programs that are dominated by middle-class norms. These parents also realize that PTAs are run primarily to benefit schools and school administrations, not parents themselves. In her discussion of social class differences, Lareau (2003) argues that these differences exist because schools rely on certain social structures and authority patterns that are not consistent with the social values and child rearing techniques of working-class and low-income parents. These social class differences affect the ways in which parents relate to schools. The greatest match in class values and practices exist between middle-class families and schools.

In the book, *Dividing Classes: How The Middle Class Negotiates and Rationalizes School Advantage* Brantlinger (2003) examined social class stratification and the ways it influences schools. In theory, schools are supposed to provide all children an equal chance to move up in social class rank and to improve life conditions. However, in reality schools do not accomplish this. Brantlinger (2003) argues that schools reproduce stratified class structure giving the middle-class an advantage. According to Brantlinger (2003), the educated middle class benefits the most from the social stratification. Brantlinger (2003) writes, "The educated middle class, who are primarily in control of schooling whether consciously or not, consistently arrange school structure to benefit children of their class" (p.189). Brantlinger (2003) suggests that social

class aids in the creation of an unequal and inequitable school system by influencing the ways in which parents interact with schools. In the context of parent and school relationships, the inequality greatly benefits the parent involvement behaviors of middle-class parents. The social class advantage makes it easier for middle-class parents to be more involved with their child's schools.

The Influence of Social Capital

Closely tied to social class and status is the concept of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 2007; Lin, 2001). The acquisition of social capital, or lack thereof, influences parent participation in parent involvement activities (Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 2007; Lin, 2001). Social capital stemmed from sociology and political science, but it is also very popular in educational literature. It is a term used to describe the resources available to individuals through social relationships and social networks. The initial theoretical development of the concept of social capital is attributed to French sociologist Bourdieu (Portes, 1998). In his book chapter *The Forms of Capital* (1986), Bourdieu discussed the interactions of economic capital, cultural capital and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). 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 collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which then to credit, in various senses of the word (p. 9).

Bourdieu's (1986) definition of social capital encompasses two elements: the social relationships that allow the individual to claim resources possessed by the collectivity and the quantity and quality of those resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Dika & Singh, 2002; Portes, 1998).

Another commonly cited social capital theorist is Robert Putnam, who works in the field of political science. Putnam established that social capital has both an individual and a collective aspect. He primarily examined social capital as a public good, arguing that communities benefit

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from an individual's possession of social capital. He argued that a well-connected individual in a poorly connected society is not as productive as a well-connected individual in a well-connected society (Putnam, 2000). Putnam (1993) defined social capital as

> Features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital enhances the benefits of investment in physical and human capital.

Putnam (2001) states, " The central idea of social capital, in my view, is that networks and associated norms of reciprocity have value" (p. 1). He argues that just as physical and human capital can increase productivity, resources, and values; social networks and contacts can do the same.

In educational research, Coleman's (1988) description and conceptualization of social capital is the most frequently utilized. His conceptualization stresses the role of social capital in communicating the norms, trust, authority, and social controls that an individual must understand and adopt in order to succeed in educational environments. Coleman (1988) offered the following definition

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

According to Coleman (1988), social capital is social structures that facilitate the actions of the actors in the structure. It facilitates productive activity and action. Persons or actors vary in the amount of social capital that they have access to which influences their knowledge and understanding of the norms and social controls that govern the system or structure. Individuals with access to more social capital are able to accomplish much more than individuals who lack access to the same social capital (Coleman, 1988).

Bourdieu examines social capital as a tool of reproduction for the dominant class, whereas Coleman examines social capital as social control, where trust and norms are characteristics of the community. Coleman's work supports the idea that families and parents can gain access to social capital by adopting the prescribed norms (Perna & Titus, 2005). Bourdieu's work emphasizes structural constraints and unequal access to institutional resources based on class, gender, and race (Lareau, 2001). Alternatively, Robert Putnam proposes that social capital can be viewed as an attribute of community and as a property of cities or nations. This usage of the term has become extremely popular in public discourse and has been used to support the idea of loss of community or social decline in America (Perna & Titus, 2005). All of the researchers would agree that families with valuable social capital fare better in school than students with less valuable social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman 1988; Lareau, 2003).

Components of social capital. Although each researcher conceptualized social capital in different ways, the common aspects and components of social capital are the social relationships and networks and the value that is added due to participation in the relationships and networks. The value of the social capital possessed depends on the size of the network connections and the possession of other forms of capital and resources possessed by the individuals in the network (Bourdieu, 1986; Dika & Singh, 2002). The first component of social capital is the social relationships and networks that make up the social structure. Social relationships and networks are defined as collections of individuals who interact socially. These networks exist between individuals due to their informal or formal social relationships with one another (Halpern, 2005). An example is the social networks that exist between teachers and parents in a school. These relationships may occur formally, through parent-teacher associations (PTA), or informally, through conversations with one another outside of school.

These relationships and networks are governed by *norms, values, and expectations*; these are also known as social norms. The social norms are the rules, guidelines, values, and expectations that characterize the social network or social relationships. They can be formal or informal "unwritten rules." The norms are a common understanding among network members that is a guide to acceptable actions and behaviors for the members of the social network. For example, in parent-teacher associations, they are social norms and expectations that guide the individuals within the social network; they may include the norms of attendance and the expectations of communication between teachers and parents. Urban parents often do not know or understand the "unwritten rules" for parent involvement and it effects their interactions with their children's schools.

The second component of social capital is the value that exists within the social structure among the social networks and relationships within the structure. The value depends on the size of the network connections and the acquisition of capital and resources already possessed by the individuals in the network (Bourdieu, 1986; Dika & Singh, 2002). Social relationships and networks are measured by density and closure (Halpern, 2005). The number of people in the social network who know one another defines the density. The closure is defined by the links that the actors in the social network have to those inside as well as outside of the social network (Halpern, 2005). The value of the social structure is determined by the quality and quantity of the density and closure. Valuable social structures contain access to human, cultural, and other forms of capital, as well as to institutional resources and supports (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001; Portes, 1998; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

Types of social capital. There are two types of social capital: bonding and bridging. *Bonding* in social capital is referred to as social networks that are inward looking and between

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homogenous groups (Haplern, 2005; Ottebjer, 2005). Bonding can be valuable for oppressed and marginalized members of society to band together in social networks that support their collective needs (Putnam, 2000). *Bridging* in social capital is referred to as social networks that are outward looking and socially heterogeneous groups (Haplern, 2005; Ottebjer, 2005). Bridging allows diverse groups the opportunity to share and exchange information and ideas and to build consensus among the groups representing diverse interests. Bridging social capital is the most needed for collective problems (Halpern, 2005). A mothers only parent involvement group is an example of bonding social capital and a citywide parent involvement group is an example of bridging social capital. Many social networks bond along some social dimensions and bridge across others at the same time (Putnam, 2000). Both forms of social capital have powerful positive social effects.

Social capital and parent involvement. Parent involvement rates can be negatively impacted due to the lack of social capital possessed by a parent or student; students with valued social capital fare better in school than students with less valuable social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman 1988; Lareau, 2003). As previously discussed, social capital is acquired through an individual's relationships with other individuals. The formal and informal relationships in schools such as informal relationships between teachers and parents or formal relationships such as Parent Teacher Associations and other parent-school organizations facilitate social capital.

In his work *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital* (1988), Coleman examined how social capital influenced parent involvement. He stressed the role of social capital in communicating the norms, trust, authority, and social controls that an individual must understand and adopt in order to succeed. It is his argument that parents vary in the amount of social capital that they have access to which influences their knowledge and understanding of the norms, social

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controls and authority that govern educational systems, thus influencing their parent involvement behaviors. Parents with more social capital tend to have higher rates of parent involvement and better student success. He (1988) examined High School and Beyond (HSB) data and found that greater amounts of social capital, such as the presence of two parents in the home, higher parental education expectations, and intergenerational closure led to lower incidences of students dropping out of school. He also found that parents from middle-class families have access to more social capital than parents from working and poor class families, influencing their children's educational outcomes.

Sheldon (2002) examined the impact of parent's social networks on their parent involvement behaviors and found that the size of parents' social networks predicted the degree to which parents were involved with their children's schools. Parents who reported speaking with more parents whose children attended the same school as their own children tended to have higher rates of involvement at the school (Sheldon, 2002).

Urban parents often have small or limited social networks that have the capital that is valued by schools. Due to the strained relationships between many urban parents and urban schools there is limited access to social capital through their relationships with urban schools. Although some groups of parents do not have access to social capital, they can acquire it through participation in applicable formal and informal networks, organizations, and relationships. Access to social capital gained through valuable social networks is theorized to generate knowledge, resources and skills that participants can use to achieve their desired goal (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998).

An example is how urban parents might utilize social capital gained through relationships with schools, teachers, parents or organizations to improve their knowledge and understanding of

how to engage in their children's education at-school as well as at-home. For example, parents can gain knowledge about the school's expectations for volunteering and homework activities through their relationships with teachers and other parents. They can also gain skills such as how to help their children with homework, reading at home, and parenting tips from informal social relationships or by attending more formal workshops or programs.

In his examination of the impact of school leadership on cultural and social capital at an urban alternative high school, Khalifa (2010) found that often school leaders struggle to recognize and validate capital that is not associated with the dominant culture. However, in his study he (2010) found that the school leaders and teachers from the urban alternative high school validated and enhanced students and families' social capital. Noguera also (2001) argues that urban schools can aid urban parents in acquiring increased social capital that can positively impact the educational outcomes of their students. He argues that the value and conditions of the relationships between urban parents and urban schools determine whether social capital can be increased. If relationships between schools and parents are weak and are characterized by fear and distrust then, it is harder for schools to improve the social capital of parents (Noguera, 2001). However, when the relationships are "genuine and based upon respect and a shared sense of responsibility" strong social capital can be generated (Noguera, 2001).

In their book *So Much Reform, So Little Change: Building-Level Obstacles to Urban School Reform,* Payne and Kaba report on a study conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research in which they surveyed staff at 210 schools to identify the characteristics shared by the schools that were improving. They found that strong social trust, the quality of staff-to-staff and staff-to-parent relationships, were characteristics of the improving schools. Relationships matter when engaging parents. How school staff treat and view parents and

community members, as assets rather than liabilities, is important when engaging parents and working to increase their social capital (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Urban parents can also acquire valuable social capital through participation in meaningful parent involvement programs that exist within or outside of schools.

The Influence of Culture

Another perspective that helps us understand lower parent involvement patterns among certain populations is the related theory of cultural capital. Beyond relationships and networks, cultural capital refers more specifically to an individual's histories, experiences, customs, and traditions. In the context of education, cultural capital is the attitudes, personal dispositions and knowledge of education gained through experiences with educational systems and connections to other education-related benefits (Lee & Bowen, 2006). The greater an individual's or family's cultural capital, the greater his or her advantage in obtaining additional capital.

Families as well as individuals can possess cultural capital. Some individuals inherit cultural capital through the values and habits present in their family's histories, experiences, customs, and traditions, in this case, those related to interactions with educational systems. This family advantage allows for more successful outcomes. In contrast, individuals with less cultural capital encounter constraints that result in unequal access to resources (Lareau, 2001). For example, a family that has a culture that does not highly value education, may not engage in their children's education as much as a family whose culture highly values education.

In the context of education, cultural capital is determined by the concordance of the educational aspects of the family's values and practices with the educational systems in which the family interacts. According to Lee & Bowen (2006), cultural capital is the advantage gained by middle-class educated European American parents from knowing, preferring, and

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experiencing a lifestyle congruent with the culture that is dominant in most American schools. This advantage accrues from their support of the types of involvement most valued by the school or most strongly associated with achievement (Lee & Bowen, 2006). According to McNeal (1999), the cultural capital possessed by affluent European American families magnifies the effects of parents' involvement on their children's achievement at school, supporting better educational results. Most urban cities consist of ethnically and racially diverse populations. Often, their histories, experiences, customs, and traditions differ from the schools, instructors and administrators they interact with. American schools rely on social structures and authority patterns that are less consistent with the cultural values and child rearing techniques of these families (Lareau, 2007).

Cultural differences and cultural diversity is one of the greatest challenges that an urban school faces in soliciting parent involvement. Additionally, many schools facilitate the exclusion of students and parents by utilizing activities that require specific culturally based knowledge and behaviors about the school as an institution that are often not possessed by urban parents and families. These parents may not possess the knowledge of how to navigate educational institutions and how to advocate for their children. The absence of appropriate knowledge excludes these parents from acceptable participation in formal school activities, resulting in isolation for many of these parents (Delgado- Gaitan, 1991). Due to this, racially diverse families living in poor socioeconomic conditions often face sustained isolation from schools. Parents who are less knowledgeable about the school's expectations and the ways in which the school operates are less able to advocate for their children than parents who have such knowledge and skills (Lareau, 2007). The cultural expectations of schools for parent involvement are different than the cultural experiences and expectations of many urban parents.

In all, racially diverse families living in poor socioeconomic conditions often face sustained isolation from schools. Parents who are less knowledgeable about the school's expectations and the ways in which the school operates are less able to advocate for their children than parents who have such knowledge and skills (Lareau, 2007).

The Influence of Self-Efficacy

Higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with more involved and engaged parents; parents with higher efficacy are more likely to volunteer at their children's schools and spend time in educational activities with their children (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1992). Self-efficacy is belief in one's abilities to act in ways that will produce desired outcomes (Bandura, 2006). Bandura (2006) suggests those with higher self-efficacy are more likely to engage and are more persistent when encountering obstacles than those with lower self-efficacy. In the context of parent involvement, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandlers (1995) define parent self-efficacy as parent's belief that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to help their children succeed in school, belief that their children can learn what they teach them, and belief that they can find alternative or additional helpful resources and skills when necessary.

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997), utilize psychological theory to understand why parents become involved in their children's education and to understand the effects of that involvement. Their *Model of the Parent Involvement Process* (1997) conceptualizes a process that is composed of five levels operating between parents' initial choice to be involved and the beneficial influence of that involvement on student outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Level 1 is parents' initial choice to become involved. Hoover-Demsey & Sandlers (1997) suggests that this decision is influenced by parent's construct of the parental role, parent's sense

of efficacy for helping their children succeed in school, and general invitations and demands for involvement from their child and their child's school. Level 2 is parent's choice of involvement forms; these are influenced by parent's skill and knowledge, demands of parent time and energy, and specific invitations and demands for involvement from the child and school. Level 3 addresses the mechanisms through which parent involvement influences child outcomes; these include modeling, reinforcement, and instruction. Level 4 is the influence of major mediating variables that enhance or diminish the influence of involvement. One such variable includes the fit between parents' involvement actions and the school's expectations of parent involvement. Level 5 is the child's outcomes for learning. This encompasses the influence of parent involvement and students' personal sense of efficacy for doing well in school academically.

Through this model Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) identified three major constructs that contribute to parents' decisions for involvement. The first construct is parent's perceptions of their role and responsibility in their children's education. Middle class parents, for example, feel that they should collaborate with and be involved at schools. But low-income families often perceive themselves as being outsiders to the school system and are more reluctant to be involved. Second is parents' sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed in schools. Parents who believe they can make a difference in their children's education are more likely to visit and participate in school activities than those who feel ineffective. Sense of efficacy is important because it enables parents to be more involved with their children's schools and to persist when encountering barriers to helping their children succeed in school. The last construct is parents' perceptions that their children and the school desire their involvement. Some schools are more welcoming than others and extend invitations, demands and opportunities for involvement. The perceptions and the extent to which schools make parents feel comfortable and

valued contributes to their participation in their children's education. Hoover -Dempsey and Sandler (1997) argue schools serving low income, ethnically diverse families must make greater efforts to welcome families, because those are the parents who often feel excluded because of differences in their ethnicity, income, and culture.

Sense of efficacy is important because it enables parents to be more involved with their children's schools and to persist when encountering barriers to helping their children succeed in school (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandlers, 1995). Parents who believe they can make a difference in their children's education are more likely to visit and be involved with their children's school activities than those who feel inadequate (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandlers, 1995; McDermott & Rothenburg, 2000). Those that have low efficacy can develop high efficacy. Higher self-efficacy can be developed through experiences that positively influence parent's beliefs. The examined program gives parents access to experiences can potentially influence their self-efficacy.

Parents' Perceptions of Schools

Parents' perceptions of schools are influenced by their interactions with schools including their prior personal experiences as students and interactions with their children's schools. Many urban parents did not have positive experiences with schools as students. In her article *Low-Income Parents and the Public Schools*, Lott (2001) discusses an ambitious study conducted by Davies (1993) that included 350 parent interviews. Davies (1993) found that parents reported several bad memories about schools and negative interactions and relationships with school personnel including teachers and administrators. These negative experiences influence the way urban parents interact with their children's schools.

Urban families also perceive schools as being culturally insensitive and school-centered in the area of parent involvement. In a study that examined parents' perceptions of family

engagement at an inner city school, McDermott & Rothenberg (2000) found "parents comments indicated that they perceived the school as representing the values and interests of established white America and not the needs of low-income people of color" (p. 9). The urban parents also perceived the urban school as unwelcoming and their interactions with the inner city school as painful encounters (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000). Due to these perceptions, McDermott & Rothenberg (2000) found that the parents "deliberately decided to withdraw from school activities " (p. 9). Urban parents' perceptions of schools create an additional barrier that further strains the relationship between urban parents and schools and urban parent's at-school involvement rates (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Teachers' Perceptions of Urban Parents

Urban parents face a number of barriers when trying to engage in school involvement, including barriers generated by the school itself. Many school personnel rely on deficit thinking in the ways they perceive urban parents. Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills and parents neither value nor support their child's education (Yosso, 2005).

Teachers' preconceived notions about urban parents further hinder efforts to build effective parent involvement. Since America's colonial period, educators have perceived parents as incapability of supporting their children's intellectual, social, and moral development (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). More than a century later, educators continue to blame low-income and racially diverse parents for their children's academic failures (Lazar & Slostad, 1999). School personnel perceive parents as being unsupportive, uninvolved, and as barriers to their children's education (Jackson & Remillard, 2005).

Lazar & Slostad (1999) argue that urban parents are not involved with schools due to schools' perceptions and isolation of urban parents. They argue that many teachers often assume that poor and minority parents do not care about supporting their children's academic progress (Lazar & Slostad, 1999). These teachers tend to believe that parents from urban communities neither value education highly nor provide their children with the intellectual and motivational prerequisites for learning and success in school. It is Lazar & Slostad's (1999) argument that teachers have these beliefs because of the lack of cultural sensitivity training they receive during their preparation. McDermott & Rothenberg (2000) found that although teachers recognize that parents are disengaged with schools; they lack the tools and knowledge of how to alleviate the lack involvement. They (2000) state, " The teachers recognized the importance of parental involvement in children's education, but they knew they were unsuccessful in this aspect of their teaching (p. 5)." Many teachers and school personnel subscribe to the majoritarian view that urban parents do not care about their children's education, are not motivated to be involved, and are consequently not involved with their children's schools. Also, as previously discussed, schools and teachers subscribe to very rigid definitions of parent involvement and do not recognize the alternative ways that many urban parents are involved with schools and with their children's education.

Effective Parent Involvement Programs and Community Organizing

Parent involvement programs are a common method for involving parents in schools. Henderson & Mapp (2002) examined 51 parent involvement studies and found that access to parent involvement programs positively impacted the at-school involvement rates of parents. They also found that parent involvement programs make a difference and have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Involvement programs and schools that successfully engage families from diverse

backgrounds exhibit three key practices; they focus on building trusting relationships among teachers, families, and community members, they recognize, respect and address families needs including class and cultural differences, and they share power and responsibility between schools and families (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha (2001) examined four schools that effectively involved migrant parents and found that schools were successful at involving parents because they aimed to meet parental needs above all other involvement considerations. The schools were successful not because they subscribed to a particular definition of involvement, but because they held themselves accountable to meet the multiple needs of migrant parents on a daily and ongoing basis (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

Unfortunately, most schools and parent involvement programs do not have these characteristics. Most programs and interventions are school-centered, do not take into account the needs of families, and are generally restricted to a few types of activities and programs (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). School-centered programs are programs established by the school and serve school-determined interests (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). These activities and programs often include parent-teachers conferences or parent-teachers associations, and focus on volunteering or giving parents guidelines for how to assist their children with academic development. Although these are important types of programs, many of them do not build trust, meet the needs of the families participating, or share power with parents and families.

Programs and schools tend to limit parental involvement practices to the more formal activities that ignore the specific perspectives of minority populations (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). Ultimately, these school-centered approaches cast urban parents as outsiders rather than welcoming them into schools. Urban families, like other low-income and

racially diverse families, struggle to feel welcome in school-centered parent involvement programs and are consequently less likely to form productive relationships with schools and school personnel (Lareau, 2003).

Due to this disconnection, researchers and educators have sought to develop the conditions that support urban schools, families and communities to form productive relationships and partnerships that support and encourage student achievement (Epstein, 2001; Mitchell, 2008; Jordan et al., 2001). As previously discussed, schools must recognize all the ways that parents are involved in their children's education (Henderson et al., 2007). Additionally schools must expand their definitions of parent involvement and create parent involvement models that are not school-centered. When the programs build trust, meet the specific needs of families and communities, and share power they are successful in creating and sustaining genuine connections and partnerships that improve student achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Parent and community organizing is a unique approach and a popular strategy utilized to improve relationships and increase parent involvement and partnerships among low-income and racially diverse families and schools. Effective organizing strategies focus on building power and relationships to increase equity and improve public education and other issues confronting families in low-income communities (Warren & Mapp, 2011). Parent and community organizing efforts often use strategies that are aimed at establishing a power base to hold schools and school districts accountable for low student achievement.

Organizing is a much different strategy than most parent involvement programs. Unlike many involvement programs, organizing is based outside of schools and is often led, designed and controlled by parents, community members and community organizations. A key goal of community organizing is to give parents and community members more power over what

happens in their children's schools. Organizing seeks to change the power relations that create and sustain poor functioning schools (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Additionally, it aims to change and alleviate conditions that underlie low academic performing schools. These conditions include, but are not limited to low standards and expectations for learning, poor and mediocre teaching, inadequate learning resources and materials, and ineffective instructional and school leadership. Lastly, organizing seeks to create and improve local leadership and capacity to improve and rebuild distressed communities (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Through the emphasis on relationship building, organizing often increases and builds social capital. In their book, *A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a catalyst for School Reform*, Warren and Mapp (2011) wrote, "Where financial capital and human capital are in short supply, as they are in many low-income communities, social capital often provides a particularly critical resource" (p. 24). Organizing builds and leverages building and bonding social capital. Organizing strategies have been successful in many cases and have contributed to changes in policy, resources, personnel, school culture, and educational program improvements (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Henderson and Mapp (2002) state, " Programs that successfully connect with families and community invite involvement, are welcoming, and address specific parent and community needs" (p. 43). For effective and genuine involvement, programs must be welcoming, have strong social trust, and address the specific needs of the parents and community. Ultimately, programs will be effective and successful not because they subscribed to a particular definition of involvement, but because they hold themselves accountable to meet the multiple needs of parents and families on an ongoing basis (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

Summary

Parent and family characteristics can act as facilitators or hindrances to parental involvement. The most commonly documented family characteristics in the parent involvement literature include race and ethnicity, social class, social and cultural capital, and parents' self-efficacy. In addition to family characteristics, other factors also influence at-school involvement such as urban parent and school personnel's perceptions of one another, logistical factors, and the school environment.

Families who possess characteristics that align closely with schools and that are valued by schools have a benefit to those whose characteristics do not (Bourdieu, 1986; Brantlinger, 2003; Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 1987, 2003). Urban parents often possess race, ethnicity, social class, and cultural norms that are not valued by schools, making it tougher to form effective at-school partnerships and collaborations.

Community organizing approaches are an emerging strategy for improving relationships and partnerships between schools and low-income, racially diverse families. Effective community organizing strategies focus on building relationships that increase equity and improve a wider set of issues confronting low-income families and communities (Warren & Mapp, 2011). This study examines a parent involvement program that utilized a community organizing approach to empower parents to become more involved with schools.

The Conceptual Framework

The review and critique of the literature and my own observations and experiences have contributed to developing a conceptual framework for this study (Maxwell, 2005). Miles and Huberman (1994) described a conceptual framework as a visual or written product that explains the key factors and concepts that are being studied (as cited by Maxwell, 2005, p. 33). The purpose of this study is to describe the Community Reviewer Program and to examine how

participation in the program influenced parent's experiences with their children's schools. Describing the Community Reviewer Program and how participation influenced parent's orientations toward involvement in their children's schools encompassed two general domains: the Community Reviewer Program and its early outcomes, and parent experiences and their early outcomes (Figure 2.2).

This conceptual framework aligns with the study's research questions. The first question aimed to describe and understand the program's underlying theory of action, its operating model, and its early outcomes. A second set of questions sought to understand parents' experiences with the program and how it influenced their orientations to greater involvement or improved interaction with their children's schools or other schools.

As discussed in the literature review, many factors affect parent involvement. Rather than testing for changes in these factors one by one, they study drew instead on the broader concepts of efficacy and social capital as a way to explore parent experiences and outcomes. Effective parent involvement programs can serve as interventions that give parents access to applicable and valuable social capital that can influence their relationships with schools and experiences that can positively affect their self-efficacy.

Specific to the goals of the Community Reviewer Program, the model included some targeted outcomes such as changes in parents' beliefs and ideas about what constitutes a good school, their confidence in being involved with schools, their involvement dispositions and behaviors, their school choice methods and decisions, and other knowledge and skills. The conceptual framework focused the research process and served as a guide for data collection and coding-- described further in the next chapter. Across that process some concepts were deleted and others were modified, or collapsed. The final working framework was as follows:
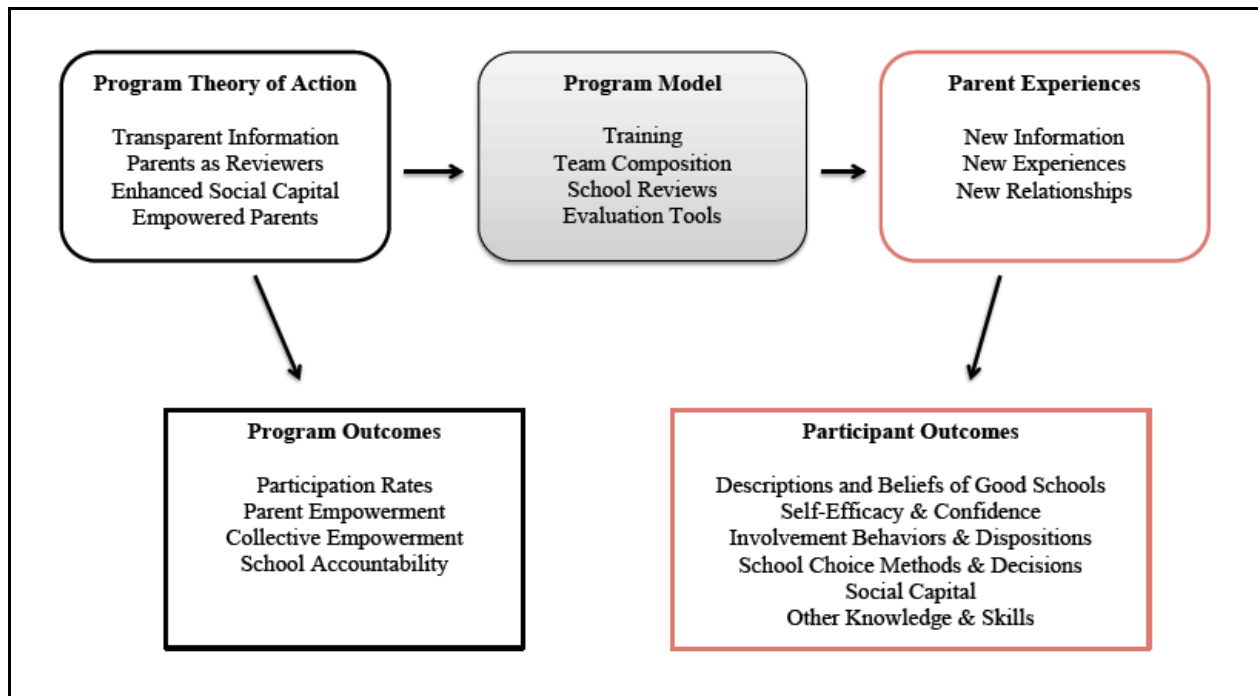
Figure 2.2 Study's Conceptual Framework

The structure of the thesis chapters aligns to this framework. Chapter Four shares the program's theory of action, model and early outcomes. Chapter Five provides findings and interpretations on parents the experiences of nine program participants. A concluding chapter offers final interpretations and implications.

CHAPTER 3: STUDY CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this case study was to describe the Community Reviewer Program developed by Excellent Schools Detroit and to examine the experiences of a sample of participants. This chapter includes an overview of the program's origins and context, the study's research questions, and a rationale for the study's approach. It then describes the study's research sample, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, and reflections on validity.

Detroit and the Community Reviewer Program

The Community Reviewer Program was developed in and for Detroit, Michigan. Detroit currently has a population of about 701,000 that is 82% African American, 10% white and 6% Hispanic. It has a school-aged population of about 130,000 children. Now in bankruptcy, the city has faced serious challenges that negatively impact school quality and student achievement, including high unemployment rates and high concentrations of poverty. The median income is only $25,000, with over 55% of school-aged children living in poverty (Data Driven Detroit, 2012; Table 3.1).

The structure of the city's schools has changed dramatically in the past ten years. In the year 2000, there were about 194,000 school-aged children in the city; over 154,000 students attended traditional Detroit Public Schools and about 11,000 students attended public charter schools. In 2011, there were only about 126,000 school-aged students in Detroit with about 57,000 students attending Detroit Public Schools, about 29,500 students attending more than 100 public charter schools, and about 11,000 students in 15 schools managed by a newly created Education Achievement Authority (EAA). Another 25,000 Detroit children were attending school in Detroit's suburbs (Table 3.2). The EAA is a new statewide school system created to

operate the lowest performing 5 percent of schools in Michigan. It was designed to provide

stable, financially responsible management to these schools and create the conditions under

which teachers could help students make significant academic gains. Together, these changes

show a dramatic population decrease of school-aged children and rapid growth in public charter

school enrollments.

Table 3.1

Demographic Changes in Detroit 2000-2011

	2000	2011
General Demographics		
Detroit population	951,270	706,640
School-aged kids 5 to 17	219,477	133,387
School-aged kids 5 to 17 in poverty^	34.1%	55.3%
Median household income*	$39,855	$25,193
% of school-aged kids 5 to 17 in single parent families	61.9%	66.6%
% w/ of households with 1 or more cars	78.1%	76.2%
*2000 estimate converted to 2011 dollars using CPI-U-RS All Items. The 2000 number is reported in 1999 dollars. ^Poverty figures use 1999 dollars		

Table 3.2

Education Landscape Changes in Detroit 2000-2012

	1999-2000*	2011-12
Where Students Attend School		
# of Students in DPS[!#]	154,648	51,894
# of Students in DPS charters[!]	1,482	3,468
# of Students in DPS self-governing[!]	0	2,325
# of Students in other Detroit charters[!]	11,167	29,496
# of students in EAA schools[!@]	0	11,135
Estimated # of students in independents[^]	8,968	2,529
Estimated # who attended school outside of Detroit[&]	17,990	25,310
Traditional public schools[+]	6,980	9,795
Charter schools	11,010	15,515
Total	194,255	126,157

Source: D3 analysis of headcount, nonresident student, and Educational Entity Master Data from CEPI.

[!]Not all students who go to school in Detroit live in Detroit; for example, in 2011-2012 1,274 K-12 students living in the

[#]The two DPS schools that DPS chartered for Fall 2012 are NOT included in the DPS charter count here.

[*]Spring headcounts are not available for 1999-2000

[@]The spring enrollment of the 15 DPS schools that ended up in EAA (including the three schools EAA chartered) are inc

[^]Headcount here is from 2001-2002; this is the earliest year available for independents.

Detroit residents attending independent schools in the suburbs are not include here; in 2011-2012 there were just ove

The comparable 2002-2003 data is not yet available.

[&]The 1999-2000 data is actually from 2002-2003; this is the earliest year available for nonresident data.

Alternative education students are included in 2002-2003.

[+]6,980 differs from the value in Bettie's State of Education in Detroit chart because this number excludes pre-kindergar

Although school choice options in Detroit have dramatically increased, the city's schools including district and charter are characterized by chronically low academic performance and weak evidence of improvement over the last decade. Currently, 46 percent of Michigan's "bottom 5%" schools (in the state's top-to-bottom ranking of all schools) and almost half of all "failing schools" are located in Detroit. More than a third of Detroit's school-aged students attend a "failing" school and more than 80 percent attend a school in the bottom 25% of the statewide ranking. Significant choice and charter developments have not altered the fact that many Detroit students still attend ineffective, academically weak schools.

Excellent Schools Detroit and the Community Reviewer Program

In 2009, Detroit Public Schools (DPS) voluntarily participated in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam for the first time. Local and state leaders called upon the district to compare its student achievement to other cities nationwide, and the results were staggering. Only 3 percent of DPS's fourth graders and only 4 percent of eighth graders met the national standards on math. DPS students received the nation's worst scores on the NAEP, hitting historic lows in mathematical proficiency (Erb & Dawsey, 2009) and prompting US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to label Detroit schools as "ground zero for education in this country" (Erb & Dawsey, 2009).

In an attempt to combat these serious shortcomings, education, philanthropic, civic, and nonprofit leaders across Detroit formed a school-community nonprofit called Excellent Schools Detroit (ESD) in March 2010. ESD's first call to action included a bold education plan that aimed to ensure that, by 2020, every Detroit child would attend an excellent school. Excellent schools were defined by the "90-90-90" concept, indicating a school where 90 percent of students are on-track to graduate, 90 percent of those graduates enroll in college or a quality postsecondary training program, and 90 percent of those enrollees succeed in their post secondary placements without remediation. Today, ESD is a coalition of over forty organizations including educational, philanthropic, government community-based, and schools.

Excellent Schools Detroit's theory of change works to create the conditions in Detroit's education system that will result in four major outcomes: 1) parents and families will choose the highest-quality education available for their children; 2) any and all new schools that open in Detroit will be of high quality; 3) weak schools will improve; or 4) they will be closed (Figure 3.1).
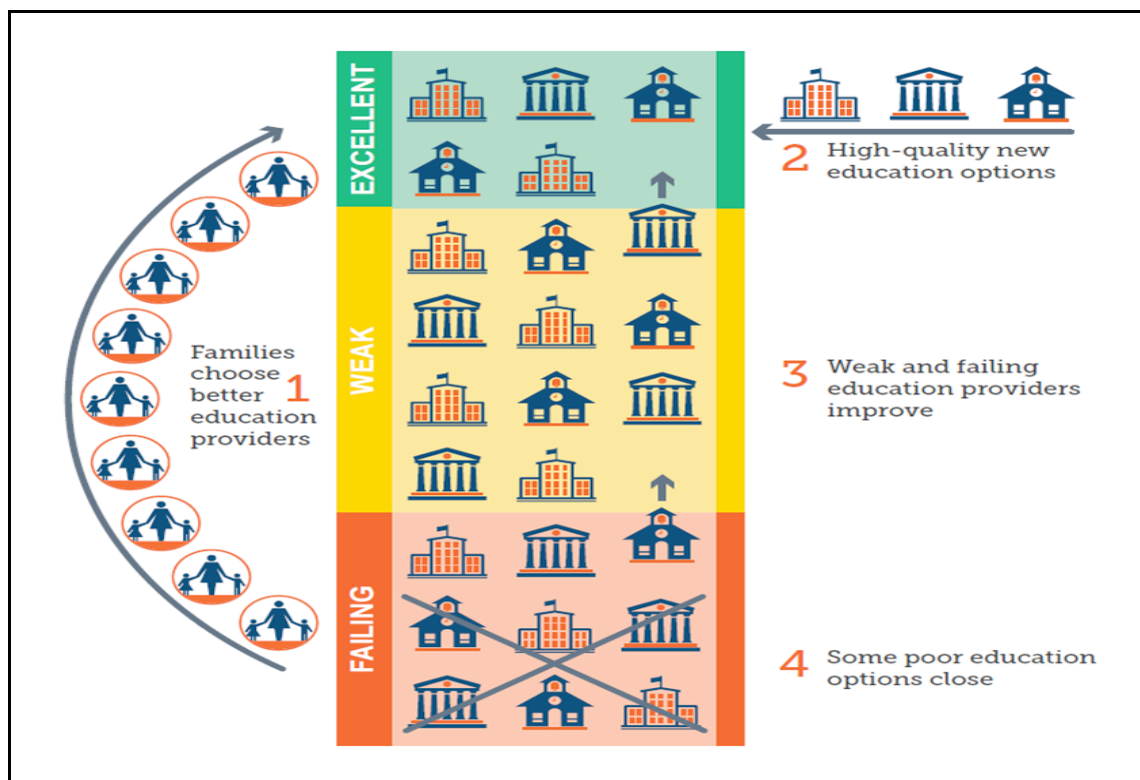
Figure 3.1 ESD Theory of Change

In order to create the conditions that support achievement, ESD's first task was to create a shared definition of an excellent education through the 90-90-90 standard and a shared information system. To accomplish this, ESD developed and launched the *Detroit School Scorecard* to assess and compare all of the city's schools against the 90-90-90 standard and an overall A- F grade based on additional factors (see Appendix B). The Detroit School Scorecard was to become an annual process for evaluating the academic performance and culture of all schools in Detroit (public, charter and private) using the same standards and measurements regardless of governance model or affiliation. Schools on-track to accomplish the 90-90-90 standard would be rated as "A" schools and " excellent schools."

More specifically, the Scorecard utilized four performance categories: academic status, academic progress, school culture, and extra credit. Academic status is a measure of the school's

current academic achievement based on how students perform on state-mandated standardized tests. Academic progress is a measure of the school's progress toward the ESD 90-90-90 goal; it measures academic growth over the course of one year based on standardized tests and growth-to-achievement assessments. The extra credit score can be earned for serving large populations of disadvantaged students including schools with high numbers of students who are English language learners, eligible for free or reduced price lunch or receiving special education services.

Skeptical of test-based accountability, parents and school leaders called for alternatives to test based indicators of school performance on the Scorecard. In response to the demands, ESD created a School Culture category based on two measures: survey data from teachers and students and schools evaluation grades given by parents and community members.. The Community Reviewer Program was created to conduct the evaluations and produce a school culture grade for the Scorecard.

Grades earned in each of the performance categories are combined to create an overall grade of A, B, C, D or F (see Appendix B). Schools must have both an academic status and academic progress grade to receive an overall grade. ESD recommends that parents send their children to schools with a C+ or better rating.

Research Questions and Conceptual Framing

The purpose of this study was to examine the Community Reviewer Program and the experiences of a sample of program participants. It was guided by the program's theory of action. Discussed more in the next chapter, this theory suggested that providing reliable, transparent data on the performance of schools and engaging parent and community members in school as reviewers would enhance the social capital of parents and empower them to choose good schools for their children and to pressure schools to improve. The Program trained parents

to conduct school evaluation visits in groups, providing new information and experiences, and

new relationships with other parents, community members and ESD leaders and organizers.

The study aimed to describe the unique program and to explore whether parents' experiences

with the program influenced their interactions with schools (Figure 3.2).
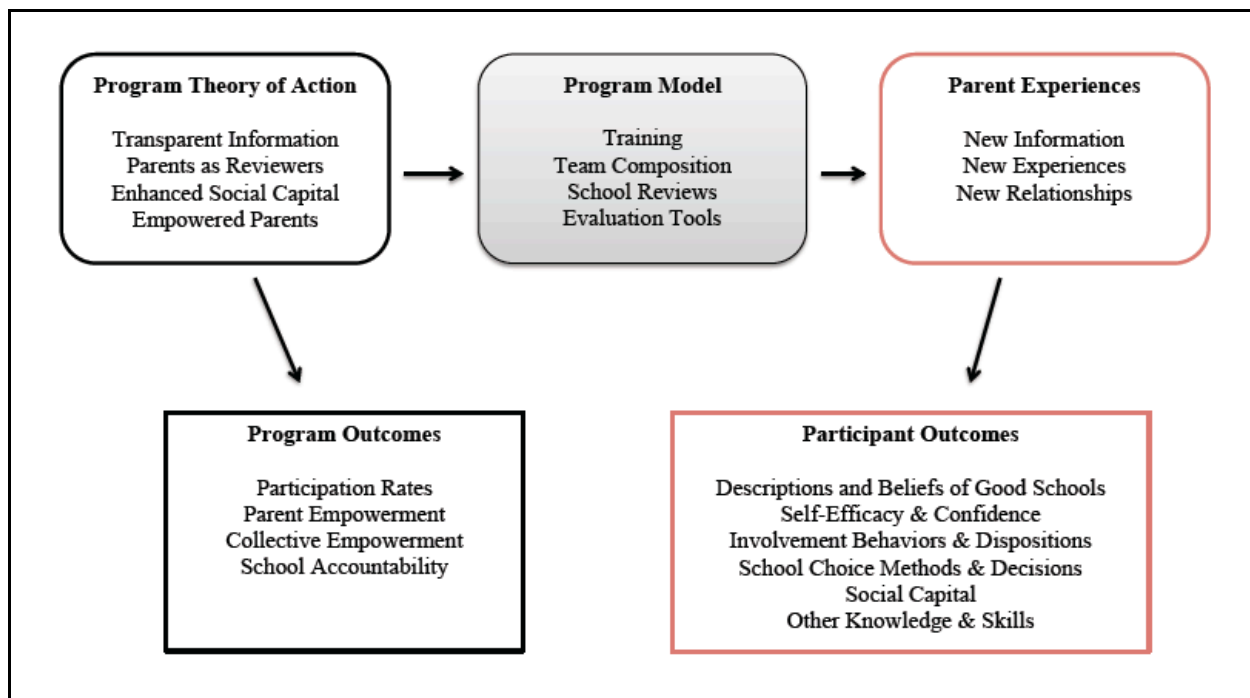
Figure 3.2 Conceptual Framework and Study Guide

Research Questions

The following main questions and sub questions gave direction and provided continued

focus during the study:

1. What strategies and practices did Excellent Schools Detroit utilize to create the

   Community Reviewer Program?

   a. What was the program's theory of action and components of the program model?

   b. What strategies and activities most empowered participants?

   c. What are the early outcomes of the program?

2. How do parents describe their experience participating in the parent involvement program?

   a. Does it affect their thinking about what constitutes a good school for their child?

   b. Does participation in the program affect parent's self-efficacy and confidence in being involved with their children's schools?

   c. What sorts of knowledge, skills, and dispositions do they report acquiring?

3. How might participation in the program influence urban parents' experiences and interactions with their children's schools?

Rationale for Research Approach

My goal was to gain insight into the CRP model but also to understand the lived experiences of the parent participants and to give voice to them. Descriptive findings on program operations and outcomes involved quantitative measures of participation rates but the central purpose was to understand the thoughts and experiences of the program participants. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was viewed as the most appropriate method for the study.

Qualitative research grounds itself in lived experiences and also seeks to understand and interpret how people in a specific setting construct and make meaning of the world around them (Glesne, 2010; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Maxwell, 2005). The approach is committed to views of social reality whereby a researcher's participants become the experts; it is his or her view of reality that the researcher seeks to interpret (Hesse-Biber, 2010). The qualitative approach also values reflection and listening with the goal of giving voice to respondents' experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

The most suited design for the study was a descriptive, embedded case study. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2003). They are often used to illustrate events and their specific context and seek to assess them in detail and in depth, based on an articulation of a descriptive theory (Yin, 2003). An embedded case study also allows for more than one unit of analysis (Yin, 2003). The examined case was the Community Reviewer Program and the units of analysis for this embedded case study were the experiences of nine parent participants.

Description of Research Sample

I utilized a purposeful sample of nine parent participants of the Community Reviewer Program. According to Polkinghorne (2005) a purposeful sample can provide relevant descriptions of the experiences that I seek to better understand. The criteria for selection of the participants were as follows:

- Program participant in the 2013-14 Community Reviewer Program

- First time participant in the Community Reviewer Program

- Parent or legal guardian with a child currently in K-12 schools in Detroit

Study participants were recruited during CRP training sessions in November and December of 2013. ESD supported this study and allowed time during the program trainings for me to explain the purpose of the study, ask participants to complete a flyer, and answer any questions that the participants had regarding the study.

Each participant at these trainings received a recruitment flyer soliciting participation in the two-stage interview process. The flyer briefly described the purpose of the study and included a few questions that asked their interest in participating in the interviews, whether they currently had children in Detroit schools, basic demographic information, and contact

information (see Appendix C). At the end of the program training, I collected the flyers from the participants that were interested in taking part in the study. A total of about thirty-five participants expressed interest in participating by turning in the flyer. Of the thirty-five participants about twenty five of them met the criteria. After the program training, I followed up with parents who met the criteria for the study via telephone. Some of the parents phone numbers were disconnected, some of did not return my phone calls, and some did not show up for the scheduled pre-interview.

The final sample included nine parents including two fathers, six mothers, and one grandmother who is the legal guardian of her grandchild. Seven participants were African American, one Latino, and one biracial participant (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Interview Participants Demographic Characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Age	Education Level	Annual Income	Employment
Hattie	Female	AA	70	BA Degree	$35,000-40,000	Retired
Barry	Male	AA	49	MA Degree	Over $45,000	Program Director at a Nonprofit
Ebony	Female	AA	42	GED	Less than $5,000	Unemployed
Michelle	Female	AA	41	MA Degree	Over $45,000	College Counselor at Local College
Maria	Female	HA	50	11th Grade	$5,000-10,000	Unemployed
Damon	Male	AA	45	High School Diploma	$10,000-20,000	Part time at a High School
Tanesha	Female	AA	31	Pursuing Associate Degree	$5,000-10,000	Unemployed
Beverly	Female	AA	40	GED	$20,000-30,000	Nursing Home
Vanessa	Female	Bi-racial	43	Associate Degree	Less than $5,000	Unemployed

Sources of Data

To answer my research questions, I utilized in-depth interviews, questionnaires, participant and program observations, and document analysis (Table 3.4). These data were collected during the third year of the Community Reviewer Program (CRP), from November 2013 to April 2014. The use of multiple methods and data triangulation is critical when conducting a case study (Yin, 2003). This data collection strategy added rigor, depth, and sources of corroborative evidence to the study.

Table 3.4

Sources of Data

Data Source	Sample Size	Description
Interviews	N=9	Parent participants of the program
Questionnaires	N=9	Parent participants of the program
Participant Observations		Trainings, program staff meetings, school site visits and evaluations
Document Analysis		Website, program documents and videos, participants' school visit rubrics

Interviews and Questionnaires

The interviews were the primary source of data. I utilized the study's research questions and conceptual framework as a guide to develop the study's interview questions, constructing a matrix to illustrate relationships between the study's research questions and the interview questions (see Appendix D). I asked members of my dissertation guidance committee to review and provide feedback on the interview questions, and I incorporated their comments into the final interview protocols (see Appendix E).

To explore the perceptions and experiences of parent participants of the Community Reviewer Program, I utilized phenomenological based interviewing (Seidman, 1998). Phenomenological based interviewing explores the human knowing through accessing people's experiences and how they perceive those experiences (Titchen and Hobson, 2005). In this case, it asks questions such as can you describe your children's social and academic experiences in schools and can you tell me a negative story about a school you visited during the program (see Appendix E).

A loosely structured pre- and post interview was conducted with each of the nine selected participants. The average duration of each interview was two hours. I used a tape recorder and I took notes during the interviews. All interview participants agreed to sign a consent form and agreed to have the interviews audio recorded (see Appendix J). Participants were also informed that pseudonyms would be utilized for the program, their names, and the school names. After participants complete both interviews I offered them a $40 visa gift card.

The pre-interviews were conducted *after* the program training, but *before* participation in the school visits. The purpose of the pre-interviews was to gather life history and baseline information about their experiences with schools and with their children's schools and their beliefs and descriptions of a good school. Parents were, however, exposed to ESD language and descriptions of the standards that mark a good school during the program trainings. A review of the pre-interviews showed much of this language in parent's own descriptions, for example the parents offered descriptions of a good school very similar to those used in the training. In retrospect, the timing of these interviews was not as ideal as one that might have occurred prior to being exposed to language and terms during program trainings. Earlier interviews might have

revealed language and descriptions of a good school more authentic to these parents and less aligned with that of the training.

The post interviews occurred after parents completed the three required school visits. They allowed participants to reconstruct the details of their experience with the program and encouraged parents to reflect on the meaning the experience held for them (see Appendix E). Some elements of the post interview were also affected by the timing of the pre interview. Differences in how parents thought about a good school changed little, as both drew heavily on language and standards introduced in the program training. This awareness and limitation aside, the interviews still present parents thinking about schools.

Most of the interviews were conducted in the participant's homes; three were conducted in other locations selected by the participants: at a school, a library, and a restaurant. The interviews in the homes of the participants took place in the participant's living room, dining room, or on the front porch. In some cases the houses were quiet, in other cases children and telephone calls frequently intervened. The interviews were open-ended and were set up to be like a conversation. I had an interview guide with questions, but depending on how the interview evolved, I sometimes deviated from it.

At the conclusion of the pre-and post interviews, each participant also completed a brief questionnaire. The questionnaire assessed participant's self-reported efficacy when interacting with their children's schools, teachers, and administrators (see Appendix K). The questionnaire was constructed utilizing Bandura's (2006) *Guide for Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales* and pre-existing questions from Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's (2005) *Model of Parental Involvement Process*. The pre- and post questionnaire included the same items and had statements such as; I know how to help my child do well in school and I am confident when communicating with my

child's teachers. Participants were asked to assess each statement by selecting not at all, somewhat, mostly, or completely. At the conclusion of the post interview, I placed both the pre- and post questionnaire side-by-side and asked participants to describe what experiences during the program most influenced any changes in their questionnaire.

Participant Observations and Document Analysis

The observations were conducted during the program trainings and school visits. I attended all of the program trainings and many of the program planning meetings and debriefings. During some of the trainings I just observed and took general field notes, and in others I participated in group discussions and aided the program staff with administrative tasks. I primarily recorded information that pertained to the training content, participants' interactions with team leaders and other parents, and their conversations and discussions about the program training rubrics and tools. I also attended program meetings with the program community organizers and scoring consultants. During these meetings, I participated in discussions, and I recorded general information.

The documents collected and reviewed included information on the program website, internal program documents (flyers, media releases, frequently asked questions documents, promotional videos, participation data, and other general program documents). I also collected training and program meeting agendas and other documents given to participants during the trainings. Additionally, ESD gave me access to the participant's school visit rubric responses.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Analysis was ongoing and began early in the data collection process. Shortly after the observations and interviews a short one to two page analytical memo was written to summarize the key issues and reflections for each observation and interview. Documents and memos on

60

program operations and outcomes were then pooled together to construct a descriptive picture of the program's origins, the model that emerged, how the program operated, and what early outcomes were in terms of participant rates and patterns. These analysis and findings are shared in Chapter 4.

I spent hours listening to the participant's interviews over and over, and documented my thoughts and reflections. I also had each interview transcribed verbatim. The shortest transcription was about twenty pages and the longest was about forty pages. I read and analyzed each participant's pre- and post interview transcript. As I read, my primary questions were: "What is this about? What is being referenced here?" I highlighted particular passages and organized them into tables to surface clusters of experiences and events. I then began to assign the clusters of experiences and events a code name. I utilized the study's research questions and conceptual framework to create a master list of codes and patterns (Campbell, 1975; Trochim, 1985; Yin, 2003). Then, I mapped each participant's clusters of experiences and events on to the master list of codes.

Next, I began cross-case analysis by comparing the master list of codes and patterns across the parent data (Yin, 2003). For example, I found that most of the participants desired to send their children to schools that would prepare them to be successful beyond high school descriptions of a good school were similar. As cross-case analysis continued, I began to narrow down the master list of codes, and I identified common themes, for example beliefs and descriptions of a good school (Yin, 2003). I utilized quasi-statistics: descriptive statistics that can be derived from qualitative research (Becker, as cited in Maxwell, 2005, p. 113) to create frequency charts for each theme and counted how many participants' responses aligned with each theme. I then utilized axial coding to synthesize themes into a final set of key

themes. Lastly, I grounded the themes through triangulating different sources of data (Yin, 2003). These analyses are shared in Chapter 5.

Across the process, I capitalized on the expertise of the Excellent Schools Detroit staff and the Community Reviewer Program staff. Although I was the primary investigator in this study, I discussed my findings with two ESD staff and past participants of the program to compare findings with their observations and experiences. These steps helped to strengthen the credibility of study findings and interpretations.

To strengthen the validity of data and interpretation, I used multiple data sources, triangulation, quasi-statistics, and member checking (Maxwell, 2005). I collected data from pre- and post interviews and questionnaires, conducted observations, and collected several meant study findings were supported by more than one independent data source (Miles & Huberman,1994). I utilized quasi-statistics. Becker (1970) described quasi-statistics as descriptive statistics that can be derived from qualitative research (as cited in Maxwell, 2005, p. 113). When applicable, I utilized frequency charts to count particular references and establish leading themes and convergences. I also utilized member checking with multiple groups. I capitalized on the expertise of the Excellent Schools Detroit staff and the Community Reviewer Program staff. Although I was the primary investigator in this study, I discussed my findings with two ESD staff that were able to critique my findings and provide alternative viewpoints that could be explored against the data. These procedures increased the study's overall credibility.

Role of the Researcher and Trustworthiness

During qualitative research, researchers must continuously seek to control for potential bias that might be present through the research process. I recognize that trustworthiness could be

an issue due my affiliation with Excellent Schools Detroit and my positionality as an African-American middle class women working on a doctorate degree.

While conducting the study, I was a full time employee of Excellent Schools Detroit. My official role was K12 Program Manager. In this role I worked with the CRP staff to provide support at the trainings, and I often participated in CRP planning and debriefing meetings. I did not work directly with or communicate with the Community Reviewer Program participants outside of my research. However, some of the participants saw me as part of the Community Reviewer Program staff or part of ESD. In order to overcome this and to make participants feel more comfortable about speaking candidly with me, I explained that I was an independent researcher and that my research was in no way sponsored by or beholden to the CRP or ESD. Additionally, I told them that I would use pseudonyms and their identities would not be revealed. I also let them know that I would not share any information with the other CRP staff unless they specifically asked me to and, again, without reference to them individually. I also made clear that my work with ESD would not be affected. I worked hard to build a rapport with each of the parents and spent a lot of time getting to know them and having general conversation that did not pertain to the study. This allowed participants to relax and helped create a conversation style interview that seemed to build on social, cultural connections and reduce differences.

My perceptions of these interviews were that these parents were speaking naturally, without hesitations or signs of unease. The positive tilt of their comments seemed genuine (and similar to other sources of data such as year 2 pilot phone survey of participants). But I cannot say if they would have spoken in the same, consistently positive way, to an interviewer who was not connected to ESD or the CRP. It may be that more critical comments may have been expressed.

CHAPTER 4: COMMUNITY REVIEWER PROGRAM FINDINGS

In examining the Community Reviewer Program and experiences of the participants, we can learn how to better improve the relationships between urban parents and urban schools, and thus, improving the at-school involvement rates of urban parents. This chapter describes the program's theory of action, its model and components, and early program outcomes.

I present key findings obtained from program documents, ten months of formal and informal program observations and nine in-depth pre- and post interviews with parents who participated in the program. Because some of the data and evidence for the program findings came from participant interviews, I begin the chapter with an overview of the participants.

Description of the Study's Participants

As discussed in Chapter 3, the study utilized a purposeful sample of nine parents who had children in Detroit schools and who participated in the 2013-14 Community Reviewer Program. Two fathers, six mothers and one grandmother were interviewed. Seven participants were African American, one was Latino, and one was biracial (Table 4.1 update). The parents had variable levels of education, income, and employment but all were minority parents or caretakers who wanted their children to have access to a quality education that successfully prepared them for opportunities beyond high school.

Table 4.1

Characteristics of Study Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Age	Children	Relation to Child	Education Level	Annual Income	Employment
Hattie	Female	AA	70	Daughter in Middle School	Grand-mother & Guardian	BA Degree	$35,000-40,000	Retired
Barry	Male	AA	49	Son in High School	Father	MA Degree	Over $45,000	Program Director at a Nonprofit
Ebony	Female	AA	42	Two Daughters in High School	Mother	GED	Less than $5,000	Unemployed
Michelle	Female	AA	41	Daughter in Elementary school; Son in High School	Mother	MA Degree	Over $45,000	College Counselor at Local College
Maria	Female	HA	50	Son in Elementary School	Mother	11th Grade	$5,000-10,000	Unemployed
Damon	Male	AA	45	Two Sons in Elementary School	Father	High School Diploma	$10,000-20,000	Part time at a High School
Tanesha	Female	AA	31	Son and Daughter in High School; Two Sons in Elementary School	Mother	Pursuing Associate Degree	$5,000-10,000	Unemployed
Beverly	Female	AA	40	One Son in High School	Mother	GED	$20,000-30,000	Nursing Home
Vanessa	Female	Bi-racial	43	Two Daughters in Elementary School	Mother	Associate Degree	Less than $5,000	Unemployed

Most (6 out of 9, 67%) of the participants interviewed reported being frequently involved

with their children's schools. Descriptions of their involvement often aligned closely with

Epstein's Six Types of Involvement framework, emphasizing attendance at events and general help and assistance at school. Hattie reported that she frequently visited her granddaughter's school for events she received invitations for. Michelle, Maria, Vanessa, and Damon described being involved by frequently volunteering in classrooms, for lunch and during school dismissal, attending events, and communicating with teachers and other personnel at their children's schools. Damon also reported that he worked at his sons' school as a parent escort to high school students, allowing for daily communication with his sons' teachers and administrators. Maria stated that she often volunteered by helping with lunchtime at her son's school. She also shared that she approached her son's school principal to inquire about job opportunities at the school. Tanesha was the most involved of the participants. She served as the PTA president of her son's school. In fact, her post interview was conducted at her son's school in the parent resource room.

Ebony shared that she was unable to attend her children's school due to transportation issues; however, I witnessed her take 3 phone calls from their school during the pre- and post interviews. She reported being involved primarily when the school called her to discuss discipline issues.

Three parents: Barry, Beverly and Ebony, reported that they rarely visited and interacted with their children's schools, going only for special events such a sporting events or special celebrations. Although Barry reported not being heavily involved with his son's school he described being involved in the community; he leads a mentoring program for black males and is involved in blight removal and improving the Ford neighborhood.

The school and community involvement profiles of the parents aligned with the type of parent and community member the program sought to engage. In recruitment materials for the program, CRP staff wrote:

> Community Reviewers are involved parents, residents, educators and members of the business and nonprofit communities who want all of Detroit's children to receive an excellent education...We are looking for parents and community members who have already demonstrated leadership or whose leadership and talents you would like to develop.

However the study also involved 3 parents who were not heavily involved with their children's schools prior to participation in the program

Below I provide a brief summary of three of the participants to provide more contexts for the program and the participants. The summaries provide a brief overview of their prior experiences with schools, their levels of involvement with their children's education, and a brief description of their children.

Maria

Maria is a Latino mother of one son who is in elementary school. She lives in a predominantly Latino neighborhood in Southwest Detroit. She invited me to her home to conduct the interviews. She was very pleasant and her home was nice and inviting. We spent a lot of time talking about her experiences with the neighborhood and her son's school. She reported that someone recently stole her car while it was parked in front of her house. Unfortunately, she is unemployed and could not afford to move. So, she is focused to live across the street from the people whom she suspects stole her car.

Maria was a good student and enjoyed elementary and middle school. However, she struggled in high school and due to an unfortunate situation with a classmate and her math teacher, she was forced to transfer schools. She did not complete her high school diploma and

does not have her GED. This has been a major barrier to consistent employment. Although she hasn't had consistent employment, during the post-interview she reported that she just made her last payment on the home and will soon be a homeowner. She stated, "So that's my dream is to finish up those two...I did say before I hit 50, I was gonna own my house and I wanta get my GED. And I'm gonna be 51 this year and in May of 2014, I'll be the owner of this house."

The Southwest Detroit neighborhood is over saturated with elementary schools and there are a lot of school choice options for parents. Maria visited five schools before enrolling her son in his current school. She selected the school because it valued the Latino culture, had high levels parent involvement, and the staff and principal were "down to earth." Maria often volunteers at the school in the lunchroom and in her son's classroom. Her son is a good student, but is struggling in math and is several grade levels behind. Maria tries to help him and encourages him to work hard, but her lack of education is a barrier.

Damon

Damon is the African American father of two elementary aged sons. He requested that we conduct the interviews at a local fast food restaurant located in his neighborhood. Damon currently works at the high school located on the same campus as his sons' school. He serves as a parent escort at the high school. His role is to make sure that the hallways are clear and students are in their classes and to support teachers with students that are having behavior issues. He also connects students with other services that will help keep them on track including counseling and behavior interventionist.

When discussing his personal experiences with school as student, he stated that he was unmotivated and not a good student. He stated, "I wasn't a super bright student. I just barely

got through, through the cracks. I just wanted to get out of there. You know, I wasn't really motivated. I just got my diploma and left, I'm like, hey, I made it. That's all that matters." However after he left school and began to look for jobs, he realized the importance of taking academics seriously.

Because he works on the campus where his sons' attend school, he is able to communicate frequently with his children's teachers. He reported that he communicates with his children's teachers weekly and with the school administrator monthly. He also reported that he volunteers in his son's lunchroom daily. Although he is very involved and constantly at the school, he reported that his oldest son is very far behind academically and is constantly being suspended from school. Therefore most of his interactions with teachers and administrators are about behavioral issues.

Tanesha

Tanesha is an African American mother of four children, including three sons who are in third, fifth, and tenth grade and a daughter who is in ninth grade. She invited me to her house to conduct the first interview and to her son's school to conduct the second. Although her home is located in one of the most notoriously violent housing projects in Detroit, her home was warm and inviting. She told me that they recently moved to the neighborhood and were having a pleasant experience despite being previously warned about living there.

When discussing her personal experiences with school as a student, Beverly reported having good grades, being on the "honor roll" and overall good experiences in schools until she got to high school. High school gave her more freedom and autonomy than she was accustom to. Consequently, she did not handle it well and began to hang out with the "wrong crowd." She began to skip school and eventually dropped out of high school. This experience has impacted

the way she interacts with her children's education. She is very vigilant and involved; she does not want her children to go down the same path she went down. She stated, "that's why it's important for me as a parent to discuss and have an open relationship with my children, especially my teens about peer pressure, you know, so they won't go down the same road." After having her four children, she decided to go back to get her GED. She failed the test seven times, but successfully passed on the eighth try. She is now pursuing an associate's degree at a local community college with a dual major in early childhood development and social work.

She wants the best for her children and is trying very hard to raise them properly and to give them experiences that she thinks will help them achieve their dreams. Taking full advantage of the school choice market in Detroit, she has enrolled her children in a total of 7 different schools. She had a difficult time finding the "right fit" for her children. She now sends her children three different schools. Tanesha is heavily involved in her children's education, and is the PTA president of her two youngest children's schools. Because I conducted the post interview at the school, I was able to see her involvement. During our post interview teachers and school staff frequently interrupted us requesting her assistance or guidance with students and other school related issues. It was very obvious that she is valued by the school staff and is considered an essential partner. She reported that the school was the only school she has been involved with at the level she is currently involved. She stated it was due to the "family-like" environment at the school.

The Community Reviewer Program's Model and Approach

The Community Reviewer Program evolved out of Detroit community members' dissatisfactions with the original Detroit School Scorecard created by Excellent Schools Detroit in 2009. An ESD document about the background and purpose of the CRP, stated:

The first Scorecard Excellent Schools Detroit released was a top-to-bottom list of schools using just one data point: their average MEAP or ACT scores. We got a lot of feedback from families and school staff that the quality of a school should be judged by more than one test. They told us that student academic performance is very important, but other factors also make up the quality of a school, including the safety, how welcoming the environment is to families, whether or not students feel cared for and feel like much is expected of them...They also told us that it was important for community leaders to participate in the Scorecard process so they could get a better understanding of what it is all about and bring that understanding back to their schools, churches, and neighborhoods…. So, we expanded the quality measures on subsequent Scorecards to include a school site visit by community members that assesses the climate, namely, the upkeep of the facility, how safe and caring it feels to students, how high expectations are for students, and how welcoming it is to parents (Excellent Schools Detroit, 2013, p. 3).

In response to this, Excellent Schools Detroit (ESD) developed the Community Reviewer Program. To do so, it utilized a unique program model designed to meet the specific needs of ESD and the Detroit community. As an enhancement to the achievement data of the Scorecard, the program sought to provide access to other reliable information about school quality that parents could use to select the best school for their children and to hold schools accountable for their performance.

The Community Reviewer Program was also created to generate and increase parent involvement at both the individual and community level. At the parent level, it wanted to give parents the tools and skills to make more informed school choice decisions. The program seeks to achieve this by providing parents with access to empowering information and experiences with schools by training them to assess and evaluate the quality of schools throughout the city. At a community level, it wanted to develop a power base of parents and community members that would make Detroit schools more responsive and accountable for chronic low performance. The program seeks to achieve this by creating a space for parents and community to gain access to empowering information and by utilizing their voices and opinions in the Detroit School Scorecard. The Program was designed to meet and achieve the goals at both levels.

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Because meeting the needs of and empowering the local community was a priority of the program, ESD utilized a community organizing approach to design CRP. Community organizing approaches are much different from conventional methods of parent involvement such as parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher associations, or training parents to support their children's learning at home. Organizing approaches are based outside of schools and are often led, designed, and controlled by parents, community members, and community organizations. Parent and community organizing is a common approach and a popular strategy utilized to improve relationships and increase parent involvement and partnerships among urban families and schools. They shift away from school-centered involvement methods to methods that support knowledge and skills that empower parents and community members' interactions with local schools.

Key goals of community organizing are to establish a power base of parents and community to hold schools and school districts accountable for low student achievement, to give parents and community members more power over what happens in their children's schools, and to create and improve local leadership and capacity to improve and rebuild distressed communities (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). These goals closely mirror ESD's goals for the Community Reviewer Program. Pragmatically, the Community Reviewer Program aimed to develop a power base of parents and community members that would make Detroit schools more responsive and accountable for their chronic low performance, bring value to parent perspectives and opinions by including their evaluations as part of the publicly available Detroit School Scorecard, and to improve relationships between Detroit parents and schools. A Detroit community leader and CRP team leader described the program as:

> Ultimately, a way to generate information that community organizations and parents can use to learn about their current schools where their kids are going. They should use this

information to get engaged, to engage community and parents in the process of improving schools in Detroit.

This quote describes how the CRP utilized a community organizing process to empower parents with information in order to encourage them to become more involved with the city's schools. Excellent Schools Detroit valued the community-organizing model so much that they hired community organizers in 2010 to help create, design, and implement the program. In a document used to discuss why ESD chose to create the Program as part of the larger Detroit School Scorecard, it states,

> During a series of community conversations held between January-May 2010, parents, community members, teachers, and school leaders shared their desire for a site visit evaluation to be a component of the Detroit School Scorecard methodology. The site visit would provide an opportunity for educators at a building to share innovative practices and bright spots of the school, while giving the evaluators a sense of the learning environment (ESD, 2010c, p. 1).

This quote describes how parents and community input led to the creation of the Community Reviewer Program. The use of a community organizing approach to create the program was vital to the CRP model and theory of action.

The Program's Theory of Action

The Community Reviewer Program reflects a theory of action in which transparent information, new experiences with schools, and new relationships and interactions with others build parent's social capital, empowers them to make more informed school choices decision, and pressures schools to be more responsive and accountable (Figures 4.1). ESD believed that access to these new experiences and resources would allow parents to interact more confidently and effectively with schools; improving the relationships between urban parents and schools and increasing at-school involvement.
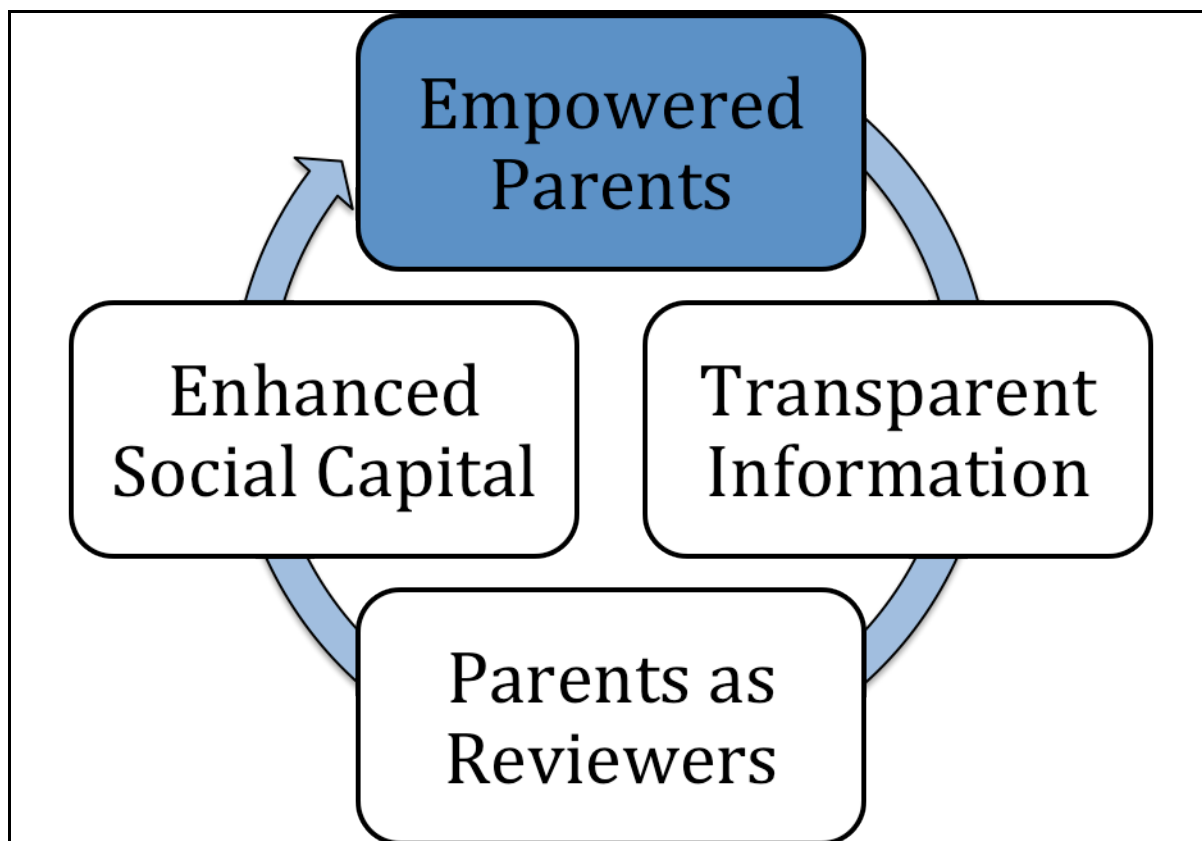
Figure 4.1 The Program's Theory of Action

Making Transparent and Disseminating School Quality Information

Excellent Schools Detroit believed that a key need of the Detroit community was access

to reliable information about the quality of schools. Similarly, school choice policies meant that

parents needed reliable information in order to select the best schools for their children. In

generating school scorecards based on student's academic outcomes, ESD established that many

local schools were ranked as ineffective and unaccountable to the local community. In a

document used to provide information about the 2010 Detroit School Scorecard, it states:

> We believe that every school should provide a quality education– regardless of whether
> that school is a charter, Detroit Public School, independent or private school. Parents,
> families, and community members deserve the best information both to choose the right
> schools for their children and to engage in those schools to improve them. This year,
> Excellent Schools Detroit is continuing the important work of empowering families with
> reliable information about their schools. Specifically, we are: (1) Identifying
> comprehensive school quality measures. (2) Reviewing every school in Detroit. (3)

Reporting the results to the community in an actionable, accessible and up-to-date way (ESD, 2010a, p. 1).

This quote describes ESD's logic for creating transparent school quality information. Before participation in the CRP many parents were unaware of the rampant poor school performance and lack of student success. Through the program trainings and access to transparent information, parents gained a better understanding of the chronically low reading and math achievement as well as the low graduation rates from high school and college, of Detroit students. All but one of the nine parents interviewed stated that the program trainings were "informational" and that they learned a lot about the performance of the city's schools. When asked about his experience at the program trainings, Barry the father of a teenage son stated:

> I learned some interesting things. I really did. I think that, again, that piece you all use in the beginning (activity to discuss the chronic low performance of Detroit schools and its effects on the outcomes of Detroit students), is an excellent visual mechanism to engage the audience that you're trying to reach. It really is. And the fact that when you put it into quantitative variables, that you can't refute the numbers. You know, numbers never lie. They don't... It, it made, for me, it makes you ask the question if not you, then who and also it makes you say, damn, is this gonna be my child? I mean, seriously, and you could have, and this is, the reason why it was so polarizing, if you would, is because I know for a fact that even if you got two parents, that your child may not have as great a risk but there's still a risk. No one is exempt from this demographic information.

Barry found an activity (described below) that helped to visualize chronic low performance across the city's schools so insightful and useful, that he requested a copy of the data and activity guide. He stated that he planned to share with other parents. He said, "I was impressed that's why I want the training information because I was so impressed." Access to transparent information about school quality was valued and eye-opening to the program participants.

Participation in the program also helped to demystify the school choice market in Detroit. Due to the unregulated school choice market in Detroit and the lack of transparent information on school quality, many parents in Detroit described the process of selecting a school for their

children as "overwhelming and challenging." A community leader in Detroit described the

school choice process as daunting and overwhelming for parents, stating:

> One of the challenges for a Detroit family raising children in this city is a lack of transparency around school performance...It's going to be much more critical for parents to be able to get credible information now that we have lots of charters coming in and we have public schools chartering schools, and we have the statewide school district (McGee, 2012).

A parent in the Community Reviewer Program promotional video stated "It's a little scary

especially for a parent if you want to find the best school, you want to have options but you are

not always sure." These quotes illuminate some of the challenges Detroit parents faced when

trying to find the right school for their children. They suggest that without clear, consistent

information on a school's performance, many parents found school choice to be overwhelming

and taxing.

However, participation in the program helped to demystify the school choice market in

Detroit and gave parents tools, such as a website that has students performance for all schools in

Detroit, rubrics to use to evaluate school quality, and a list of questions to ask school personnel

during school visits, to utilize when making school choice decisions. A community leader who

also served as a team leader stated, "Excellent Schools Detroit has done a tremendous job of

making this transparent and making the process (school choice process) understandable to

parents. And so that there is real choice." After the program, they knew where to go to get

accurate information on each school's academic performance and how to better make school

choice decisions.

Parents as School Reviewers

Although ESD could have used professional education evaluators to conduct the school

site visits and reviews, it selected to train Detroit parents and community members as reviewers.

As discussed in the literature review, low-income, minority families possess social and cultural

capital that is often viewed as a liability rather than an asset. In contrast, community-organizing

approaches view parents as an asset rather than a liability; CRP recognized, valued, and utilized

the current capital of families and community members. Their goal was to recruit members of

the Detroit community "who have already demonstrated leadership or whose leadership and

talents you would like to develop." Utilizing local leaders to review and evaluate schools,

demonstrates how ESD recognized, valued, and utilized their individual capital and power.

Through the Program, ESD also harvested their collective power, which will be discussed in

more detail in the next section.

ESD coined the term "community reviewers" for the parent and community members

who conducted the school site visits. ESD worked closely with local community organizations to

recruit community members and parents to participate in the program. In documents sent to local

community organizations to help recruit community reviewers, ESD described the role of

community reviewers by stating:

> Community Reviewers are involved parents, residents, educators and members of the
> business and non-profit communities who want all of Detroit's children to receive an
> excellent education. 500 Community Reviewers will split into teams and visit every
> school in the city to observe the school culture and learning environment. Guided by
> trained team leaders, the Reviewers will make a report about each school they visit that
> Excellent Schools Detroit will share with parents and students to help them choose the
> best schools...We are looking for parents and community members who care about
> education, who want to be a part of a longer-term movement to create great schools in
> Detroit, and who have already demonstrated leadership or whose leadership and talents
> you would like to develop (ESD, 2012, p. 1).

Since the inception of the Detroit School Scorecard and the Community Reviewer Program, ESD

has valued and worked closely with Detroit parents and community members to build their

capabilities. The Program believes in validating and harvesting their knowledge and skills while

developing them also. They valued their assets and "voices" so much that they utilized them to

help create the tools to assess the schools and as school reviewers and evaluators, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Access to Social Capital

Building up parents' access to social capital was also central to the program's theory of action. Social capital is a resource that parents may utilize to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the educational system in which their children participate. Access to social capital is theorized to enable parents to gain access to other forms of capital as well as to institutional resources and supports (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001; Portes, 1998; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). Through participation in the CRP, parents' knowledge and values were valued and leveraged, and they gained access to new social capital.

ESD believed that access to new experiences and resources would allow parents to interact more confidently and effectively with schools, improving the relationships between urban parents and schools and increasing at-school involvement. Through participation in the program, participants gained access to new social relationships with program staff, other parents and community members, team leaders, education specialist, and urban schools (Figure 4.2). Through these new relationships, Community Reviewer Program provided participants access to bonding and bridging social capital.

CRP created a space for what is known as bonding social capital. Bonding social capital is an integral component of community empowerment and coalition building as it connects individuals with high degrees of homogeneity, such as individuals with similar social-financial position and demographics characteristics. The Program aimed to "bond" urban parents current social capital by providing them with access to new social networks of other urban parents and community members.

The also CRP created a "bridge" to give parents access to social capital that is valued by schools. Prior to participation in the program, many of the urban parents did not possess social capital that was valued by public schools and this negatively affected their relationships with their children's schools. The Program created a "bridge" to new social capital by giving parents access to new social relationships with program staff, education specialist, and urban schools.

Bonding Social Capital

As discussed in the literature review, low-income, minority families possess social capital that is often viewed as a liability rather than an asset. However, CRP recognized and valued the current capital of families and community members in Detroit. ESD valued their capital and "voices" so much that they created a program to leverage their collective capital and as previously stated trained them to review schools. Bonding social capital is a valuable strategy to support oppressed and marginalized members of society to band together in groups and networks to support their collective needs. The Community Reviewer Program provided a space to "bond" a homogeneous group of urban parents with the common goal of holding the city's schools accountable.

Bonding capital can only be utilized if the capital of the individuals involved are recognized and valued and therefore worth bonding over. Tanesha, spoke about her experience interacting with other program participants and the relationships she gained. She stated, "It was a great situation because I got to know parents from other schools. It was cool to know that other parents share the same interest as you have you know and just getting different ideas and things of that nature." This quote describes how participants gained access to bonding social capital. The bonding capital validated the parents in Detroit by allowing them to work collectively with other like-minded individuals with the same goals.

Through their interactions, the community reviewers recognized that their bonding

capital mattered and that they had power as group. Parents reported that through their

participation in the program they gained "power" and a "voice" in their children's education.

One program participant stated that the program "woke her up" and gave her a "voice" and

"power" in her child's education. She stated, "It's like something that had fell asleep in you,

woke up and you realized that your voice has power. And you realized that your voices together

has even more power." Maria, the mother of a young son, discussed how participation in the

program was empowering and how it showed her that she does have a "voice." She stated:

> We as parents do have a voice, we have to have a voice for the children of today...Some
> parents including myself might not know how to address the situation or know how to
> pinpoint oh my gosh look at this or look at that, you know. I think groups like that (CRP)
> if a lot more parents knew about them they would help the schools of today. You know
> rethink of how they address certain situations maybe even add additions to their
> schooling

The participants' quotes illuminate how parents reported feeling a greater sense of belonging and

found value and power in being able to interact with other parents that had similar issues and

interest. ESD created the CRP as a space to "bond" and leverage their capital. The participants

of the program were a similar group of individuals in social class, race, and geographic location,

and they had common goal. Building bonding capital mobilized parents in Detroit around the

common goal of holding the city's schools accountable for their chronic low performance.
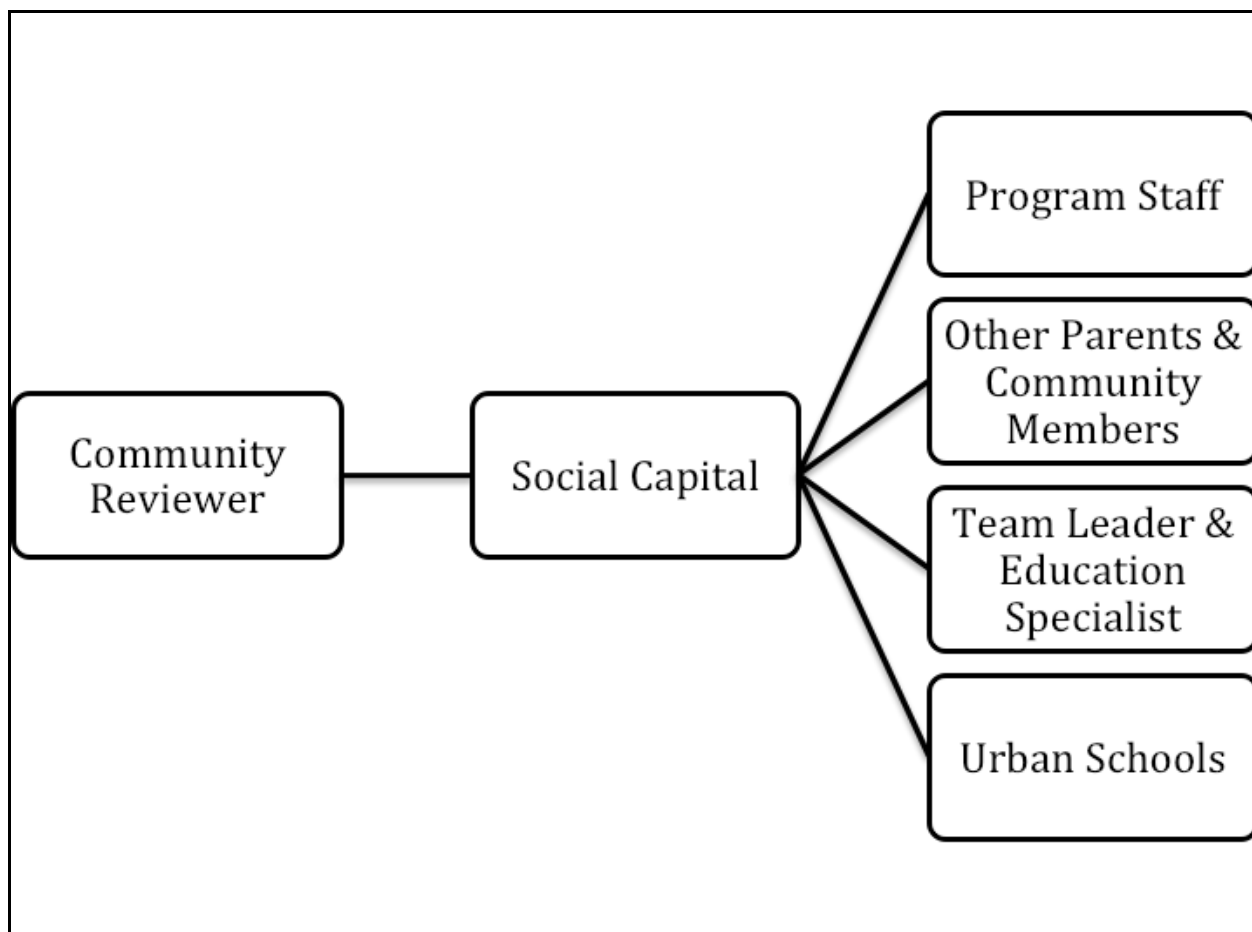
Figure 4.2 Social Capital in the Community Reviewer Program

Bridging Social Capital

Urban parents and school personnel often have differing social class and race characteristics which makes it harder for them to form productive relationships. Prior to participation in the program, many of the parents did not understand the culture, norms, and expectations of their children's schools. In the CRP promotional video, a former community reviewer stated, "A lot of parents do not know what is going on in these schools." The Community Reviewer Program built bridging capital by connecting parents to information and groups beyond their normal social spheres. Bridging social capital allows diverse groups the opportunity to share and exchange information and ideas. In this case, the program participants

have the opportunity to learn more about the culture, norms, and expectations that guide urban schools.

The program provided participants access to new relationships with program staff, education specialists, and urban schools. Through these new relationships and other experiences with the program, participants were given access to opportunities to better understand the dominant school norms. Parents interacted with the program staff during trainings and when they were contacted to finalize their school visit schedule. The program staff was responsible for communicating the program norms and expectations for the school visits. Parents repeatedly stated that the program staff was "informational" and helped them to better understand the norms and expectations of schools. For example, the program staff discussed with participants what to wear to the school visits and how to present themselves to school personnel. Damon, the father of two elementary sons discussed his interaction with program staff by stating, "I mean, they told us how to present yourself to the teachers… you gotta follow the principal." Damon's quote illuminates that the program staff emphasized the importance of being a good representative of the Community Reviewer Program and an engaged and concerned Detroit citizen. The program staff emphasized the importance of arriving on time, being dressed properly, representing CRP positively, and addressing their concerns about the schools with the team leader and school principals.

Parents also reported having positive interactions with the team leaders and education specialist and felt they helped them better understand what to look for in schools and what questions to ask school personnel. Ebony, discussed the resources she gained from her new social relationships with the team leaders. She stated, "I wouldn't have known the questions to ask or the things to look for until they gave us insight on it." Her quote demonstrates that parents

benefited greatly and gained new knowledge from their new relationships with team leaders and education specialist.

Parents also described how their overall experiences including the new relationships, trainings, and school visits influenced their perceptions and understandings about urban school procedures and norms. When ask what new skills or knowledge she gained from her participation in the program, Ebony stated that the program taught her that she should address the concerns that she has with her children's schools, and she now understands that in order to get results she may need to take her concerns to the school board. She stated:

> Yeah, to be more aware of what's going on and the things that you want, address those issues... But yeah, just be more patient and start addressing these issues to the school board, period. You know. Cuz a lot of times, the teachers are like, we've been telling them that for years. You know, so yeah, just getting with the people that can change it and make a difference.

During the interviews, Ebony described that she was concerned about her daughter's school. She discussed how the school called her almost everyday for dress code violations and other issues that had little to do with teaching and learning. In fact, during my interviews with her the school called her twice. Ebony's quote describes that she learned that she should address her concerns with someone other than the teachers at her daughters' schools. She was frustrated because she has been telling the teachers about her concerns, but nothing had been done. Her quote is also an example of how parents reported learning more about the structures and policies that guide urban schools and how the new knowledge can be translated into action for their particular situations with schools.

Both bonding and bridging social capital existed in the Community Reviewer Program. The bonding capital was important to cultivate trust, cooperation, and collective strength among individual community reviewers. The bridging capital was useful for building connections between urban parents and urban schools. ESD believed that access to these new experiences

and resources would increase urban parents involvement with schools by equipping parents to interact more confidently and effectively with schools.

Empowered Parents

The end outcome of the Community Reviewer Program was to empower parents to pick better schools and hold schools accountable for student achievement by giving them access to information, the opportunity to review schools, and access to expanded social capital.

The program intended that parents and others would begin to hold schools accountable for their responsiveness and performance. A board member of a Detroit charter school and prominent community leader, described the program as a way to build the "public will" to hold schools accountable for performance:

> The more folks that we have concerned about education, as chaotic as that may be sometimes, [the better]. I think it is a good thing for creating the strong public will to make sure that we are accountable for educating every child in this city (McGee, 2012).

A parent-participant of the program described how it helped to build public will for school accountability by stating:

> If you keep grabbing these parents you will have a voice. One parent should be able to grab the next parent, the next parent should be able to grab the next parent and it should be a line of parents. Because we are the school system! We make the schools! So every parent need to grab a parent and that's the way it's going to have to start (McGee, 2012).

These quotes illuminate that the Program provided a space and process for parents and community members to get involved with schools and begin to hold schools accountable.

The Program also aimed to empower parents individually by helping them better select the right school for their children. Many parents and community members in Detroit have little knowledge about education besides their own personal experiences and the experiences of their children. The CRP reflected a hope that direct experience as a school reviewer would lead parents to feel both more able and more willing to investigate their children's schools in new and

important ways. Although parents can select any school in the city to send their children to, the school visits conducted as part of the program was the first time that most (5 of 9) of the parents visited schools in the city. Ebony, the mother of two teenage girls who utilized school choice to send her children to a charter school, but did not visit the school before sending her children there stated, "If it wasn't for this reviewing process, I don't think I would have ever stepped into other schools. You know what I am saying, so I was grateful for that."

Participation also caused many parents to reassess their school choice methods and decisions, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Hattie, the grandmother and legal guardian of an elementary student, who utilized school choice to send her granddaughter to a charter school, reported that participation in the program will influence her future methods for making future school choice decisions for her granddaughter. She stated

> I will use some of the guidelines (from the program). I'll be looking at the environment. I will be looking at teacher interactions. I'll be looking at diversity. I know I will be looking at safety, all of the things that are really important. Not just, you know, the big picture. I'll be looking at a more total picture rather than just narrowing my focus on what academics are extremely important but everything else is important, too.

Hattie is currently looking for a high school to send her granddaughter to because the charter school she selected for her daughter is one of the lowest performing schools in the state of Michigan, and she wants to remove her from the school after she finishes eighth grade. Hattie's reported that participation in the program will help tremendously with selecting a high school for her granddaughter. She now has "guidelines" to help her make a better school choice. The Program aimed to empower parents individually by helping them better select the right school for their children and collectively by empowering them to hold the city's schools accountable for achievement through their choices.

The Program In Action: How it Works

This section describes how the program has been implemented and how it has functioned operationally. The key elements of the program operations were the: 1. Program trainings 2. Community reviewer teams 3. School visits and evaluation tools. Also, there have been adjustments to these components since the start of the program. In this section, I will describe the program's key elements and adjustments made to the program.

Program Start Up

As a result of the feedback they received from parents and community members about the Detroit Scorecard, ESD designed the Community Reviewer Program in 2010. Since the program's launch in 2011, ESD has worked closely with the community to design and implement the Program. As a first step, the Program had to develop criteria for assessing the quality of a school and a review process. In a document published in 2010 to answer frequently answered questions about the Program, ESD wrote, " The design of the observation tool will be largely informed by the community reviewers themselves, through a research-based process led by the National Equity Project. A local university will construct the actual tool, which will be available for school leaders" (ESD, 2010b, p. 3).

ESD utilized community reviewers' input and opinions about a good school to create the evaluation tools utilized during the school visits. Documents from the program's first training outline how ESD asked reviewers to discuss "what is a good school?" According to the training agenda, reviewers worked in small groups at their tables to answer the following questions:

- What was school like for you?

- What did you like about school?

- What helped you most as a student?

- A good school is like (fill in the blank) Because...

- What makes a school good?

- What would you expect to see in a good school? What might adults be doing? Students? What does it feel like?

- What kind of information do YOU want to know about a school?

- What will YOU be looking for when you visit schools?

- What do you want to see in the final report about schools?

Each table had a facilitator, a note taker, and a group of community reviewers. The notes from each table were given to a regional university hired to create rubrics and school visit evaluation tools evaluation tools. The final tools primarily focused on the school's climate and culture by examining and evaluating the maintenance of the school facilities, school safety, staff's expectations for students, how caring the adults in the building are toward students, and how welcoming and open the school is to community and parents (described below). In a document used to provide an overview of CRP, ESD wrote the school site visits "assesses the climate, namely, the upkeep of the facility, how safe and caring it feels to students, how high expectations are for students, and how welcoming it is to parents " (ESD, 2010c, p. 2).

Schools Targeted

CRP actively reached out to and invited every school in Detroit to ask that they participate in the program. In a program overview document from the 2012 program it states:

> Students in Detroit attend more than 250 schools, which are governed by many different authorizers with differing expectations and results. Detroit Public Schools manages over 100 schools, while 10 independent authorizers monitor over 100 public charter schools operating in the city. Detroit also has more than 30 independent schools, each setting its own standards. The divided authority makes it too easy to finger-point and too hard to make the tough decisions that are needed to ensure that every child is in a high-quality school...Each of these schools has different standards of success. This mishmash makes it impossible for parents and families to get credible, easy-to-understand information about

which schools are best for their children. It is our obligation to the Detroit community to ensure (1) all schools are measured against the same standards of quality and (2) information is accessible and consistent.

ESD's goal was to evaluate every school in Detroit with the goal of measuring their performance against the same standard of quality.

Unannounced Visits

In discussion of the Detroit Scorecard and the development of the Reviewer program the practice of unannounced visits was also established. That is, not only did the community request community led school visits, but they also requested unannounced schools visits. Their desire was to see a school on a regular day and to avoid a school "putting on a show" for visitors. On the 2011 community reviewer recruitment flyer and application, it states "In 2010, parents, teachers, and school leaders agreed that unannounced site visits should be one – but not the only – piece of any school evaluation" (ESD, 2010d, p. 1).

Recruiting and Enrollment of Community Reviewers

Participation in the CRP is open to all parents and community members who have an address within the Detroit city limits. There are no restrictions to the types of schools participant's children attend; they may send their children to traditional public, charter, private, parochial, independent or suburban schools or they may not have children who currently attend school. All community reviewers are required to complete an application, pass a background check, attend at least one training, and complete at least three school visits. To enroll in the program, participants must complete and submit a brief program application that asks for basic demographic information, their education level and schools attended, information about their children's schools, and why they want to be a community reviewer (see Appendix F). After participants submit the application, the community organizers and other CRP staff go through the applications and invite the appropriate participants to attend a training.

ESD worked closely with local community organizations to recruit community members and parents to participate in the program. The program was announced in the Detroit Free Press, on the ESD website, through communications with community organizations and general circulation of a program recruitment flyer. After its first year, ESD also sent an email and text message to former community reviewers to offer them the opportunity to participate in the program again.

Beyond general invitations, CRP sought a specific pool of Detroit parents and community members for community reviewers. A goal was to engage parent and community leaders. In a document titled, *What is Community Reviewer*, CRP wrote, "Community Reviewers are involved parents, residents, educators and members of the business and nonprofit communities who want all of Detroit's children to receive an excellent education (ESD, 2012, p. 1)." ESD's goal was to recruit community members who were already involved with schools or who had an interest in being involved with schools. As discussed in the theory of action, ESD wanted to create a space to bond the capital that already existed in the community in an effort to build a power base of parents that would begin to hold Detroit schools more accountable.

While ESD saw parents as assets, many school leaders did not initially think parents should evaluate schools when the program first launched. In a document providing an overview of CRP, the CRP community organizers wrote:

> In the first year, it was a real struggle to convince schools to open their doors to unannounced visits by community members. Many school leaders did not think that parents should be evaluating schools, that parents don't have the necessary expertise. Community leaders from our partner organizations all across the city had to push schools in their neighborhoods to participate in the School Quality Review because they believed it was important for parents to have good information (ESD, 2013, p. 3).

However, ESD has valued and utilized parent and community reviewers since the beginning of the Community Reviewer Program and continues to do so. The ESD website states:

You have the opportunity to be a part of Excellent Schools Detroit's mission by becoming a community reviewer. Community reviewers are an integral part of the Detroit School Scorecard, ensuring that the perspective of the community is factored into how schools are evaluated... As a community reviewer, you will be trained to observe the multiple elements of positive school culture while contributing your knowledge and experience to improving how we measure school culture. You will be the experts of school culture, working in teams to take a closer look inside the schools. Becoming a community reviewer shows that you are committed to the belief that every child in Detroit deserves a quality education (ESD, 2015).

Reviewer Trainings

All participants of the program are required to attend a 1-day training that last 6 hours. Excellent Schools Detroit staff, including two community organizers, three support staff, and consultants instituted and facilitated the program trainings. The trainings are held in schools and churches throughout the city and follow the same general agenda: a welcome and explanation of the purpose of the day, a "why this matters" activity, training on the tools and rubrics and a practice school visit and evaluation.

During this study's observations of the program, CRP offered participants three trainings, with participants attending the training that best fit their schedule and locations needs. ESD offered participants free bus and taxi transportation to and from the trainings, and they served breakfast and lunch. One of ESD's coalition partners also offered participants on-site childcare services during the trainings.

When participants arrived at the training locations they were immediately greeted by ESD staff and directed to the registration table. There they received their training materials and a nametag. Participants were instructed to sit at the table of their choice. Each table had at least one team leader or education specialist who was responsible for leading table discussions and facilitating training activities with participants at their table. Prior to the trainings, ESD met with the team leaders and education specialists to go over the agenda and activities for the trainings.

The CRP community organizers began the trainings by welcoming the parents and community members and by thanking them for being there and for taking an interest in the welfare of the city's schools and children. They also gave the participants time to meet and greet with others at their tables. After the welcome, introductions, and purpose of the meeting, the CRP staff gave each participant a piece of paper that had a male or female child stick figure on it. The staff asked participants to write their children's name or the name of children they know on the paper and to write something special about the child. After participants named their children, they were asked to place the children down on their table in a line.

Next the ESD community organizers began to read statistics about the outcomes of children in Detroit. One staff member, stated, "In 2012, the high school graduation rate in the Detroit was 68%, so that means one out of every three students in Detroit dropped out before graduating. I will now walk around and take one out of every three children on the table." The staff member counted aloud as she collected the paper-children from the table. She continuously counted, "One, two, three; I will take this child." After she collected all of the children, she began to read each child's name and the special comment written by participants. " Tyrell very smart, Marquis is artistic, Monique a hard worker, Latoya wants to be a doctor. All of these children are high school dropouts, and the children left on the table are high school graduates. "

CRP staff continued the activity by taking one of every three children for college enrollment and two of every three children for college graduation. At the end of the activity, there were four stacks of children, those that were high school dropouts, high school graduates, those with some college, but no degree, and those with a college degree. During the activity, other staff members wrote the number of children in each group down on a large board at the front of the room.

Then, the staff asked the participants, "How much money in a year do you think is a living wage for one parent and one child in Detroit?" Participants guessed the living wage; then, the staff revealed that the living wage is about $39,000. Next, they ask participants to guess how much money a person with no high school diploma earns in a year, a high school graduate, someone with some college, and someone with a college degree. The staff revealed to the participants that the only yearly wage that is equal to or exceeds the living wage is the person that earns a college degree including associate or bachelor's degrees. Lastly the staff stated, "These are real statistics. For every 100 students that start 9th grade in Detroit, only 14 of them are likely to graduate from college and make a living wage. We need to change some things. That's what this program is all about."

As discussed in the theory of action, this activity is an example of how the CRP gave participants access to information about the quality of schools and the ramifications of school failure. It was an eye opening activity for participants; it helped them connect the dots between education and poverty. Before participation in the CRP many parents did not know the extent of poor school performance and lack of student success or its consequences. Through this activity, parents gained a better understanding of the quality of schools in Detroit and how many students in Detroit were not graduating from high school and college. Eight of the nine parents interviewed for this study reported that the program trainings were "informational" and that they learned a lot about the performance of the city's schools. As previously discussed, when asked about his experience at the program trainings, Barry the father of a teenage son stated

> I learned some interesting things. I really did. I think that, again, that piece you all use in the beginning (to display failure rates with stick figures) is an excellent visual mechanism to engage the audience that you're trying to reach. It really is. And the fact that when you put it into quantitative variables, that you can't refute the numbers.

Barry found the activity so insightful and useful, that he requested a copy of the data and activity guide. He stated that he planned to share it with other parents. He said, "I was impressed that's why I want the training information because I was so impressed."

Next, the consultants instructed the community reviewers about how to utilize the designated tools and rubrics for the school visits. (The documents and tools utilized by the community reviewers are discussed later in this chapter). The staff discussed each document one section and one question at a time. They went over each section and question on the observations tool that is used when the reviewers are walking and assessing the school and the final rubric that is used at the conclusion of the school visit. For example, on the Main Entrance and Main Office section on the observation tool one of the questions is *the main office has copies of the most recent parent newsletter or parent information sheets*. The consultant reminds parents to pay close attention to the location, availability, and dates of the parent newsletters and information documents while in the main office.

Next, trainers gave participants pictures of different locations in a school building and asked participants to practice utilizing the tools and rubrics. For example, there were pictures of a school restroom and of a school hallway. Participants were first instructed to utilize the observation tool that is arranged by school area to answer the open-ended questions and questions specific to the applicable areas. Then, participants were directed to utilize the second rubric to provide an overall impression of the areas in the pictures. Next, the team leaders and education specialists led a group discussion at their tables to discuss the participants' answers. Lastly, the consultants discussed each picture and observations aloud with all of the participants at the training.

The last portion of the training included a practice school visit. The team leaders and education specialists led the participants from their table on a practice school review and evaluation utilizing the tools and rubrics they had just received training on. The participants were led on a thirty-minute practice school tour. At the conclusion of the practice school tour, participants completed the school evaluation survey and rubric. Lastly, each team leader and education specialist led a discussion with their group about the participants' findings. At the conclusion of the training, the participants received a call to action to help improve the city's schools and to become more involved with the city's schools.

During the training, ESD also asked participants to submit an online form that indicated their dates of availability to conduct school visits. ESD utilized this online form to assign each community reviewer their school visit locations and dates. Following the training, each community reviewer received their schedule and a hub location for each school visit. The hub locations were at McDonald's restaurants located throughout the city. The day before each school visit, community reviewers receive a text message, email, or phone call reminder that includes their location hub. In order to protect the integrity of the unannounced school visits, community reviewers do not find out which school they were visiting until they arrived at the hub location on the day of the visit. ESD utilized one or two McDonald's restaurants and conducted five to ten school visits each day during the 2013 CRP.

Team Leaders and Education Specialists

The Program uses team leaders and education specialists to lead the community reviewers during the school visits. In the team leader and education specialist handbook used during their trainings, it asserts:

> The Team Leader and Education Specialist are the most critical roles in the Site Visits. The validity of the results, as well as the opinion of the process that school leaders and

community members hold will largely be determined by you...Your first expectation is to be the face of the Community Reviewer Program to the school leader. Your second expectation is to enforce the rules for reviewers. Your last expectation is to facilitate critical thinking and friendly conversation (ESD, 2013, p. 4).

Team leaders were recruited from local community organizations. During the year of this study, they were employees of the eight community organizations that recruited community reviewers. Most of the team leaders served in a community organizing type role at the community organizations. Their jobs often consisted of working with people in the community to connect them to the services and opportunities available at the community organizations. Also, all of the team leaders were former community reviewers and had participated during the first two years of the program. Consequently, many of them had prior relationships with the community reviewers. Team leaders were responsible for guiding reviewer teams through schools, keeping them on schedule, and facilitating the debrief and survey process that followed the school tour. The CRP 2013-14 internal overview document states:

> The team leader is drawn from local community organizations and receives special training to help them organize the day. The leader participates in both team leader training and community reviewer training. He or she must be organized and able to direct a group of diverse individuals. They are responsible for interacting with school administrators and staff and leading the teams of parents and community members through the schools during school visits and evaluations. The team leader must be organized and able to direct a group of previously unrelated individuals.

The education specialists were graduate students of education from local universities. They served as experts on the school visit tools and rubrics, answering education questions posed by the community reviewers, ensuring that the team completed the entire visit and answered all the questions on the tools and rubrics. The specialists were the most knowledgeable about current trends in education and education reform. They helped community reviewers better understand and interpret the education environments. The CRP 2013-14 internal overview document states:

> The specialist is responsible for becoming an expert on the site visit rubric, arriving on-time at training and events, answering questions posed by the community reviewers, and

reminding community reviewers to seek out elements from the facilities checklist. The specialist should be knowledgeable about current trends in education, able to speak objectively but non-academically regarding education reforms, and personable toward individuals from a background different from him/herself.

Team leaders and education specialist attend a full-day training prior to community reviewer trainings. They were trained on the program tools and rubrics, methods for leading conversations between school leaders and community reviewers, and methods for facilitating conversations and debriefs with community reviewers. They also attended and helped facilitate portions of the community reviewer trainings. As previously discussed they facilitated conversations at the tables during the community reviewer trainings and led team of community reviewers on mock school evaluations during the trainings.

The team leaders and education specialists often led school visits on the same days each week. They submitted to CRP their available days to conduct visits, and they were given a weekly schedule. To protect the integrity of the unannounced school visits, they were only told the school name and location the night before their visits.

Community Reviewer Teams

The composition of the school review teams was a vital component of the Community Reviewer Program. The school visits were conducted by teams of 3-4 trained parents and community members and facilitated and led by a team leader and an education specialist. The team leader is responsible for navigating the school and interacting with school administrators and staff. There is also one education specialist per team; they have deeper knowledge of schools and provide feedback and guidance during the walk-through to ensure reviewers observe all aspects of the school. There are generally 3-4 community reviewers per team, and they are the primary reviewers of the schools. They score the schools by completing designated school visit

rubrics, surveys, and documents. In order to complete the program, each team is required to complete at least three school visits.

School Visits and Evaluation Tools

ESD contacted every school in Detroit and schools in the suburbs that serve 50% or more Detroit students to ask that they participate in the Community Reviewer Program. ESD generally conducts visits to between seventy and two hundred schools each year. During the year of my formal observations, ESD conducted visits to about seventy schools. Each school visit lasted for about four hours, from 10:00am to 2:00pm. During the visits, teams tour the school for two hours and discuss and rate their observations for the remaining two hours. The teams use two documents during their schools visits. The first is an open-ended observation tool used during the school tour, and the second document is survey that is complete by the team after their school tour.

School Visits

As previously discussed, the community reviewers meet at a hub location on the morning of the visit at 9:30am and leave the hub for the school where the team leader and education specialist meet them. The community reviewer team generally arrives at the school at 10:00am, and the school tour begins.

The team leader and education specialist go directly to the school and arrive at 9:00am. When they arrive at the school they meet with the school principal or administrator to discuss the process for the school visit, go over the tools and scoring rubrics, and answer the administrator's questions. They also request a school map, bell and lunch schedule, and a room for the community reviewers to use for the debrief. After their meeting with the school administrator, they walk around the school and finalize a route for the school visit.   The teams generally visit

school surroundings, the main entrance and main office, hallways, restrooms, the cafeteria, auditorium, library, media center, computer lab, science labs, gym, art and music rooms, and classrooms.

After the team leader greets the reviewers in the lobby, they lead them to a designated room. While in the room the team leader and education specialist discuss the group norms and give an overview of the school visit route and process. Important norms emphasized included, stay in a group and do not wander off, disrupt student learning as little as possible, and evaluate the school on only what you observe, not what others tell you.

Next, each team member is given a large clipboard and observation document. The team leader and education specialist then guide the team through the school. During the tour the community reviewers are required to take notes of their observations using the designated tools and rubric forms. At the conclusion of the tour, each team member individually completes a rubric through which they rate and evaluate their experience during the school visit. These rubrics are later scored to give the school an overall score.

After each member finishes rating the school, the team leader and education specialist facilitate a group conversation during which they discuss the following questions: What are the strengths and areas for improvements for this school? What can the school do to make these improvements? How can community help with the improvements? The information gathered during the group discussion accompanies the scores aggregated from the rubrics in a final school profile that describes the participants' experience and perspectives during the school visit. The information gathered is later made public by ESD through the publicly available and widely disseminated Detroit School Scorecard (see Appendix G).

Evaluation Tools

The community reviewers use two documents during their school visits; the first is an open-ended observation form used during the two-hour walk through (see Appendix H). The open-ended observation tool provides a structure for the school tour portion of the site-visit and is arranged by school settings and includes the following sections:

- School surroundings

- Main entrance and main office

- Common areas (hallways, restrooms, cafeteria, auditorium)

- Shared learning spaces (library, media center, computer lab, science labs, gym, art and music rooms)

- Classroom one, two and three.

Each section has the following questions: what is your first impression, what do you see, smell, and hear? Each section also includes location specific questions. For example, the school surroundings section includes the questions: Is the school's main entrance indicated? Are the school grounds well maintained?

The second form used during the school visits is a rubric that each participant completes individually at the conclusion of the school tour but before the debriefing conversation that follows the school tour (see Appendix I; Figure 4.3). As previously discussed the rubric was created primarily through recommendations given by the community reviewers, and it examines the school's climate and culture by asking participants to assess the maintenance of the school facilities, school safety, staff's expectations for students, how caring the adults in the building are toward students, and how welcoming and open the school is to community and parents. The final rubric has four main sections:

1. Facilities Checklist (also included on the observation school tour tool)

2. Safe and Caring Environments

3. High Expectations for Learning

4. Parent and Community Partnerships.

Sample indicators of these components include school safety procedures, school mission and vision statements, and signals of parent and community involvement in the school. Using the rubric, each participant rates his or her perceptions and experiences during the school visit.

2014 School Review – Site Visit Summary

Thank you for completing the school community review. Your feedback is important to improve Detroit schools.

When you are answering these survey questions, don't think of it like a grading a test. For instance, if you answer "Completely" about something you observed, that doesn't mean you are giving the school an 'A' in that area. An answer of 'Not At All' doesn't mean you are giving the school an 'F' in that area. Please just share your honest observations. Schools can still receive a high grade even if they get some low marks. More details are included below in the instructions for each section.

Facilities Checklist:

*Please look at your note-taker to answer the checklist question below. Only use **Not Applicable (N/A)** if you did not visit a specific area.*

*For example, you may answer "Not Applicable (N/A)" to questions about the parking lot only if you **didn't** visit the parking lot. If you visited the parking lot, though, you must answer the questions about it. The same goes for any other school areas.*

School Surroundings	YES	NO	N/A
The parking lot is free of trash.			
The parking lot is in good repair.			
The main entrance is clearly indicated.			
The school's outdoor signs are visible and in good repair.			
The school grounds are well maintained.			
The school exterior is in good repair.			
Main Entrance & Office	YES	NO	N/A
The outside of the main entryway appears well maintained.			
The main entryway is staffed or has an electronic entry system.			
The inside of the main entryway appears well maintained.			
Visitors are greeted in a polite manner upon immediate entry or being "buzzed in".			
Upon entering, there are immediately visible signs (or a person) that direct visitors toward the office.			
The school office and reception area are orderly and free of clutter.			
The main office is clearly identified.			
The main office has copies of the most recent parent newsletter or parent information sheets.			
The most recent parent newsletter/info sheet was published within the last 3 months.			
Upon request, visitors are provided information about student achievement.			
Parent materials are provided in multiple languages.			

Figure 4.3 The Community Reviewer Final Rubric

Figure 4.3 (cont'd)

Common Areas (Hallways, Restrooms, Cafeteria, Auditorium)	YES	NO	N/A
Stairways and hallways are well maintained (adequately lit, in good repair, and free of graffiti and litter).			
Food provided in cafeteria appears nutritious and well prepared.			
Food service areas appear clean and tidy.			
A space is dedicated to address family or community needs (community closet, parent room, bulletin board, health clinic, section of library, etc.).			
There are public displays of student work (other than standardized testing scores).			
There are images of role models and cultural works.			

Common Areas (Hallways, Restrooms, Cafeteria, Auditorium)	# Observed	# Yes	# No
How many locker areas did you observe?		-----	-----
--- How many were/were not in good repair?	-----		
How many drinking fountains did you observe?		-----	----
--- How many were clean, functional, and accessible?	-----		
How many restrooms did you observe?		-----	----
--- How many were/were not clean and functional?	-----		
--- How many were/were not adequately stocked with toilet paper and hand soap?	-----		

Shared Learning Spaces (Library, Media Center, Art/Music Room, Science Lab, Gym)	Yes	No	N/A
The school has a library.			
The library has periodicals (newspapers, magazines, etc.).			
Periodicals in the library include issues from within the last 3 months.			
Books and materials in the library center are in reasonable condition.			
There is a media lab or a laptop cart with at least 20 computers.			
Computers appear to be in working order.			
The school provides a visual-arts instruction space (painting, sculpture, etc.).			
The school provides a music/band instruction space.			
The school provides an auditorium for drama/theater.			
The school provides a gym for exercise/athletic instruction.			
There is at least one science lab.			
The library, media center, OR classrooms provide college-going resources (e.g., lists of colleges, college majors, scholarships, etc.).			
The library, media center, OR classrooms provide age-appropriate career guidance (e.g., books, resources, etc.).			

Classrooms:

This section asks about the classrooms you visited. For each question, please look at your note-taker and add up the total number of classrooms that you marked "Yes". Enter that number into the answer boxes below.

For how many classrooms was the following true?

	# Visited	# Yes	# No
The temperature is within normally accepted ranges.			
The classroom is free of clutter.			
Classroom furniture is in good repair.			
The classroom displays examples of student work.			
The classroom prominently displays the current day's/period's activities.			
College information and/or the teacher's university information are posted inside or immediately outside the classroom.			
The classroom has 3 or more computers.			
The classroom has its own library.			

Figure 4.3 (cont'd)

Safe & Caring Environment:

Please share your observations on the first two questions. Then, for the rest of the questions, please tell us how much you agree with the following statements?

How many of the houses around the school seem to be lived in?	None, Some, Most, All
How much of the area or how many blocks surrounding the school seem safe and well maintained?	None, Some, Most, All
The school grounds are welcoming to students.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school's interior is positive for students.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
It appears that adults (staff, volunteers, etc.) care about the school's appearance.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
There are procedures in place to ensure school safety.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Teachers have positive interactions with students in classrooms.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Non-teaching staff has positive interactions with students.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Common areas display substantial social/emotional support options for students.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school displays positive images and role models that reasonably reflect the ethnic makeup of the student body.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Adults appear to care deeply about student well-being.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
On a **scale** of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend other schools use this school as an excellent example of a safe & caring environment? *As a guideline, use the following statements to help you decide how to answer:* **Answer 1** if you would *never* recommend this school as an example of a safe & caring environment. This school doesn't seem at all safe and caring. **Answer between 2 and 4** if the school is generally **not a good example** of a safe and caring environment but it does have some strengths. **Answer 5** if this school is an OK example of a safe and caring environment, but the school could do much better. **Answer between 6 and 9** if the school seems to be a **good example** of a safe & caring environment but has some weaknesses. **Answer 10** if you think this school is the **very best example** of a safe & caring environment. There isn't anything you think they could to do to make the school safer or more caring.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

High Expectations for Students

How much do you agree with the following statements?

The school displays its academic progress throughout the school (e.g., hallways, classrooms, etc.).	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Displays of academic progress are clearly labeled for parents and visitors to understand.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school celebrates individual student work in public displays throughout the school.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Displays of student work include descriptions of the topic and the quality of work.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Students are on-task and appear engaged in school activities.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school promotes a college-going culture.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school clearly displays information about college throughout the school.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school clearly displays information about a variety of career paths or technical trainings throughout the school.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school clearly displays a variety of enrichment courses and extra-curricular activities throughout the school.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend other schools use this school as an excellent example of having high expectations for students? *As a guideline, use the following statements to help you decide how to answer:* **Answer 1** if you would **never** recommend this school as an example of having high expectations for students. It doesn't appear to have high expectations of students at all. **Answer between 2 and 4** if this school is generally **not a good example** of setting high expectations for students, but it does have some strengths. **Answer 5** if this school is an **OK example** of setting high expectations, but it could do much better. **Answer between 6 and 9** if the school generally is a **good example** of setting high expectations for students, but it has some weaknesses. **Answer 10** if you think this school is the **very best example** of setting high expectations for students.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Figure 4.3 (cont'd)

Welcoming School Community	
How much do you agree with the following statements?	
There is a school-wide culture that supports the community.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Teachers are warm and welcoming toward visitors.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Non-teaching staff members are warm and welcoming toward visitors.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Visitors feel welcome and are not treated like they are a nuisance.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school clearly displays or distributes information for parents and visitors about recent news and student activities for parents.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school clearly displays or distributes information for parents and visitors about school policies.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Parents can get up-to-date information about student achievement at the school.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Parent resources provided by the school are in languages that match the ethnic makeup of the students, families and community.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school publicly displays images or evidence of parent and/or family involvement.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school publicly displays information to support parents on a range of issues related to parenting and their child's education.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend other schools use this school as an excellent example of a welcoming school community? *As a guideline, use the following statements to help you decide how to answer:* **Answer 1** if you would **never** recommend this school as an example of a welcoming school community. It doesn't appear to be a welcoming school at all. **Answer between 2 and 4** if this school is generally **not a good example** of a welcoming school community, but it has some strengths. **Answer 5** if this school is an **OK example** of a welcoming school community, but it could do much better. **Answer between 6 and 9** if the school is generally a **good example** of a welcoming school community, but it has some weaknesses. **Answer 10** if you think this school is the very **best example** of a welcoming school community.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Thank you for your submission.

Your time and efforts are helping to improve schools for children in Detroit.

The 3-4 community reviewer rubrics completed during each visit are averaged together and aggregated into a final score. A school can earn up to fifteen points on the Detroit School Scorecard for the Community Reviewer Program. The ESD Scorecard Rulebook states

> The Average Community Review Score is the school's average score on the three-four rubrics of ESD's Community Review survey. The Community Review measures feedback given by members of the Detroit community who visited the school...The Average Community Review Score is calculated from community review data collected by Excellent Schools Detroit and uses the most recent year of data. If a school did not participate in a community review, the Average Community Review Score will still count toward its cumulative grade and the school will earn 0 out of 15 possible points on the measure.

According to the internal CRP 2014 Executive Summary document, each rubric is scored on a 1-4 point scale (1=Not at all, 2=somewhat, 3=mostly, 4=completely). The individual questions are then averaged to create measure scores, and the measure scores are averaged to create a domain

score for each of the three main categories. Lastly, the domain scores are averaged to create the overall score and are converted to a 0-15 scale. According to the same internal document, Detroit schools averaged "Mostly" across the three site visit domains, scored lowest on the College & Career Measure and scored highest on the Emotional Environment measure, with Welcoming Culture close behind.

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Learning and Adjusting

</div>

The program has been operating for three years and has made adjustments and changes during that time. At the conclusion of each year of the program, program staff evaluated the strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas of improvement for the program through the use of debrief meetings with community reviewers, team leaders, and school leaders. From those debriefs and through internal meetings with program staff, CRP has made two major adjustments to the program. It changed the composition of the community reviewer teams and it changed the school scoring process.

Adjustments to the Community Reviewer Team Composition

During the first year of the program, the community reviewer teams consisted of 4-5 community reviewers and one team leader. During my observations of internal program meetings, the program staffed discussed that CRP intentionally utilized retired school administrators as team leaders during the program's first year. Their rationale was to make the visited school leaders more comfortable about the school reviews and to get buy-in from educators in Detroit. As previously stated, the team leaders served as the face of the program; they were the first to arrive at the school, and interacted the most with visited school principals and leaders. Although the retired administrators were well accepted by the school leaders, CRP received negative feedback from the community reviewers during the first year debriefs. The

community reviewers complained that the team leaders were biased and made excuses for the schools and school leaders. They gave examples of team leaders that would not allow them to see certain parts of the school building in an effort to protect the school and school leader. They also stated that the team leaders did not value the community reviewer's voices and opinions. They described team leaders who continuously inserted their opinions and voices into conversations during the school visits.

The intended role of the team leader was to remain unbiased and to value and empower the voices and opinions of the community reviewers. According to feedback, that was not occurring so CRP shifted the composition of the teams. During the second year the teams consisted of team leaders who were leaders from local community organizations. They received better feedback from community reviewers after the second year, and they had very little negative feedback from the school leaders. CRP learned that involving community leaders as team leaders seemed a better approach and they continued to use it during the third year of the program.

During the third year of the program the team composition shifted again. After shifting to team leaders from community organizations during the second year of the program, CRP realized that there was no one with education training and backgrounds to help community reviewers understand and interpret displays in halls, classroom interactions and other observed scenes. They also wanted to increase and improve the quality of data collected during the school visits (discussed in the next section). Therefore, during the third year they added the role of the education specialist. The job description for the education specialists listed the following as key responsibilities:

> On school walkthroughs, help team members make adequate observations of schools through facilitation, open-ended questions and highlighting notable school components. Provide

educational expertise in school data and school displays during school walkthroughs. Provide expertise about artifacts and evidence of effective school climate and culture. Contribute to the development of clear, useful, and accurate reports that can be used by school leaders and community to understand school climate in individual schools

The education specialists were education graduate students from local universities. Excellent Schools Detroit was overall satisfied with the education specialist and intended to continue utilizing their role in the Community Reviewer Program.

Adjustments to the Scoring and Data Collection Process

The third change was to the rubric and to the scoring methods. During the first year of the program, the community reviewers utilized one final rubric to collect all of their opinions and were required to reach a consensus on each of the rubric items. Every community reviewer had to agree before they could move on to the next question and complete the rubric. After the school tour, during the debrief conversations, the team leader would read each question out loud and ask the community reviewers one at a time to rate the school on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This process was difficult for team leaders to facilitate, and did not allow every community reviewer's voice to be heard equally. Often times, the loudest or most aggressive community reviewer was able to persuade the rest of the group. CRP staff received feedback from team leaders and community reviewers that this process did not truly capture the opinions of all of the reviewers. Thus, after the first year, CRP changed the process for collecting scoring data. During the second and third year of the program, each community reviewer had his or her own individual rubric. This adjustment created an opportunity for every community reviewer's opinion to be valued and counted. A school's score on each rubric item became an average of the reviewer's individual scores.

Early Program Outcomes

This section brings together some data on early program outcomes. First, it is necessary to note that careful, systematic data collection has not been a strong point of the CRP and ESD. Data collection has varied year to year. In some cases, ESD collected basic participation numbers but not information on the types of parents or community members participating. They know the number of schools reviewed but have not worked with the reviewer data to show patterns in reviewer demographics and background or how schools are scored over the three years of the program. This is a frustration that limits what might be learned about the program thus far. Still, there is some preliminary data on the characteristics and participation rates of community reviewers and the number of schools reviewed. All sources of formal and informal data pooled together allow some reflection on whether the program is accomplishing its goals of empowering participants at the individual and collective level or shows potential to do so longer term.

Program Participation Outcomes

The Community Reviewer Program (CRP) began in 2011 and is currently in its third year of operation. In its first year, it worked with over two hundred parents and community participants. According to the multiple sources of program participation rates, at this time, over five hundred parents and community members have participated in the program. It has conducted and completed over four hundred and fifty school visits and reviews to Detroit schools, including K-12 private, parochial, charter and traditional public schools.

Characteristics of the Community Reviewers

Detailed information about participants varied from year to year (see Table 4.2). In 2012-13, over three hundred and seventy community reviewers participated in CRP. Ninety percent of

the participants were African American, eight percent were Latino and two percent were White. Eighty-one percent of the participants were female, and the median age of the participants was forty-two. Ninety-five percent of the participants had a high school diploma or GED, and thirty percent of the participants had a bachelor's degree (Table 4.2).

Earlier it was noted that ESD looked to engage "involved" parents and community leaders. This may explain the profile of participants. Clearly, the program has attracted community members that are older and have higher levels of education than the average Detroit parent. The average age of community reviewers during the 2012-13 program was 42 and 95% of reviewers had at least a high school degree or GED equivalent, rates higher than the average Detroiter (Table 4.2). So far, younger, and less educated parent and community members have much lower participation rates in the program, as do males, Latinos and whites.

Characteristics of the Schools

During the 2011-12 and 2012-2013 operation years, the Community Reviewer Program was open to all schools that desired to participate in the program. ESD's goal was to visit as many schools as possible and to urge every school in the city to participate. CRP successfully engaged a range of schools: Detroit Public Schools, Education Achievement Authority schools, and charter schools, to participate. In contract, catholic, private and select charter schools have not participated much in the program.

Table 4.2

CRP Participation Rates and Characteristics

Rate & Demographics	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	Detroit
Number of Schools Evaluated	175	210	79	-
Number of Participants	350	377	102	-
Median Age	*	42	?	34
High School Diploma or GED or higher	*	95%	93%	69.5%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	*	29.5%	45%	11.2%
% Male	*	19%	24%	48%
% Female	*	81%	76%	52%
% African American	*	90%	92%	82.7%
% Latino	*	8%	3%	6.8%
% White	*	2%	5%	7.8%

* Data is not available

During the most recent year, 2013-2014, CRP only evaluated 70 schools (Table 4.3). They focused on newer schools, schools in operation four years or less and schools that had recently gone through a turnaround schools that had been through a state takeover, had a new

management company or new school authorizer. Consequently, only about 100 community reviewers participated in the program in 2013-2014 (Table 4.2).

Table 4.3

CRP School Visits and Evaluations

Type of School	2013-2014
Charter School	45
Traditional Public Schools	22
Private/parochial Schools	3
Total	70

Reaching the Program Goals

The Community Reviewer Program has developed to operate as envisioned and it continues to learn from its experiences. Many parent involvement programs struggle, so it is no small thing that the CRP has engaged as many parents and schools as it has. It can claim basic operational success.

In creating the program, ESD wanted to empower Detroit community members to become more involved with schools. At the individual level, it wanted to provide parents with the tools and skills to make more informed school choice decisions. At the community or collective level, it wanted to develop a power base of parents and community members that would make Detroit schools more responsive and accountable for their chronic low performance. Assessing success on these complex matters is difficult. But on the basis of its overall observations and its more in-depth study of 9 parents, the study has developed some case-based

evidence that the program may change parent's interactions with schools and the school choice behaviors.

Individual Empowerment

Prior to participation in the program, many of the parents, even more involved parents, reported having little knowledge about education except for their own personal experiences and the experiences of their children. The program allowed them to learn more about the state of education in Detroit and what a quality school should "look" and "feel" like. In the case of the 9 parents interviewed for this study, all reported that they gained new information and acquired new resources and skills through their participation in the program. This also aligns with the experiences of other program participants. For example, a participant featured in the program promotional video stated:

> Going into the Community Reviewer Program and going on school reviews, I learned so much. It's unbelievable of a way that a school should look when you walk in. The way that you are supposed to be greeted when you walk in. It's just certain levels of different things that you should see and that should be there.

Visiting and reviewing schools was a significant experience for many of the participants. Although parents can visit and select any school in the city, the school visits sponsored by the CRP were frequently the first time that most had visited other schools in the city. In the study sample of parents, it was the first time for 5 of the 9 parents. For example, Ebony, the mother of two teenage girls, utilized school choice to send her children to a charter school but did not visit the school before sending her children there:

> If it wasn't for this reviewing process, I don't think I would have ever stepped into other schools. You know what I am saying, so I was grateful for that. Because I don't think that if I was a parent off the streets coming in I don't think the school would have offered anything to me you know versus me being a reviewer.

Participation in the program changed the way Ebony saw her children's schools also. She stated, "I thought they were doing a fantastic job (her children's school) but looking at what I saw

(during the program) they can do a lot more, a lot better." Participation in the program also caused her to reflect upon her prior school choice decision:

> I should have done more research. I shouldn't have took someone else's word for it. I shouldn't have been blindsided by the newness (of her daughters' school) and when I saw constant turnover in teachers, I should have asked more questions then. Because now I see that it was something going on with the way they were operating her school.

The experience of Ebony and the experiences of other participants shared in this chapter suggest how participation in the CRP might lead to a greater sense of confidence and empowerment about school decision-making. Participation in the program was a significant experience for many of the participants. It helped to demystify the school choice market in Detroit and gave them tools to utilize when making school choice decisions. They now knew where to go to get accurate, information on each school's academic performance. They reported a better understanding of what questions to ask schools and how to assess the quality of a school. As a result, the 9 studied participants reported having a better understanding of what to look for in a good school and how to make better school choice decisions for their children. It changed their thinking about what a school should offer and what sort of expectations they should or could have for their own child's school. Several of the parents expressed a changed opinion of the type of school they wanted their children to attend.

The participant's comments also suggest a changed sense of identity in terms of their relationships with schools. They felt more *able* to ask questions but also more *allowed* to ask questions, (a theme explored further in the next chapter). They were more connected to people who might provide support for them to do so also. These signs offers some evidence for the idea that participation could enhance the participants overall social capital and individual sense of empowerment.

Collective Empowerment

The program's other goal was to foster collective empowerment among community reviewers in order to hold Detroit schools more accountable and pressure them to improve. Led by the same community organizers that helped created the CRP, after participating as reviewers and as team leaders in the Community Reviewer Program, community leaders from several neighborhoods launched neighborhood based school improvement strategies.

The Ford Neighborhood Alliance and Ford Faith Alliance, launched a school attendance campaign and a parent mentoring program. They started looking at attendance data from schools in their neighborhood and found that "over 60% of children in Ford Neighborhood schools were missing more than 10 days of school each year." Through their campaign, schools and churches in Ford worked together to launch a community campaign to increase attendance rates to 97%.

After participation in the CRP, members of the Antioch Neighborhood Education Committee launched a campaign to increase the role of parents as decision-makers and school-to-home communicators. The Committee held dozens of one-on-one conversations with neighborhood parents and students to understand what prevented their involvement in their children's schools. They also conducted a national scan of best practices in parent involvement. Ultimately, the Committee chose to implement the Parent Mentor Program, a nationally recognized parent engagement model that builds deep and lasting relationships between students, teachers, and parents. In Antioch, the program offers parents a small stipend to work in the classroom or elsewhere in the school to support students academically and connect families to resources. In 2013-2014, there were 3 parent mentors at the neighborhood elementary school and 2 parent mentors at the neighborhood high schools.

With support from the CRP community organizers, community leaders involved in the

CRP also launched a citywide education organizing network called Our Schools. According to

the Our Schools website, they are a collective of "neighborhood organizations, parents, and

youth committed to ensuring that all Detroit children have access to an excellent education,

regardless of their race or socioeconomic status." The groups credits the CRP for it's founding:

> In 2012, Excellent Schools Detroit convened community-based organizations from around the city to participate in their annual Detroit School Scorecard. That year, ESD added an exciting new part to their school rating system: an unannounced site visit by parents and community members to assess the climate and learning environment of each school. … Participating in the Detroit School Scorecard energized and activated some community leaders so much that they begin to lead local organizing campaigns with the neighborhood organizations that recruited them...Ultimately, this convening proved to be such a powerful lever for improving schools that participating groups decided to make it official, and Our Schools was born...Together, we are building power to make systemic change and win educational justice for our communities.

It is not yet known how these new initiatives will develop and how they will interact with

schools. But they offer some preliminary evidence of positive collective outcomes from the

CRP. The tools and resources of the CRP offer important support structures and experiences to

these new organizations that lend them a very important assist.

Chapter Summary

According to Delgado-Gaitan (1991),

> Empowerment is an ongoing intentional process centered in the local community involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources.

The CRP was an intentional process centered in the Detroit community that helped parents who

lacked an equal share of resources to gain greater access to information, new knowledge and

experiences and new relationships. ESD created the CRP to increase parent involvement and

improve relationships between urban parents and schools by empowering participants to make

better school choice decisions and to hold the city's schools more accountable. It drew on

community organizing models that view parents as assets rather than liabilities. It also successfully developed a model and process for parents and community members to conduct school quality reviews that enhanced the Detroit School Report card and the dissemination of reliable and valued information about Detroit schools. In a document used to provide an overview of CRP, ESD wrote

> Now in its third year, the Community Reviewer Program has become an invaluable tool not just for collecting information, but also for engaging local leaders in creating educational change. Over 500 neighborhood leaders have participated in Site Visits, and are bringing a new-found energy and resource back to their communities. They have started parent engagement programs, school attendance initiatives, and are recruiting more folks every year to get involved with the Scorecard.

CRP brokered opportunities for parents to engage in new relationships and to gain information and knowledge about norms that are valued by schools and variations in school conditions and qualities. Data from a small set of parents who participated in the program suggest that the program succeeded in developing a stronger orientation to learn more about their children's schools and a greater sense of empowerment about asking questions of schools and making school choices.

The involvement of community leaders in the CRP led some of them to develop local programs of parent involvement and school improvement. Overall, preliminary data from the program gives some affirmation to the program's theory of action and the value of a very different form of parent involvement in urban schools. The next chapter shifts perspective away from the program to consider the personal experiences of the nine parents who participated.

CHAPTER 5: THE EXPERIENCES OF NINE COMMUNITY REVIEWERS

In the previous chapter, I discussed the findings related to the program theory of action, program model, and early program outcomes. A second area of inquiry in the study was to examine how participation in the program influenced individual parents. This chapter presents key findings from in-depth pre- and post interviews and surveys of 9 of the community reviewers. I provided a description of the participants in Chapter 4. This chapter provides an overview of their experiences with the program and discusses how the program influenced their beliefs about quality schools, their interest and comfort in being involved with schools, their involvement behaviors, and their school choice decisions. In closing it considers how the program may have influenced their social capital.

The school and community involvement profiles of the parents aligned with the type of parent and community member the program sought to engage. As noted in Chapter 4, the program sought to attract "involved parents and residents." In recruitment materials for the program, CRP staff wrote:

> Community Reviewers are involved parents, residents, educators and members of the business and nonprofit communities who want all of Detroit's children to receive an excellent education...We are looking for parents and community members who have already demonstrated leadership or whose leadership and talents you would like to develop.

The sample of parents interviewed for the study largely aligned with this description. However the program also involved a small group (3 out of 9, 33%) of parents who were not heavily involved with their children's schools prior to participation in the program

Why the Participants Joined the Program

In 2013, the CRP conducted a phone survey of the 2012-2013 community reviewers to gain feedback on their experiences. An overview of the data showed that most joined the program to learn more about what was happening in the schools and to know how they could help. A common comments was:

> I decided to participate in the community review process because I wanted to see what is going on in Detroit Public Schools…I think that education is very important and I wanted to see for myself what is going on and what I could do to make things better.

In pre-interviews, (after their training but prior to their school review visits) the 9 study participants were asked to explain why they became a community reviewer. All shared a desire to help improve the Detroit community, their children's schools, or other schools in Detroit. Another common reason was a desire to separate fact from fiction about the schools, as was clear in this comment from Tanesha:

> Because I wanna see what's going on in some of the other schools, comparing to my schools and see how I can, either we change the stuff or incorporate it. See what works, see what's really going on other than hearsay, because I'm not a hearsay person.

Michelle stated:

> People really don't know the jewels that we have in the city... Because the city gets such a bad rap so I don't think that they really know. And they go for what looks best because the school that I did go in, it's a newer school so it looked really nice on the outside but I was just looking, thinking the quality of this could be better.

Many parents stated that they heard negative things about schools in Detroit, and the program offered them a chance to explore the quality of schools in Detroit for themselves. They wanted to explore the schools personally, to get beyond the negative stories heard, past hearsay, to learn about Detroit schools for themselves. Other participants shared similar interests in being able to directly observe and compare the conditions of Detroit schools against the negative stories they often heard about them.

Participants also saw the program as an opportunity to help improve the communities and schools in Detroit. When asked why he joined the program, Barry replied by stating:

Because I know that for the rest of my life, I'm going to be doing something with the amelioration of these blighted communities in Detroit. And I have to have as much information and knowledge on what I'm doing to be successful in that endeavor. So I'll try to expose myself to a repository of information. And I think that when you have those in the community who have a vested interest in understanding what makes your school good or bad and that you have the ability to change this, is, it's imperative.

Ford, that is my target area because it is such, it is such a decimated area. That when you say Ford, that's the look you gonna get. Exactly what you're doing. People just, they cringe when you mention that area. They don't wanta go over there. Definitely not after 5:00 and they ain't going over there before the sun is up. So you know, but the need for that, in fact, I truly believe just a strong, small nucleus of parenting over there, concerted parenting. I'm talking about again not just for a week or a month, I'm talking about you committing your child for the next few years and giving them what they need.

Barry like many of the other community reviewers is a community leader in Detroit. Barry worked heavily in the Ford community to combat the neighborhood blight problem and as mentor to black males. Barry's quote is an example of how some of the participants connected their participation in the program to the larger goal of improving the city and communities in Detroit.

Parent's Experiences with the Program

The Community Reviewer Program reflects a theory of action in which access to transparent information, new experiences with schools, and new relationships build parent's social capital, empowers them to make more informed school choices decision and to pressure schools to be more responsive and accountable (Figures 4.1). This chapter examines parent's individual experiences with the program and how the program influenced participants at the individual level. This study specifically wanted to examine whether participation influenced parents' beliefs and descriptions of a good school, self-efficacy, involvement behaviors and

dispositions, social capital, and other knowledge and skills (Figure 5.1). It also wanted to

examine whether it empowered parents to make better school choice decisions.
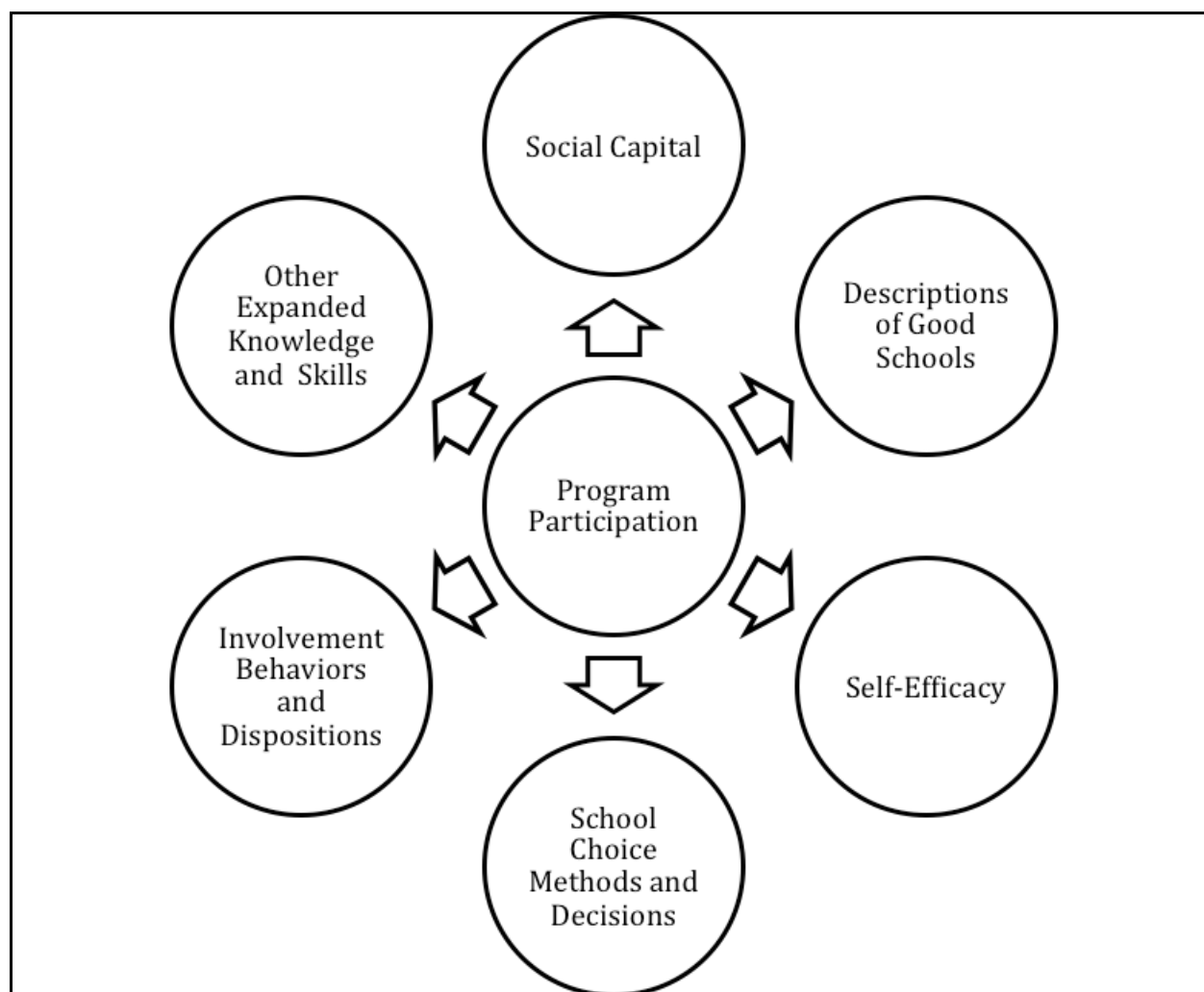
Figure 5.1 Parent's Experiences with the Community Reviewer Program

Beliefs and Definitions about Good Schools

Exploring whether participation in the program influenced parent's beliefs about what

constituted a good school was a central interest of the study. In pre-and post interviews,

participants were asked to describe components of a good school and their experiences of their

favorite school visited during the program. Many parent comments may reflect the timing of

their pre-interviews. The pre-interviews were conducted prior to conducting school visits but

after the program trainings where parents were exposed to descriptions and discussions of standards that constitute a good school. Parents did not define good schools exactly the same, but their attentions were directed by the tools and rubrics created by parent and community members that emphasized the maintenance of school facilities, school safety, staff's expectations for students, how caring the adults in the building were toward students, and how welcoming and open the school was to parents and the community. Participants described good schools in part as "safe, clean, welcoming, and have good academics and curriculum."

Safety was a central quality of a good school for these parents. Beverly, a parent of a teenage son, drew on her experiences during a school review visit to describe what she thought a good school looked and felt like:

> They had security, where you had to, we all had to get badges, wasn't you could just come in and leave out. And when one of the kids' parents came there, the lady said, *excuse me, could you just, one second* and she gave all us our badges and then she said, I will escort you around but before she left her post, she went and got somebody else to take over her post while she went somewhere else.

Hattie noted safety right off also. She stated, " It's safe, you feel safe going in the door. You feel good when you walk in the environment." In her descriptions, Maria also shared experiences that spoke to central concerns about safety:

> Make sure the school is protected. That was another thing that the school is protected. With all these issues going on in the school today, people just walking in there, that frightens me, too. And I made a point to that, you know, at one of the parents meetings (at her son's school). You know, now they have a doorbell. You can't just get into the school and the main door has a doorbell. You can't just open the door, thank God. Thank God, not like before. Before you could go in there like nothing.

Closely connected to safety was the quality of being "welcoming." Many of Tanesha's comments spoke to this:

> A good school to me is first, when you walk in the door, a school must make parents feel welcome...It's what the school has to offer when I step in. Now, if I walk in the school and they don't even say good morning, or I go in the office and they're not even trying to

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respond and not even noticing I'm there, I'm not gonna send my child there cuz how you treating these kids when I'm not here

In the CRP video, a parent spoke of how visiting schools changed her expectations of what schools should look like and how she should be greeted:

> Going into the Community Reviewer Program and going on school reviews, I learned so much. It's unbelievable of a way that a school should look when you walk in. The way that you are supposed to be greeted when you walk in. It's just certain levels of different things that you should see and that should be there.

Related to being welcoming, Maria underscored the theme of communication during both her pre- and post interview. During the pre-interview she defined a good school as a place where there's communication with the principal, the teachers, and the setting. She stated, "When there's communication with the principal, the teachers, and the setting. Yeah, that's what I think, the main thing is the communication and the safety of my child."

School safety and a welcoming environment were central themes used by the parents to describe a good school. For urban parents whom often hear about crimes and violence in their neighborhoods and communities, having a safe school is very important and centrally important to them.

A welcoming school environment is also an important element to a good school. This is often because the parents themselves did not have good experiences with schools and they often feel unwelcome and uncomfortable at schools and interacting with school staff. This aligns with the literature which concluded that parents' perceptions and interactions with schools are influenced by their prior personal experiences as students (Davies, 1993; Lott, 2001; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000). In his study *Benefits and Barriers to Parent Involvement,* Davies (1993) found that parents' bad memories about schools and prior negative interactions and relationships with school personnel influenced and impacted the way parents interacted with their children's

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schools. It is critically important that good schools create a welcoming environment for urban

parents.

The CRP program sought to increase parents' attention to the quality of academic

programs in schools. Parent definitions of a good school spoke to this also. Beverly voiced that

good schools have quality academics, sharing her observations that a good school is one where

kids that go there "accomplish a lot." She stated:

> The kids that I've seen that went there (a good school), they accomplished a lot, from
> going there. And with the curriculum…they have to keep a certain grade point average to
> stay there and that made it a good school to me.

Tanesha commented about the importance of academics and her experience at a school during

the site visits:

> And you gotta look for the academics because if a school ain't functioning in academics,
> how can you teach my child so they can succeed in the future? So I look for that, too...
> [At Rosa Parks Creative Studies] they allow their kids go out in the hallway, sit on the
> floor. You know, any way the child feel comfortable learning. And also, they cater to
> their kids like if they wanta draw, they incorporate it with their like curriculum and stuff.
> I thought that was cool, too. And the kids, they had art projects all over the place and
> everything

Hattie, the grandmother of an elementary female student, saw a good school as safe, but also one

where there is discipline and where staff and the curriculum "recognize cultural differences":

> They have lots of materials, educational materials that will help the learners with their
> critical thinking skills and their creativity...I also think a good school is one that is
> disciplined, where the teachers are disciplined um where the teachers respect their
> students and in turn I think the students will respect the teachers. I think a good school is
> one that has a good curriculum okay and one that is up on the curriculum and is sensitive
> to who their students are. For example, my granddaughter came home and they were
> studying immigration and migration. And she came home with a project that she had to
> do and one of the projects wanted to know where did your ancestors come from and why
> did they come here. And what were their native languages and you had to know who they
> were. What was the names of you ancestors that came here and why did they come here?
> Those questions to African American students are very insensitive. You know why did
> they come here; they were enslaved...So why would you give an assignment like
> that...Curriculums need to be relevant to whoever you are teaching and they need to
> understand that. To me a good school recognizes cultural differences; they know who
> their audience is, whom their students are and they are able to teach accordingly.

The interview data from parents may not show significant shifts in how they defined a good school between their pre and post interviews but there are signs of developments to their thoughts and perceptions. Perhaps because he was the most expansive in his comments, Barry's comments on what makes a school good or valuable are interesting. During the pre-interview, Barry, the father of a son in high school, described a quality school this way:

> What makes a school valuable? The fact that you roll up to Business Academy [School] and its aesthetically appealing: this is a pretty school. That makes it valuable. The fact that you come in and you are greeted professionally. Girlfriend ain't on the phone, she ain't smacking no gum you know she ain't doing none of that. She is appropriately dressed for the job that she works. So that makes a school valuable. When it's clean, when its well lit, when you come in and somebody is speaking to you or assisting you with things you don't know. When it puts on events, if it has a strong PTA association. If there are things on the wall that you can see that they are making kids feel good about themselves. The value of a school, what does it bring to the community, that type of thing. You have to understand that is what is going to educate your child. When your child goes from third to twelfth grade that school is the most influential factor and those individuals in there are too.

During the post interview, Barry's description of a good school developed and shifted some:

> What does a good school look like? Just from my experience overall, I'm thinking a good school looks like it can show an upward increase in progression in your students. They don't have to be A students but if you can show me a consistent pattern of students who started here and now they're here, it can be as small steps incrementally as possible, but as long as there's a continuous, gradual upward spiral of progression in academics and social development...Yeah, I think that's, I think, I don't think you can have one without the other. I think a child who's progressing academically will progress socially. Those skills should be synonymous anyways. And I think the administrative portion (of a school) should be enthusiastic and inviting across the board...You got to have people that are committed to the school. The school has to be a pulse of the neighborhood. When the school ceases to become a pulse for your neighborhood, then I think that is the beginning of your downward spiral.

Although some parts of Barry's definition of a quality school are the same, his overall description developed and shifted. Some things are consistent, for example before and after participation the program, he describes a good school as welcoming, having professional and committed school personnel, being a valuable part of the community, and one that successfully

develops students. However the differences in the descriptions are important to pull out. In the first quote, Barry notes the quality of the school appearances; it is aesthetically appealing and clean, there is art and other displays on the walls. He also notes adult behaviors; the staff are professional, and the parents are involved through a professional like body like the PTA. In this description, he expresses what some might call middle class expectations of a good school.

In the quote that follows, he moves past appearances of the building and the visible behaviors of adults to consider what is transpiring among students. He speaks about students and their academic and social growth and success over time. He speaks of adults as people who should be reaching out and connecting to the community. He moves past the degree to which the school has visible signs of order and to matters below the surface. His criteria are not different, but they are developed.

Involvement Behaviors and Dispositions

During the post interviews, parents were asked whether participation in the program influenced their involvement and interactions with their children's schools. Most (5 out of 9, 56%) replied "no" because they were already involved with their children's schools and participation had not change their involvements. Recall that 6 of the 9 parents interviewed reported being frequently involved with their children's education. Damon, stated "Uh uh. I stayed the same...I was already doing it before even I knew (the Community Reviewer Program) existed. So I always interacted with them (personnel at his children's school). I still am." Vanessa shared a steady form of involvement as a volunteer in her child's school:

> I think I got a good rapport with my kids' teachers, both of them. And like I said, I saw them last night and a couple of them, I haven't seen because I do different things at the school, I don't get a chance to see all of them at the same time. They walked up to me and hugged me and greeted me and was like I haven't seen you and I was like that's because I've been on the other side of the building, whatever. You know any time you wanta come read or you wanta come in, you can.

However, 4 (out of 9, 44%) of the parents reported that the program had some influence on how they thought about their interactions and involvement with their children's schools. These influences were mostly in terms of asking themselves new questions about how they might be helpful. For example, Michelle stated,

> I know what questions to ask. I know nonverbals to look for. I also see areas that need support that I probably wouldn't've typically thought about supporting... People always say we need somebody in the lunchroom, help out with lunch duty or they might simply need copy paper. The staff may need someone to come in and assist, you know, just to kinda help monitor in the classroom so they can get some paperwork done. So do reading with the children or play a game for the older children. Those areas that we don't always think about. Maybe spearheading, I've always wanted to do this, spearheading a, …teacher appreciation week or something, something to appreciate the teachers that will go a week long. Where they may have people in the building that may do a movie with the 5th grade so the teachers can go and get a hand massage. You know, having little gifts that may have been donated so they can take little tokens home. Just something to get them excited.

And Maria felt more able to interact after her experiences, stating:

> It gives me more interaction with his teacher and the school itself to know what I want for my child... And you know, to let them know that I'm willing to help in any way, you know, help him with his education. And even in the school, like as a volunteer, you know.

Barry was the only parent who reported that he took action to become more involved with his child's school as a consequence of his participation in the CRP. Barry was one of three parents who reported not being frequently involved with their children's school prior to participation in the program. In the post interview Barry stated that participation affected his involvement behaviors with his son's school:

> Yeah. Well, I'm more…I've been involved as far as going up there more and to see, you know, the platform where parents can go in there and view grades and look at type of things, look at social events, just to see what they're, see what they're putting out there. They're very good at keeping parents informed, keeping the information board updated and accessible...Yeah, just, just to pay a visit. I mean, I think a parent should make at least two visits up to the child's school during the calendar year. At least two and volunteer once. Just if nothing else, to give the student, the teachers and the principal that I'm involved in my child's life. Period. I wanta come up here and just go to one

class. Just hey, how's it going? How's things going? What are you all doing? What's going on? Just, and then your child appreciates you.

Prior to participation, Barry had not visited his son's school during the school day or explored the school's website and other parent tools. He now thinks it is important to be more present at his son's school.

Participation in the program influenced some of the parents' thoughts and orientations about at-school involvement. Because most of the parents were already involved, measuring a shift was limited. However, participation in the program compelled some to think more deeply about how to be more involved with their children's schools or to see different ways to become involved. Several reported that they would like to help and volunteer at the school more often. Although the parents reported how they would like to be more involved with their children's schools, they had not taken the actions they described. In the case of the parents who were not involved, one, Barry, seemed ready to take some specific actions.

Self-Efficacy and Confidence in Involvement

To assess whether the program influenced parent's self-efficacy and confidence when interacting with schools, the study analyzed the interviews and also created a questionnaire to assess parents' confidence when interacting with schools before and after participation (see Appendix K). Self-efficacy is belief in one's abilities to act in ways that will produce desired outcomes (Bandura, 2006). In the context of parent involvement, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) define parent self-efficacy as parent's belief that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to help their children succeed in school.

The questionnaire was constructed utilizing Bandura's (2006) *Guide for Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales* and pre-existing questions from Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's (2005) *Model of Parental Involvement Process*. The purpose of the questionnaire was to examine parents'

sense of efficacy for involvement, interacting with school personnel, and helping their child succeed in school. The questionnaire had items such as: I know how to help my child do well in school, I am confident when communicating with my child's teachers, and the school I selected for my child is a great school. Participants were asked to assess each statement by selecting not at all, somewhat, mostly, or completely. At the conclusion of the post interview, the researcher placed both the pre- and post survey side-by-side and asked participants to describe what experiences during the program most influenced any changes in their self-efficacy and confidence.

Most (8 out of 9, 89%) of the participants selected mostly and completely to most of the questions in both the pre- and post questionnaire. For example Tanesha and Maria stated "completely" to all of the questions on both the pre-and post questionnaires. Additionally, Ebony marked "completely" on all of the questions except *the school I selected for my child to attend is a great school*. As discussed in more detail throughout this study, she was concerned that the school she selected was not a good school. For this question she selected somewhat for both the pre-and post questionnaire.

The remaining participants had small shifts from mostly to completely or from completely to mostly on a few of the questions. For example, Hattie answered "completely" to all of the questions in the pre-questionnaire, but shifted her answer to mostly and somewhat on the post questionnaire for questions about selecting a good school. She stated:

> At first, I thought I knew how to, you know, select, identify (a good school), but now I know that there's some things that I didn't know. So that's why I said mostly now when before I thought I knew it all. And I've learned that I don't, so that's why... Knowing how the environment, knowing about the environment and how important the environment is. She has to be in the right environment, right school environment.

During the post interview when asked if she would select the same school for her granddaughter she replied, " No, I would have picked another school." Hattie's concerns about her granddaughter' school is also discussed in other sections in this chapter.

Damon and Barry also shifted their answers to the questions about selecting a good school. Both shifted their answers from mostly to completely. They reported feeling more confident in how to make school choice decisions. Damon stated:

> Now I know what I'm looking for. I go in there, this school well maintained. Is the teacher teaching my son, my daughter anything? Don't want my son sitting like, ain't learning...I go in there and the teacher's on the cell phone, not interacting with my child. You're wasting my child's time. I want my child to learn. I want my child to do well, better than where I am. I want him to be topnotch. Have everything I didn't have. I want him to have the best education he can get, while he can get it, while it's free.

At the individual level of empowering parents to think critically about their school choice decisions, the program accomplished it's goal. Participation in the program pushed many of the parents to think deeper about school quality and in some cases to reconsider their school choice decisions. This is also discussed in more detail in the school methods and decisions section.

Beverly, Michelle, and Barry's answers shifted for the questions about school involvement and their impact on their child's school performance. As evident in the involvement behaviors and dispositions section, Barry became more involved with his son's school after participation in the program and reported that he had visited his son's school more often. His self-efficacy for school involvement and his impact on his son's school performance shifted to completely. He stated:

> I think that because I hadn't been to the school except for football games...Now it's like, okay, when you show up at the school (during school hours), it's like, okay...you have an involved parent...Just having the dialogue with his principal, you know, instructors, all that. Just them being so inviting...This is part of the role. I'm not doing nothing that's extraordinary. This is what I'm supposed to do.

Participation in the program also stimulated some of the parents to think deeper about their involvement with their children's schools. However, because most of the parents reported high levels of involvement before participation, it appears that the program did not substantially impact the overall group's involvement behaviors. This aligns with what is discussed in the involvement and dispositions section.

Although there appeared to be little change in participants' self-efficacy as a group, there were a few individual parents whose self-efficacy shifted as a result of participation in the program.

Social Capital

Access to new relationships was a key component of the program model and theory of action. Through the new relationships participants gained social capital that helped enhance the knowledge and skills they utilize when interacting with their children's schools. They gained access to bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital occurred through their new social relationships with other urban parents and community members, and bridging social capital was established by giving parents access to new social relationships with program staff and urban schools (Figure 4.2).

Bonding Capital

Through the bonding capital parents gained a shared language for school quality and a new identity as a community reviewer. The participants gained a new language and way to talk about schools. Through training on the rubrics, the school visits and their shared experiences, they developed a new language for describing the quality of schools. This language closely mirrors the rubrics utilized during the school visits. As previously discussed the rubric were created primarily through recommendations given by other parents and community members.

The rubrics focus on the maintenance of the school facilities, school safety, staff's expectations for students, how caring the adults in the building are toward students, and how welcoming and open the school is to community and parents.

The shared language among the participants became evident when they were asked to describe a good school. The participants utilized the same categories of safety, cleanliness, welcoming, and good academic curriculum. It comes as no surprise that these are similar categories from the program rubric, but they were also qualities that the parents seemed to truly value. This will be discussed in more detail in the description of a good school section later in this chapter.

Participants also gained a new identity as a community reviewer. In a flyer to recruit community reviewers, ESD described community reviewers as:

> Involved parents, residents, educators and members of the business and non-profit communities who want all of Detroit's children to receive an excellent education... parents and community members who care about education, who want to be a part of a longer-term movement to create great schools in Detroit

Hattie described here experience as a community reviewer by stating:

> It was good to feel that you were a part of making sure that the schools were organized and managed the way that they were supposed to, according to the reviewer list that we had...It was a good thing to do and there should be a continuation of monitoring schools to make sure that they are carrying out their objectives and their missions and visions.

Participants of the program were bonded to other like-minded community members who cared about education in Detroit. The program gave them the opportunity to be a part of a collective group of community members who were dedicated to improving Detroit schools.

The program also provided a pathway to stay involved at the collective level with school improvement in Detroit. After the second year of the program, participants created Our Schools, an education-organizing network of neighborhood organizations, parents, and youth committed

to ensuring that all Detroit children have access to an excellent education, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. After participation in the program, participants were encouraged to stay involved by joining a community organization in their neighborhood, a parent involvement program at their children's school, or Our Schools.

Bridging Capital

New language and other tools gained through the program created bridges to urban educators and schools in new ways for the participants. The bridging social capital available through the program allowed participants the opportunity to learn more about urban schools. The bridging capital influenced their interactions with their children's schools. Vanessa discussed how participation helped her to better understand how to handle issues at her children's schools:

> Yes. I can honestly say after my second review, I stopped being all hyped and irritated (about issues at the school). I took things differently when the kids told me, oh, guess what so and so said today or guess what happened today. I was a little bit more, I wasn't upset. I was like, you know, you gotta understand this, this and that other thing. Just from visiting the other schools and seeing and hearing things, I was able to like not be upset and give my kids a reason why certain things had occurred

Michelle discussed how participation has influenced her interactions with her children's schools:

> It will become more intense...because I know what questions to ask. I know nonverbals to look for. I also see areas that need support that I probably wouldn't've typically thought about supporting.

The visits gave participants insight and a better understanding of the culture and norms of her children's schools, which influenced the way they interacted with the schools. Participants utilized the new language and tools in their future interactions with their children's schools to create more informed and positive interactions with the school. The social capital gained through participation in the program is one of the program components that enhanced knowledge and skills that parents utilize when interacting with schools.

New Knowledge and Skills

All (9 out of 9, 100%) of the participants indicated that they gained new information and

access to new resources through their participation in the Community Reviewer Program. During

the post interview, parents described what they learned from participation in the program. When

asked to describe what she learned from her experience with the Community Reviewer Program,

Michelle stated:

> People really don't know the jewels that we have in the city...And unless it's, you know,
> the outside is a new and this fabulous school, looking on the outside, people really don't
> know, you know, that we have really good schools. Because the city gets such a bad rap
> so I don't think that they really know. And they go for what looks best because the school
> that I did go in, it's a newer school so it looked really nice on the outside but I was just
> looking, thinking the quality of this could be better.

When asked the same question, Tanesha shared:

> I learned new is not to judge a book by its cover and what I mean by that is before you
> comment on any school, parents need to really get out and research that school before,
> whether it's positive or negative comment, go look into it yourself. Don't base judgment
> on something somebody else told you...It's so many different styles of learning and like
> their environments and the cultures and stuff. And somewhat just because you see their
> name, things ain't how they always seem, just by the name. You have to go in. Cuz some
> of them, like, wow! Really? For example, my favorite one was the Rosa Parks Creative
> Studies. Their program is awesome...Versus when I went to Carrollton. I went during the
> winter time. Built up ice, the sidewalk wasn't clear. You didn't get greeted just like that.
> It was just like, like wow. It was like, like a jail or something. Like it was just like, you
> know, just because you going to school in the neighborhood, that don't mean the school
> gotta be horrible cuz the neighborhood is horrible.

Each quote is an example of how participants described their perceived learning from the

program. The quotes illuminate that the program helped to demystify the myth that all Detroit

schools are bad. Many participants reported that they heard many negative things about schools

in Detroit. The program offered them the opportunity to explore the quality of schools for

themselves. Michelle stated that schools in Detroit often get a " a bad rap." However, through

her participation in the program she discovered that there are good schools in Detroit; she describes them as "jewels."

Parents in Detroit often judge the quality of schools based on the external and internal appearance of the schools or the school name. They are often distracted by the newness of the building and do very little investigation into other aspects of the school. However, participants of the program found that you cannot judge a school by its name or outside appearance. The quality of a school must be examined by visiting and exploring the school. Participants described learning that there are diverse types of schools. The schools are diverse in their environments, cultures, and quality. They were surprised to discover that Detroit has good and bad schools.

School Choice Decisions and Methods

One of the most targeted goals of the program was to empower parents to select better schools for their children. A community leader in Detroit described the school choice process as overwhelming for parents due to the lack of school performance information:

> One of the challenges for a Detroit family raising children in this city is a lack of transparency around school performance...It's going to be much more critical for parents to be able to get credible information now that we have lots of charters coming in and we have public schools chartering schools, and we have the statewide school district.

A parent in the Community Reviewer Program promotional video stated, "It's a little scary, especially for a parent, if you want to find the best school, you want to have options but you are not always sure."

Although parents can select any school in the city to send their children to, the school visits conducted as part of the CRP were the first time that most (5 of 9, 56%) of the parents visited schools in the city other than the schools they attended and their children's schools. As shown above, many of these parents were not confident of feeling welcomed in school, a pattern that aligns with the literature on urban parents perceptions and experiences with schools. Some

of the parents perceived the schools as being unwelcoming and did not visit schools for that

reason. For example, Ebony, the mother of two teenage girls who utilized school choice to send

her children to a charter school, did not visit the school before sending her children there:

> If it wasn't for this reviewing process, I don't think I would have ever stepped into other schools. You know what I am saying. So, I was grateful for that. Because I don't think that if I was a parent off the streets coming in, I don't think the school would have offered anything to me, you know, versus me being a reviewer.

By learning to assess the quality of schools, Ebony developed new expectations and standards

for schools.

Indeed, all (9 of 9, 100%) of the participants reported feeling that they had a better

understanding of how to assess the quality of schools. Tanesha, stated:

> My experience (with the program) was good because it let me know the different rankings as far as they (schools) test scores, cleanliness and staff and you know different insight on how to look at some different things when it comes to schools. Like this one may be thriving but this one may not but why this one ain't, you know. Let's go in and see what's going on.

Hattie, the grandmother, who utilized school choice to send her granddaughter to a charter

school, reported that participation in the program would influence her future methods for making

school choice decisions for her granddaughter. Hattie is currently looking for a high school to

send her granddaughter to. The current charter school she selected for her daughter is one of the

lowest performing schools in the state; she wants to remove her from the school after she finishes

eighth grade. Hattie reports that participation in the program will help tremendously with

selecting a high school for her granddaughter:

> I will use some of the guidelines (from the program). I'll be looking at the environment. I will be looking at teacher interactions. I'll be looking at diversity. I know I will be looking at safety, all of the things that are really important..I'll be looking at a more total picture rather than just narrowing my focus.

Participation also caused many parents to reassess their current school choice decisions.

When asked if participation in the program influenced the way she sees her children's schools,

Ebony, responded by stating, "Yes. In a lot of ways. I thought they were doing a fantastic job (her children's school) but looking at what I saw (during the program) they can do a lot more, a lot better." She went on to state:

> I should have done more research. I shouldn't have took someone else's word for it. I shouldn't have been blindsided by the newness (of the school building) and when I saw constant turnover in teachers, I should have asked more questions then. Because now I see that it was something going on with the way they were operating her school.

Maria described how participation influenced how she views the school she selected for her son.

> Going to these other schools, it made me like, like see what they have that's a good, like a positive and then seeing what your school doesn't have that it should have. Because that school has it and your school should have it too. I think all schools should have certain things. I think all kids are entitled to have a bigger cafeteria, an auditorium, a nice outdoors to relax in, a play area, an area to have their, you know.

Maria is considering moving downriver and will soon be searching for another school for her son. She discussed that she learned what questions to ask and what to look for during the school visits:

> If I move, I'm gonna put him in a school downriver, you know, and I have to be able to ask questions, go in there and see how their setup is...You know, now if I go in there, I know what my questions can be. And what I'm gonna be looking for. Based on my experience reviewing schools here in Michigan, Detroit.

Ebony and Maria's quotes describe how participation in the program assisted them to reflect about the schools they selected for their children. Ebony did not visit the school she selected for her daughters prior to sending them. She took advice from her daughters' previous school principal and sent them to the school the principal recommended. Participation in the program gave her a new perspective about the school; she now feels that the school should be doing a better job.

Maria visited several schools before selecting a school for her son. She reported being very happy, overall, with her son's current school. However, participation in the program helped her realize that her son's school should have more resources and a better building. Her son's

school has a small lunchroom and outdoor play area, and no auditorium. They do not offer extracurricular activities, which she thinks should be added.

It cannot be said what these parents will actually do going forward, but their comments offer some evidence that the program could empower parents to select better schools for their children and perhaps, place more pressure on schools. Ebony and Maria's descriptions are examples of parent responses to participation in the program. They learned methods for selecting schools for their children. These included checking out their Scorecard information, knowing what questions to ask schools, and having some guidelines to help them make better school choices. A community leader who also served as a review team leader believed that through the Scorecard and Community Reviewer Program "Excellent Schools Detroit has done a tremendous job of making this transparent and making the process (of school choice) understandable to parents. And so that there is real choice."

Chapter Summary

This chapter sought to better understand the experiences of nine program participants and to examine how participation influenced their interactions with schools. Specifically, this study wanted to examine whether the program influenced particular knowledge and skills including: their definitions of a good school, involvement behaviors and dispositions, self-efficacy, social capital, school choice methods, and other reported knowledge and skills. The findings revealed that all of the parents had a positive experience with the program and gained new knowledge and skills. Acquisition of the new knowledge and skills influenced their thoughts, dispositions, and in some cases their interactions with their children's schools.

The parents' descriptions and beliefs about a quality school were similar in many ways and aligned to the program rubrics. They believed that a good school is "safe, clean, welcoming

and has good academics or curriculum." However, parents also used additional descriptions and terms to describe other components of a good school that were important to them. Participation in the program did not shift or change parents beliefs, but it did affirm that their definitions, descriptions, and beliefs about quality schools were valid and important. In fact, their definitions aligned closely with the tools and rubrics created by other community reviewers and used during the school visits.

Participation did not influence most (5 out of 9, 56%) of the parents' orientations toward at-school involvement or their interactions with their children's schools. This group of parents reported they were already involved with their children's schools, and participation in the program did not influence their involvement. However, other parents reported (4 out of 9, 44%) that the program did influence their interactions and involvement with their children's schools. The program compelled this group of parents to think more deeply about how to be more involved with their children's schools. They reported that they would like to help and volunteer at their children's schools more often.

In the context of parent involvement, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) define parent self-efficacy as parent's belief that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to help their children succeed in school. Although there appeared to be little change in participants' self-efficacy as a group, there were a few individual parents whose self-efficacy shifted as a result of participation in the program.

One component of the program theory of action was to enhance the participants' social capital. Through the bonding capital parents gained a shared language for school quality and a new identity as a community reviewer. The program gave them the opportunity to be a part of a collective group of community members who were dedicated to improving Detroit schools. It

also provided a pathway to stay involved at the collective level with school improvement in Detroit. New language and other tools gained through the program created bridges to urban educators and schools in new ways for the participants. Participants utilized the new language and tools in their interactions with their children's schools to create more informed and positive interactions with the school.

One of the most desired outcomes of the program was to empower parents to select better schools and hold schools accountable for student achievement. Participation influenced parents' school choice methods and decisions. All of the participants (9 of 9, 100%) reported that they have a better understanding of how to assess the quality of schools. It cannot be said what these parents will actually do going forward, but their comments offer some evidence that the program empowered parents to select better schools for their children and perhaps.

This chapter illustrates the multifaceted and complex nature of their experiences with the Community Reviewer Program. The findings revealed various ways the program influenced participants' orientations and interactions with their children's schools. The primary finding is that participation positively influenced parents' orientations and interactions with their children's schools.

CHAPTER 6: DICUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this case study was to describe the Community Reviewer Program and to examine how participation in the program influenced parents' interactions with schools. In this chapter, I revisit the purpose of the study, the research questions, summarize key findings with respect to the existing literature, and provide implications for practice and future research.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The Community Reviewer Program was created to generate and increase parent involvement at both the individual and community level by empowering parents to select better schools for their children and to hold the city's schools more accountable for their chronic low achievement. This study described the program's logic, its early outcomes, and how participation influenced parent's interactions and orientations with schools. Three primary research questions gave direction and provided continued focus during the study:

1. What strategies and practices did Excellent Schools Detroit utilize to create the

    Community Reviewer Program?

    a. What was the program's theory of action and components of the program model?

    b. What strategies and activities most empowered participants?

    c. What are the early outcomes of the program?

2. How do parents describe their experience participating in the parent involvement

    program?

    a. Does it affect their thinking about what constitutes a good school for their child?

    b. Does participation in the program affect parent's self-efficacy and confidence in

        being involved with their children's schools?

    c. What sorts of knowledge, skills, and dispositions do they report acquiring?

3. How might participation in the program influence urban parents' experiences and interactions with their children's schools?

To gather the information and data needed to answer my research questions, I collected and utilized in-depth interviews, questionnaires, participant observations and document analysis.
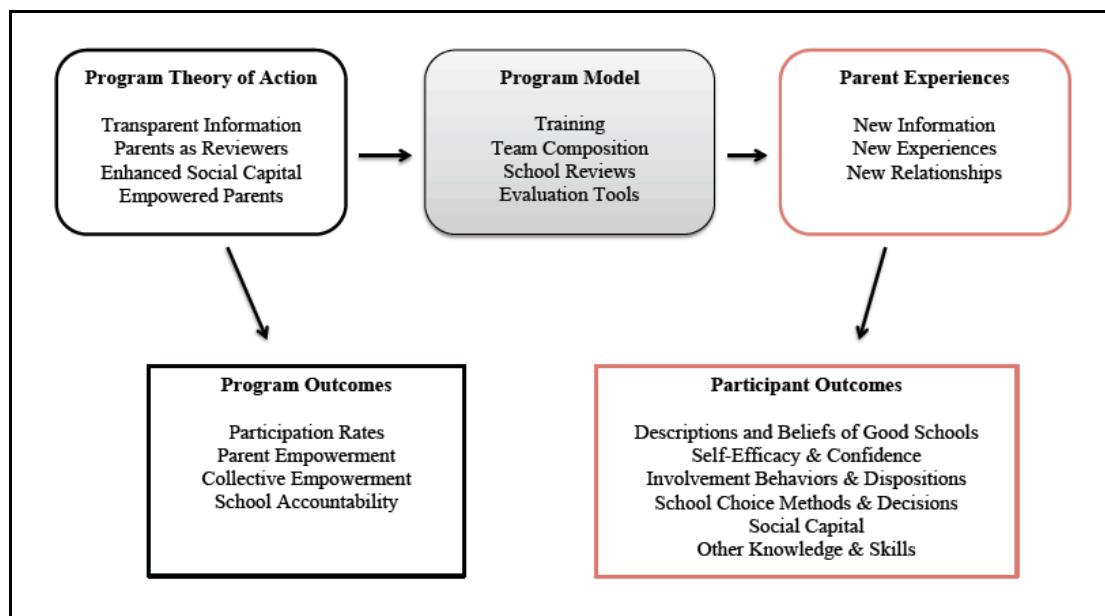
Figure 6.1 Conceptual Framework and Study Guide

Essential Strategies for Urban Parent Involvement

Literatures on urban parent involvement have stressed three key qualities and strategies. First, schools and programs must recognize urban parents as assets rather than liabilities. As highlighted in the literature review, "When families are engaged in positive ways, rather than labeled as problems, schools can be transformed from places where only certain students prosper to ones where all children do well" (Henderson et al., 2007, p. 3). Second, programs and involvement initiatives must be designed to meet the specific needs of particular parents and communities. Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha (2001) examined four schools that effectively involved migrant parents and found that schools were successful at involving parents because they aimed to meet parental needs above all other involvement considerations. The schools and

programs were successful not because they subscribed to a particular definition of involvement, but because they held themselves accountable to meet the multiple needs parents (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). Third, alternatives to school-centered parent involvement programs designed to serve school determined interests are critical to engaging urban, minority, and low-income parents (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Schools and programs must recognize, value, and utilize more forms of involvement. Findings from this study underscore the importance of these orientations and strategies and speak to how they might inform programs and schools that seek to involve urban parents.

Excellent Schools Detroit and the CRP recognized that Detroit parents and community leaders were key assets to their movement to improve the schools. They could have utilized school experts or former educators, but they selected to utilize parent and community members instead. They rejected deficit assumptions about these parents and empowered them in fundamentally new ways by including them in the formation of the Detroit School Scorecard and giving them the role of school quality reviewers. Both forms of involvement were significant departures from traditionally recognized school or program-centered parent involvement activities. They empowered parents to make judgments about schools, to indirectly put pressure on schools, rather than to follow and to assist schools as parents or volunteers.

ESD leaders also believed better information and active experience as school reviewers could generate new sources and levels of social capital among Detroit parents and community members. Like other parents, parents in Detroit desire that their children attend a good school that prepares them to be successful for life beyond high school. While Detroit parents could exercise school choice, there was a lack of transparent information to help them to identify good or better schools and a limited number of good schools to choose from. To meet these specific

needs, ESD created the Detroit School Scorecard. The original Scorecard only had academic test scores, but parents and community leaders wanted other, additional forms of information. Specifically they wanted more information about climate and culture, on "safety, how welcoming the environment is to families, and whether or not students feel cared for and feel like much is expected of them."

Instead of established parent involvement frameworks, the program drew on community organizing methods focused on improving family-school relationships and empowering parents to engage in school improvement. Warren & Mapp (2011) argued that the core processes of community organizing are to "build relationships and power" in part by enhancing social capital (p. 24). The community organizing strategies seemed significant to overcoming barriers to urban parent involvement. CRP created a space where people with high degrees of homogeneity in race, class, culture and social capital could work together to improve education in Detroit.

In engaging parents in the Scorecard process and as school reviewers, the CRP generated and brokered opportunities for parents to engage in new relationships and to gain information and knowledge about norms that are valued by schools and differences and variations that did, in fact, exist among Detroit schools. In this, the program may have achieved some of the social capital influences and outcomes within its theory of action and program model. Individually and collectively, parents gained important forms of knowledge about how schools work, what sort of questions they might ask about schools, what they could or should expect of schools in terms of their order, management, and the climate of hallways and learning spaces, etc. Parent and community members who participated developed new bodies of shared knowledge about the performance realities of Detroit schools; they gained shared language for describing and judging

schools. They shared the experience of visiting, observing, and discussing a school with other parents.

The Singular Impact of School Review Visits

Participants reported that the school visits were the most empowering component of the program and their greatest source of high value learning, more than their training days or other activities. Participants were highly motivated to explore the schools personally, to get beyond the negative stories heard, past hearsay, and to learn about Detroit schools for themselves. The program offered them the opportunity to separate fact from fiction, as was clear in Michelle's comment: " People really don't know the jewels that we have in the city... Because the city gets such a bad rap so I don't think that they really know."

For many of these parents, the school visits were the first time they visited any school other than their children's schools and the schools they attended. Recall the example of Ebony, the mother of two teenage girls who utilized school choice to send her children to a charter school, but did not visit the school before sending her children there stated, " If it wasn't for this reviewing process, I don't think I would have ever stepped into other schools. You know what I am saying. So, I was grateful for that."

The visits provided a safe space to practice parent engagement behaviors and activities such as how to engage and interact with school personnel, how to ask school personnel questions about a school, what to look for in the hallways and classrooms, and what questions to ask about the school culture, teaching and student learning. These may be familiar acts for many middle-class parents but significant experiences for urban parents crossing into different social contexts.

Importantly, participants reported the school visits as their greatest source for learning. A parent and former community reviewer in the CRP video stated:

Going into the Community Reviewer Program and going on school reviews, I learned so much. It's unbelievable of a way that a school should look when you walk in. The way that you are supposed to be greeted when you walk in. It's just certain levels of different things that you should see and that should be there.

Conducting school visits gave participants an accessible list of standards and guidelines to utilize to assess the quality of schools. They learned how to use a guide of questions and a set of criteria. Hattie shared that participation in the program would help tremendously with selecting a high school for her granddaughter:

I will use some of the guidelines (from the program). I'll be looking at the environment. I will be looking at teacher interactions. I'll be looking at diversity. I know I will be looking at safety, all of the things that are really important...I'll be looking at a more total picture rather than just narrowing my focus.

School visits also had a direct impact on participants' perceptions of their children's schools, which they found to be better, worse or some of both when compared with the schools they visited during the program.

The school review visits were powerful to the parents in terms of their individual concerns for their children and their education but also their motivations and desires to take part in education improvement and change in Detroit more broadly. One participant stated, "It's like something that had fell asleep in you, woke up and you realized that your voice has power. And you realized that your voices together has even more power." So often, urban parents are not given the opportunity to help improve their schools. School reform happens to their children's schools and education, but their own voices are often unheard or silenced. The opportunity to visit schools, to have a voice in the description and assessment, and to take part in education improvement in Detroit was very meaningful and significant for these parents.

Parent's Personal Experiences with the Program

The study's second set of questions explored how participation influenced participants' individual thinking about what constitutes a good school, their efficacy and confidence in being involved with their children's schools, and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they acquired through participation.

Defining a Good School

The study considered whether participation in the CRP would affect parent's thinking about what constitutes a good school for their children. In most cases, participation in the program did not seem to shift or change parents beliefs about what components create a good school. Rather it affirmed that their definitions, descriptions, and beliefs were valid and important. As discussed in Chapter 3, the timing of data collection from parents introduced some uncertainties about this data. Parents did not define good schools exactly the same but their attentions were shaped and informed by the language, tools, and rubrics of the CRP program.

Safety was a central quality of a good school for these parents. For urban parents who often hear about and sometimes experience crime and violence, having a safe school was centrally important to them. Maria stated:

> Make sure the school is protected. That was another thing that the school is protected. With all these issues going on in the school today, people just walking in there, that frightens me, too.

Parents also affirmed that a welcoming school environment was critical. Many described their observations and feelings upon entering schools as reviewers. The comments of some parents suggested that their experiences with the program influenced the standards and expectations they now have for how they should be treated upon entering a school. Hoover-Demsey & Sandler (1997) found that a parents were more likely to become involved if school

personnel were inviting and welcoming and argued that schools serving low-income and ethnically diverse families must make greater efforts to welcome families. Findings here confirmed the importance of a welcoming climate that erases fears of exclusion for urban parents and willingness to set or voice expectations for civil, professional climate and interactions in their children's schools.

Parents also defined a good school as one with a good academic curriculum. Contrary to what some believe, these parents believed that academic preparation was a critical factor to their children's future success. They wanted schools to prepare their kids to be successful beyond high school. Damon discussed this in saying:

> I want my child to learn. I want my child to do well, better than where I am. I want him to be topnotch, have everything I didn't have. I want him to have the best education he can get, while he can get it, while it's free.

Tanesha stated, "And you gotta look for the academics because if a school ain't functioning in academics, how can you teach my child so they can succeed in the future?"

However, the academic qualities of schools were harder for the participants to assess. The CRP provided parents with a website and other resources to assess the academic outcomes of schools in Detroit, but the program training covered a limited amount of information about how to assess academics outcomes. Academic quality was not a key component of the school review process or the evaluation form. Parents' comments affirmed that they recognized academics as important, but the program did not necessarily develop their capabilities to describe or understand academic programs, standards, or practices.

Only a few parents' expectations for a good school were enriched or expanded after participation in the program. Tanesha confessed that she would pay a lot more attention to teacher turnover; Hazel felt she would ask questions about cultural diversity and awareness. The

primary influence of the program on conceptions of a good school seemed much more in developing parent's language and confidence to describe a good school and to ask questions about them. Overall, findings here revealed that urban parents want the same things that most parents want from schools, a safe and welcoming environment where their children are learning and are being adequately prepared for life beyond high school.

Confidence and Self-Efficacy

A centrally hoped for outcome of the program was that it would positively influence parents confidence and self-efficacy for interacting with schools. Here data from the study is a bit mixed. According to a brief efficacy questionnaire, most (8 out of 9) of the participants reported that they felt mostly or completely confident to interact with schools during both the pre- and post questionnaire. This may reflect, again the parent population that CRP targeted and enrolled, parents that were already involved with their children's schools. Damon, stated, " Uh uh. I stayed the same...I was already doing it (involved at his sons' school) before I knew the program existed. So I always interacted with them (personnel at the school). I still am."

At the same time, data from the interviews suggest many ways in which participation did increase their confidence and sense of efficacy. However, the potential influence of this type of program on a wider sample of urban parents confidence, particular less involved parents, is unclear here.

New Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions, New Social Capital

Through participation in the program, participants reported several forms of new or enhanced knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Noted above, parents gained some new understandings about the performance trends and outcomes of the Detroit schools and about resources and reporting systems that track those trends. The school review visits also introduced

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parents to new schools and, in some cases, new neighborhoods. They helped parents develop

language and categories for describing schools and asking questions of them. Participation in the

program also facilitated new experiences and relationships with other parents, community

members, program staff, team leaders and education specialists.

Through all of these new resources and connections, participation in the program did

seem to leverage new forms of bonding capital among these parents. They developed identities

as school reviewers and as members of a community working to improve the Detroit schools.

The experiences and connections allowed parents to feel less alienated and more familiar with

schools and more confident about visiting and asking questions about them.

Opportunities to connect with new people and groups, less familiar parents, community

organizers and program leaders, also assisted with bridging capital. In this context, however,

the more distant or dissimilar group to connect with would be school leaders and teachers. The

absence of formal processes to interact with educators in the school and the exclusion of teaching

and learning indicators from the school reviews limited and made uneven shifts in bridging

capital. While parents felt more bridged to schools, there was little evidence that the program

was working to help educators feel more connected or bridged to the parents and community

members.

New School Choice and Involvement Behaviors

An important outcome for the program was for parents to feel more skilled and

empowered to make more informed school choice decisions. As noted above and in previous

chapters, parents reported acquiring changed ideas and new skills for making school choice

decisions moving forward. When asked if participation in the program influenced the way she

sees her children's schools, Ebony, responded by stating, "Yes. In a lot of ways. I thought they

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were doing a fantastic job (her children's school) but looking at what I saw (during the program) they can do a lot more, a lot better." She went on to state:

> I should have done more research. I shouldn't have took someone else's word for it. I shouldn't have been blindsided by the newness (of the school building) and when I saw constant turnover in teachers, I should have asked more questions then. Because now I see that it was something going on with the way they were operating her school.

Maria, who was considering moving downriver and would be searching for another school for her son, discussed what questions she would now ask and what she would look for:

> If I move, I'm gonna put him in a school downriver, you know, and I have to be able to ask questions, go in there and see how their setup is...You know, now if I go in there, I know what my questions can be. And what I'm gonna be looking for. Based on my experience reviewing schools here in Michigan, Detroit.

This is a small sample of evidence, overall, but important to understanding the potential of new forms of parent involvement and the types of knowledge and experiences that urban parents find helpful and empowering. The challenge of following through on these new thoughts is not small. This study was not able to follow these participants forward to now assess how much staying power these new ideas and commitments would have. This is a challenge to any program and most program studies.

The parents also reported feeling new dispositions toward involvement with their children's schools. Again, most of the parents reported that they were involved with their children's schools in some way prior to program. But several shared that participation has encouraged them to think about how their involvements might grow or change. They were asking themselves new questions about how they might become more involved with their children's schools. Michelle stated:

> I also see areas that need support that I probably wouldn't've typically thought about supporting... Maybe spearheading, I've always wanted to do this, spearheading a, …teacher appreciation week or something, something to appreciate the teachers that will go a week long. Where they may have people in the building that may do a movie with

the 5th grade so the teachers can go and get a hand massage. You know, having little gifts that may have been donated so they can take little tokens home. Just something to get them excited.

Here again, how much follow through on these ideas developed is not known, and how a wider set of parents might be influenced is an important question going forward.

The Potential of the Community Reviewer Program Strategy and Model

The involvement of up to 500 parent and community reviewers argues that the program succeeded in motivating and engaging a great many urban parents who might, going forward, become involved in other parent involvement activities, including more recognized in-home and at-school activities, and/or activities that pressure schools to improve. Findings from the study suggest that the approach to parent involvement adopted by ESD and the CRP might work as both a welcoming yet powerful gateway to parent involvement in schools. Data from the study sample of parents suggests that the program succeeded in developing a stronger orientation to learn more about their children's schools and a greater sense of empowerment about asking questions of schools and making school choices. Additionally, the involvement of community leaders in the CRP led to the development of other, local, neighborhood and citywide programs of parent involvement and school improvement, adding to the total possible influences and outcomes of the program.

These new understandings and capabilities meant that parents also gained skills for navigating school choice processes – an important and intended outcome. The CRP was a resource that parents could utilize to better understand school quality and the school choice process in Detroit. The program provided parents with access to transparent information, a set of guidelines, questions, and standards to utilize when assessing school quality and making school choice decisions

In the *Making School Choice Work* report, the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) (2014) found that parents in Detroit struggled to navigate the city's education marketplace due to "a lack of information, confusing paperwork, and transportation gaps" (p. 5). Parents reported that "You have to be a fighter" if you want to find a good school in Detroit because no one was there to help. This aligns with the experiences of participants in this study and is the primary reason that ESD created the Detroit Scorecard and the Community Reviewer Program. A community leader in Detroit described the school choice process as overwhelming for parents due to the lack of school performance information:

> One of the challenges for a Detroit family raising children in this city is a lack of transparency around school performance...It's going to be much more critical for parents to be able to get credible information now that we have lots of charters coming in and we have public schools chartering schools, and we have the statewide school district.

A parent in the Community Reviewer Program promotional video stated, "It's a little scary, especially for a parent, if you want to find the best school, you want to have options but you are not always sure."

Alternatively, it is right to consider ways in which the Program may not have significant effects. A possibility here is that, in its opening years of operation, the program did not actually generate and grow parent involvement as much as it effectively organized and harvested existing involved and engaged parents. ESD recruited a specific type of community member for the program:

> We are looking for parents and community members who care about education, who want to be a part of a longer-term movement to create great schools in Detroit, and who have already demonstrated leadership or whose leadership and talents you would like to develop (ESD, 2012, p. 1).

Most of the parents who participated in this study described themselves as already involved in schools, some of them extensively involved. A profile of their education and income levels show

them above the city average. In questionnaire data, many reported that their confidence and sense of efficacy for interacting with schools had not changed (though their interview data strongly suggested otherwise.) As ESD and CRP has not developed reliable data on the parents who have participated as reviewers, it cannot be known how many of the participating parents are already quite involved, such as Tanesha, and how many are very new to most kinds of involvement, such as Ebony.

The study also found that options for developing more bridging capital, specifically, more activity and connections between educators and parents, was a weak spot in the program. There were reasons to not involve educators in the program – it was reported that educators often felt defensive and in conflict with parents; leaving educators out of the program was perceived by some as critical to engaging parents and allowing them to develop new skills and more confidence. The downside was that the program did not create spaces for educators and parent and community reviewers to talk and collaborate. The lack of direct experiences with educators might mean that parents find it more difficult to follow through on their ideas and commitments outside the structures of the program and on their own with their children's school leaders and teachers.

Implications for Practice

A Note to Parent Involvement Programs

Observations and findings from this study suggest that programs and schools seeking to engage urban parents or other groups of racially diverse parents must first recognize that all parents, no matter their race, class, education, language, or culture, are assets and can contribute in positive ways. This should be a value and belief when working with urban parents and

creating involvement programs. Training and support should be provided for staff that lacks the ability to recognize this essential value.

Second, schools and programs must expand their beliefs about parental involvement. As discussed in the literature review and found in this study, urban parents often engage in forms of parent involvement that are not recognized by schools and school personnel. The urban parents in this study engaged in community-organizing, a type of at-school involvement that is not often recognized by schools. Additionally when asked how they would like to be involved with schools, many of the parents described alternative forms of involvement. The parents did not simply want to volunteer and attend parent teacher conferences and meetings, but they wanted to be involved in other ways. Urban schools must recognize and value the other ways that urban parents engage in their student's education.

Next, urban schools must recognize the needs of their parents and create programs and initiatives that are designed to meet those specific needs. Schools and programs might, for example, conduct focus groups with their targeted groups of parents to learn more about their strengths and needs. Additionally, parents from the targeted group should also be identified to support the program staff with the planning and implementation of the program. The parents should not act as advisors to the program, but should share responsibility for the planning and implementation with the program staff. These parents should be involved with the program from the early stages.

Sharing responsibility is also a component of successful programs that engage diverse groups of parents (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Henderson et al, 2007). By allowing parents the opportunity to help create the program, programs will create avenues for shared power and responsibility between programs and families. As previously discussed, existing research affirms

that programs that successfully engage diverse groups of parents hold themselves accountable for meeting the needs of those parents and create spaces where programs and parents share responsibilities and power (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Henderson et al, 2007; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

For programs and schools in suburban and rural school districts that wish to replicate this program, the same critical components should be utilized. They should also focus more heavily on involving schools in the program by creating processes that ensure that schools and parents communicate and collaborate to utilize the participants' recommendation to improve the schools. This will create a mechanism for addressing and improving bridging capital between parents and schools. This was weakness of the Community Reviewer Program that must be addressed when replicating the program.

A Note to Excellent Schools Detroit and the Community Reviewer Program

Data Collection and Program Evaluation

The Community Reviewer Program, or programs that seek to replicate it in some fashion, should develop ongoing data on school reviewers and schools that participate. There is a large gap in the data collection for the program that makes it difficult to evaluate whether the program is successful and reaches its goals. Additionally, ESD should complete a program evaluation to see if the program is reaching its intended goals. After three years of operating the program, there was very little documentation of participation rates and whether the program met its intended goals.

Target a Different Group of Community Members

Our Schools is now filling the gap for building the education capacity of community leaders and creating collective power among those members. Their target audience is community leaders, parents, and community organizations. Their website states:

> We are neighborhood organizations, parents, and youth committed to ensuring that all Detroit children have access to an excellent education, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. Together, we are building power to make systemic change and win educational justice for our communities.

Due to Our Schools focus, ESD should shift its target audience and try to engage urban parents who are not community leaders and who have not effectively been involved and engaged with their children's schools. This population of parents can benefit greatly from the program and truly become more empower and more involved with their children's schools.

Share Power and Responsibility with Participants

Although the program gives parents the opportunity to gain more power and a voice in education reform in Detroit, it still does not share power and responsibility with participants. Former participants and team leaders should have the opportunity to assist the program staff with the planning and implementation of the program going forward. These groups have frontline experience with the schools, neighborhoods, and other community members that can help improve the program and assure that it reaches its goals. Additionally their participation will help ensure that the program continues to be geared toward meeting the needs of the community.

Also, ESD should eventually allow a few of the stronger community organizations to conduct and run the program. This will allow the program to truly be a product of the Detroit community and empower the community to have a true voice, power, and responsibility in education reform in Detroit.

Improve Bridging Capital

The bridging capital in the CRP was not very strong due to the lack of genuine involvement by school personnel. It could be improved if the program involved school personnel more and created spaces for school personnel and community reviewers to exchange dialogue and collaborate. The collaboration could be about the suggestions for improvement that community reviewers made during schools visits. Community reviewers and school personnel could work collaboratively to make the improvements in the schools. This will enhance the program's bridging capital and allow for better partnerships and relationships between urban parents and urban schools.

Combat the School Choice Marketplace in Detroit

In order to address the immediate need of helping parents navigate the chaotic school choice marketplace in Detroit, ESD could strengthen the program around this need. In this case, the program could seek to engage parents who are actively in the process of making school choice decisions. The revised program could continue to train parents to assess the quality of schools and conduct school reviews. However, it could also add a one-on-one guiding component that helps parents create a list of their top schools then use the same model to train parents to assess the quality of those schools. It should also add a section to the rubric that is specific to the parent's needs such transportation, special education, sports, and other extracurricular activities.

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Implications for Further Research

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Urban Parents are Diverse Groups

The diversity among families in urban schools is often a school's greatest challenge and greatest strength. Unfortunately, when we read about urban parents in education literature, many

researchers describe them as a uniform group who has very few differences. The assumption is often that urban parents are poor, minority, and do not value education. However, few studies examine the diversity that exists within groups of urban parents. It is critical that future research examines these diverse groups of urban parents and tell their stories and give them a voice and a space in education literature.

The Untold Counter-Stories

Urban parents are often characterized as parents who do not value education and are not involved with their children's schools. Through this study, I discovered several cases of urban parents from different education and income levels who are very involved with their children's schools. However, few studies actually profile and discuss urban parents who are poor, minority, and very involved with their children's schools or urban parents who are middle class, minority, and involved with their children's schools. Critical race theory can be used as framework to examine these group's experiences and to tell their counter stories.

Critical race theory provides a space to conduct and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Current parent involvement literature upholds deficit, racialized notions about people of color. As previously stated, the grand narrative of urban parent involvement is that they are not involved with in their children's education. Critical race methodology provides a tool to "counter" this deficit narrative and storytelling (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical race methodology in education challenges traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color. It exposes deficit-informed research and methods that silence and distort the experiences of people of color and instead creates a space for and focuses on their experiences as sources of strength and solutions (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

One critical race method presented by Solorzano & Yosso (2002) that can be utilized are counter stories. Counter-stories are methods of telling stories of people whose experiences are not often told because they are marginalized by society. It is a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian theories and stories (Yosso, 2007). Counter-stories need to be created only as a response to majoritarian stories. Within the histories and lives of people of color, there are numerous unheard counter-stories including those of urban parents who are heavily involved with their children's schools. Future studies should examine the counter-stories of urban parent involvement.

Conclusion

This descriptive, embedded case study examined a novel parent involvement program in Detroit that has successfully engaged over 500 parents and community members. Specifically, this study described the Community Reviewer Program and examined how participation in the program influenced parents' interactions with schools. The study collected and utilized in-depth interviews, questionnaires, participant observations, and document analysis as sources of data.

The Community Reviewer Program reflected a theory of action and program model where transparent information, new experiences with schools, and new relationships and interactions with others build parent's social capital and empowers them to make more informed school choice decisions and pressure schools to be more responsive and accountable.
The program only met one of its two primary goals. It successfully improved how parents make school choice decisions, but it did not successfully force schools to be more responsive and accountable to the Detroit community. Although early findings reveal that parents and community leaders have formed a formal network to continue community organizing and to begin to hold schools more accountable. It is too early to determine what the activities and

impact of the Our Schools network will be. Therefore, during this study the program only partially met the second, community level goal of creating a powerbase of parents to hold schools accountable for low achievement. Although there is a formal new powerbase of parents, Detroit schools are still not accountable or under more pressure to perform better. Therefore it can be concluded that the program did not cause schools to be held more accountable to improve.

Findings revealed that the program was successful at engaging over 500 community reviewers because it recognized urban parents as assets rather than liabilities, was designed to meet the specific needs of the Detroit community, and expanded beyond school-centered involvement techniques. Unfortunately, most schools and parent involvement programs do not have these characteristic and struggle to effectively engage urban parents.

Lastly, it was found that the Community Reviewer Program did not improve parents' traditional involvement activities such as volunteering at the school or attending PTA meetings. Only one parents reported that they visited the school more frequently as a result of participation in the program. However, it did enhance other useful knowledge and skills that participants can utilize when interacting with schools. Specifically, participation confirmed participants' beliefs and definitions of a good school and enhanced their social capital and dispositions for involvement.

If the program truly desires to increase urban parent involvement, a major shift needs to occur. To do this, the program should involve parents and community members who are not currently engaged and involved in Detroit. By reaching and engaging this population, the program will be better able to accomplish the goal of increasing urban parent involvement at schools.

Although CRP did not accomplish all of its goals, the program still successfully engaged

over 500 parents and community leaders in Detroit. In the program video, the CEO of ESD

stated:

> These were everyday average Detroiters from the faith community, to the corporate
> community, to parents whose kids are in school to former educators...This is the Detroit
> community coming together to take ownership of our schools not for the purpose of
> defending them from outsiders and critics. Rather, this is Detroiters taking ownership of
> our schools because we love our children.

APPENDICES

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement and Sample Practices

Table A.1

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement and Sample Practices

Type 1: Parenting
Helping all families establish home environments to support children as students.

Sample Practices
• Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy). • Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services. • Home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school.

Type 2: Communicating
Designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

Sample Practices
• Conferences with every parent at least once a year. • Language translators to assist families as needed. • Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications

Type 3: Volunteering
Recruiting and organizing parent help and support.

Sample Practices
• School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents. • Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, resources for families. • Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.

Type 4: Learning At Home
Providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

Sample Practices
• Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade. • Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home • Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.

Table A.1 (cont'd)

Type 5: Decision Making
Including parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

Sample Practices
• Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees for parent leadership and participation.   • Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements.   • Networks to link all families with parent representatives.

Type 6: Collaborating with Community
Identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Sample Practice
• Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational,   • social support, and other programs or services. Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students.   • Service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g. recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities for seniors or others).

APPENDIX B

Excellent Schools Detroit Scorecard Methodology

Table A.2

Excellent Schools Detroit Scorecard Methodology

Elementary and Middle Schools (Kindergarten-8th grade)	
Academic Status *10 pts:* percent of students proficient in Math (MEAP two year average) *10 pts:* percent of students proficient in ELA (reading + writing) (MEAP two year average) *10 pts:* percent of students proficient in Science and Social Studies (MEAP two year average) **TOTAL: 30 points available**	**Academic Progress** *20 pts:* percent of students making progress year over year in Math & Reading (MEAP two year average) *20 pts:* percent of students meeting one year growth targets (NWEA/Scantron) **TOTAL: 40 points available**
School Climate *15 pts:* Community-led site visits *10 pts:* 5E Student & Teacher Survey Net Score *5 pts:* 5E Student & Teacher Survey Annual Improvement Score (Improvement points available for schools that have taken the survey two consecutive years) **TOTAL: 30 points available**	
Extra Credit *Up to 10 pts:* English language learners (ELL), free or reduced price lunch (FRL), and/or receiving special education services (SPED) **Up to 10 points available for schools that participate in all other measures**	

High Schools (9th-12th grade)	
Academic Status *20 pts:* ACT Composite (two year average) *15 pts:* Percent College Ready based on ACT score of 21 (two year average) *15 pts:* Graduation Rate (2011-12) **TOTAL: 50 points available**	**Academic Progress** *20 pts:* Year over year ACT Composite (two year average) **TOTAL: 20 points available**
School Climate *15 pts:* Community-led Site Visits *10 pts:* 5E Student & Teacher Survey Net Score *5 pts:* 5E Student & Teacher Survey Annual Improvement Score (for those schools that have taken the survey two years in a row) **TOTAL: 30 points available**	
Extra Credit *Up to 6 pts:* English language learners (ELL), free or reduced price lunch (FRL), and/or receiving special education services (SPED) *Up to 4 pts:* FAFSA completion above 70% **Up to 10 points available for schools that participate in all other measures**	

APPENDIX C

Participant Recruitment Flyer
Interest in Being a Participant

You are being asked to participate in a research study that seeks to understand parent's experiences with their children's schools. The purpose of this research study is to better understand how to engage parents in their children's schools. You will be asked to participate in 2 one hour and a half interviews and answer questions about your experiences with your child's school.

Name_____

Email_____

Primary Phone_____

Secondary Phone_____

Is this your first time participating as a reviewer in the Community Reviewer Site Visits?

YES   NO

Are you currently raising children under age 18?   YES   NO

	Grade	What city is the school in?
Child 1		
Child 2		
Child 3		
Child 4		
Child 5		
Child 6		
Child 7		

What dates and times are you available for an interview? The interview will last for about an hour and a half.

Why did you want to become a community reviewer for ESD?

APPENDIX D

Research and Interview Question Matrix

Table A.3

Research and Interview Question Matrix

Research Question	Interview Question

How does participation in the program influence urban parents' experiences and interactions with their children's schools?	• Tell me about yourself.
	  o Where are you from? What schools did you attend?
	  o Would you describe yourself as someone who liked school?
	• Can you describe your children's social and academic experiences in schools?
	  o What schools do your children attend?
	  o How old are your children?
	  o What grades are they in?
	  o What schools do they attend?
	  o How and why did you select those schools?

How does participation in the program influence urban parents' experiences and interactions with their children's schools?	• What are your interactions like with your child's school?
	• How would you describe your involvement in your child's education?
	  o Describe your involvement at home.
	  o Describe your involvement at school.
	• Can you describe to me the last interaction you had with a teacher? An administrator?

Does it affect their thinking about what constitutes a good school for their child?	• Describe what you believe a good school is, or a good school for their children is?
	• Would you like to be more involved at your child's school? If so, can you explain what types of involvement interest you and why?
	  o What steps do you think you would have to take in order to be involved in this way?
	  o Are you satisfied with your child's school?
	  o What types of knowledge and experiences do they feel will support them to be more a) interested and b) comfortable c) involved

Does participation in the program affect parent's interest and confidence in being involved with their children's schools?	• Would you like to be more involved at your child's school? If so, can you explain what types of involvement interest you and why? o What steps do you think you would have to take in order to be involved in this way?
Does participation in the program affect parent's interest and confidence in being involved with their children's schools?	• What barriers and/or supports influence your involvement with your child's schools? • Do you think people at this school see you as someone who can be involved and contribute?

Table A.3 (cont'd)

How do parents describe their experience participating in the parent involvement program?	• What are your initial thoughts about the School Quality Review process? • Prior to your participation in the School Quality Review process, what did you expect to learn? ○ What did you want to gain from the experience?
What sorts of knowledge, skill and dispositions do they report acquiring?	• Do you feel you gained new knowledge and skills from the experience? If so, could you describe the types of knowledge and skills you feel you gain. *(Tell them to its okay to say no)* • Do you feel you gained new points of view or new dispositions from the experience? Can you describe them to me? ○ Can you think about what parts of the experience most helped you develop new knowledge, skills or dispositions?
How do parents describe their experience participating in the parent involvement program?	• What are your initial thoughts about the School Quality Review process? • Prior to your participation in the School Quality Review process, what did you expect to learn? ○ What did you want to gain from the experience? •
What sorts of knowledge, skill and dispositions do they report acquiring?	• Do you feel you gained new knowledge and skills from the experience? If so, could you describe the types of knowledge and skills you feel you gain. *(Tell them to its okay to say no)* • Do you feel you gained new points of view or new dispositions from the experience? Can you describe them to me? ○ Can you think about what parts of the experience most helped you develop new knowledge, skills or dispositions?
How do parents describe their experience participating in the parent involvement program?	• What did you most want to know about the schools you visited? Why? • What did you find yourself noticing most about the schools? ○ What questions/topics were the most important to you? • What most surprised you about the schools you visited? • What surprised you most about your reactions? • What challenged you most as a community reviewer?
Does it affect their thinking about what constitutes a good school for their child?	• Describe what you believe a good school is, or a good school for their children is? (Read their description from the prior interview and ask if it has changed)

Table 4.3 (cont'd)

Does participation in the program affect parent's interest and confidence in being involved with their children's schools?	• Did the experience change the way you feel about your children's schools? If so, can you explain these changes to me
	   o Did it change the way you feel about yourself in relation to the schools?
	   o Do you feel more comfortable and confident interacting with leaders and teachers in schools and other parents?

Does participation in the program affect parent's interest and confidence in being involved with their children's schools?	• Did the experience change the way you feel about your children's schools? If so, can you explain these changes to me
	   o Did it change the way you feel about yourself in relation to the schools?
	   o Do you feel more comfortable and confident interacting with leaders and teachers in schools and other parents?
	• Efficacy scale

How does participation in the program influence urban parents' experiences and interactions with their children's schools?	• Do you think this experience will help you overcome the barriers you described in your previous interview? (If applicable) • What do you think the next steps should be for you and for schools? o Would you like to be more involved with schools? If so, how?

APPENDIX E

Pre-and Post Interview Questions

Pre-Interview Questions:

Life History/ Background
1. Tell me about yourself.
    a. Where are you from? What schools did you attend?
    b. Would you describe yourself as someone who liked school?
2. Can you describe your children's social and academic experiences in schools?
    a. What schools do your children attend?
    b. How old are your children?
    c. What grades are they in?
    d. What schools do they attend?
    e. How and why did you select those schools?

Interactions with Schools
1. What are your interactions like with your child's school?
2. How would you describe your involvement in your child's education?
    a. Describe your involvement at home.
    b. Describe your involvement at school.
3. Can you describe to me the last interaction you had with a teacher? An administrator?
4. Would you like to be more involved at your child's school? If so, can you explain what types of involvement interest you and why?
    a. What steps do you think you would have to take in order to be involved in this way?
5. What barriers and/or supports influence your involvement with your child's schools?
6. Do you think people at this school see you as someone who can be involved and contribute?
7. Are you satisfied with your child's school?

Community Reviewer Program
1. Why did you apply to be a community reviewer?
2. Can you describe your experience as a community reviewer?
    a. Discuss the community reviewer training.
    b. Discuss your interactions with ESD staff.
3. What do you most want to learn/know about schools in Detroit?
    a. What questions would you like to have answered?

Community Reviewer Program Participation
1. What are your initial thoughts about the School Quality Review process?
2. Prior to your participation in the School Quality Review process, what did you expect to learn?
    a. What did you want to gain from the experience?
3. Can you describe your experience as a community reviewer?
    a. What schools did you go visit?
    b. Who was your team leader?

    c. What types of interactions did you have with the school staff?
    d. What types of interactions did you have with the other community reviewers?
4. What did you most want to know about the schools you visited? Why?
5. What did you find yourself noticing most about the schools?
    a. What questions/topics were the most important to you?
6. What most surprised you about the schools you visited?
7. What surprised you most about your reactions?
8. What challenged you most as a community reviewer?
9. What was missing from schools and/or the School Quality Review that you wanted to see?
10. Did the experience change the way you feel about your children's schools?
11. What benefits did you gain from the experience?
    a. Did it change the way you feel about yourself in relation to the schools?
    b. Do you feel more comfortable interacting with schools?
12. Do you think this experience with help you overcome the barriers you described in your previous interview? (If applicable)
13. What do you think the next steps should be?
    a. Would you like to be more involved with schools? If so, how?

<u>Post Interview Questions:</u>

1. Prior to your participation in the School Quality Review process, what did you expect to learn?
    a. What did you want to gain from the experience?
    b. What did you most want to know about schools in Detroit?
2. What are your initial thoughts about the School Quality Review process?
3. Can you describe your experience as a community reviewer?
    a. What schools did you go visit?
        i. What did you like/dislike about the schools?
        ii. Can you tell me a positive story about the schools you visited?
        iii. Can you tell me a negative story about the schools you visited?
    b. Who was your team leader? What were your interactions like with your team leader?
    c. What types of interactions did you have with the school staff?
        i. Can you tell me about a positive interaction you had with school staff?
        ii. Can you tell me about a negative interaction you had with school staff?
    d. What types of interactions did you have with the other community reviewers?
        i. Can you describe a positive interaction you had with the other community reviewers?
        ii. Can you describe a negative interaction you had with the other community reviewers?
4. What did you most want to know about the schools you visited? Why?
5. What did you find yourself noticing most about the schools?
    a. What questions/topics were the most important to you?
6. What most surprised you about the schools you visited? Why?
7. What surprised you most about your reactions?
8. What challenged you most as a community reviewer? Why?

9. What was missing from the School Quality Review that you wanted to see?
10. Do you feel you gained new knowledge and skills from the experience? If so, could you describe the types of knowledge and skills you feel you gain. *(Tell them to its okay to say no)*
11. Do you feel you gained new points of view or new dispositions from the experience? Can you describe them to me?
   a. Can you think about what parts of the experience most helped you develop new knowledge, skills or dispositions?
12. Did the experience change the way you feel about your children's schools? If so, can you explain these changes?
   a. Did it change the way you feel about yourself in relation to the schools?
   b. Do you feel more comfortable and confident interacting with leaders and teachers in schools and other parents?
13. Do you think this experience will help you overcome the barriers you described in your previous interview? (If applicable)
14. What do you think the next steps should be?
   a. For yourself?
   b. For the schools?
   c. Would you like to be more involved with schools? If so, how?
15. Describe what you believe a good school is, or a good school for their children is? (Read their description from the prior interview and ask if it has changed; use it only if I need to)
16. Did your involvement with your kids education change or will it change? Do you see yourself doing things differently with your kid's education at home and at school?
   a. Describe your current involvement at home.
   b. Describe your current involvement at school.
17. Did your involvement with community organizations change or will it change?
18. Will your methods change for making decisions about what schools to send your children to?
19. Will you continue to send your children to the same schools? Please explain why or why not.
20. If you had to do it again, would you send your children to their current schools?

APPENDIX F

Community Reviewer Application Form

Name:
Email:
Phone Number:
Home Address:
The best way to contact you is: ___Phone   ___Email

Tell us about you!!!

1. Birth Year (optional) _____

2. Race (optional) _____

3. Who are you?
___Parent or guardian of a child who has or is currently attending school in Detroit
___Grandparent of a child who is currently attending school in Detroit
___Employee of a Detroit-based organization
___Volunteer of a Detroit-based organization
___None of the above

4. How far did you go in school?
___Some high school, did not complete
___GED
___High school diploma
___Some College, did not complete
___Associate's Degree
___Bachelor's Degree
___Master's or above

5. The high school you attended was (please circle one)
Public   Private   Charter
High School Name: _____   City _____

6. Have you ever worked at a school in Detroit?   YES   NO
If yes, which school(s)? _____
During which years _____

7. Have you ever volunteered at a school in Detroit?   YES   NO
If yes, which school(s)? _____
During which years _____

8. Do you think Detroit has (please choose one):
___Lots of quality schools
___About half bad schools, half good schools
___Mostly bad schools with a few good ones

9. What do you think are the **TWO** most important components of a strong school?
___Effective leaders (principals and school leadership teams)
___Collaborative teachers
___Involved families and community
___Safe and supportive school environment
___Ambitious curriculum

10. Do you have reliable access to a car?   YES   NO

Tell us about your kids!!!

The kids who are still in school:
Child #1:   Age _____   School _____
Child #2:   Age _____   School _____
Child #3:   Age _____   School _____
Child #4:   Age _____   School _____
Child #5:   Age _____   School _____
Child #6:   Age _____   School _____

The kids who already graduated:
Child #1:   Year graduated _____   School _____
Child #2:   Year graduated _____   School _____
Child #3:   Year graduated _____   School _____
Child #4:   Year graduated _____   School _____
Child #5:   Year graduated _____   School _____
Child #6:   Year graduated _____   School _____

Or, if you are an active grandparent, tell us about your school-age grandchildren:
Grandchild #1:   Age _____   School _____
Grandchild #2:   Age _____   School _____
Grandchild #3:   Age _____   School _____
Grandchild #4:   Age _____   School _____
Grandchild #5:   Age _____   School _____
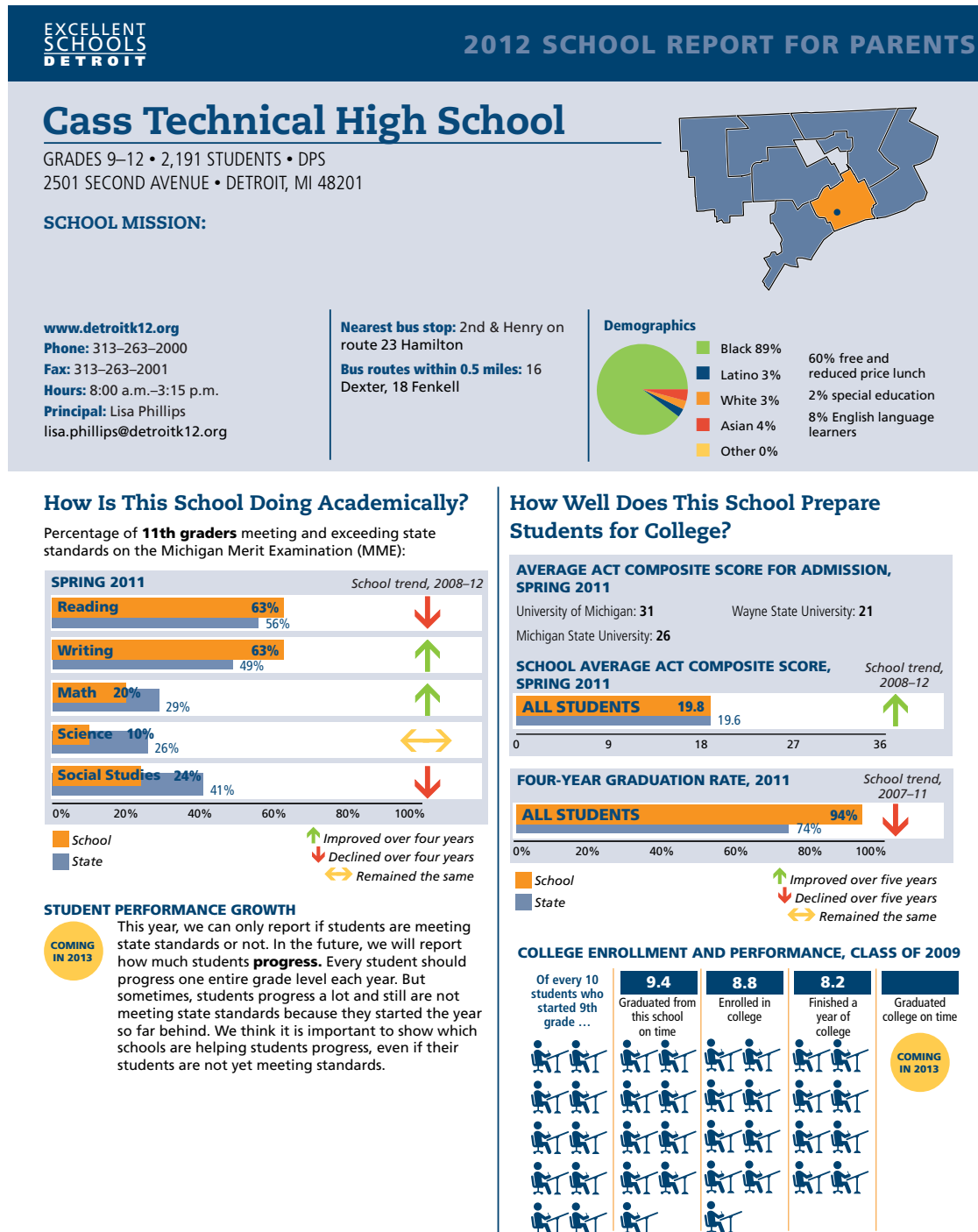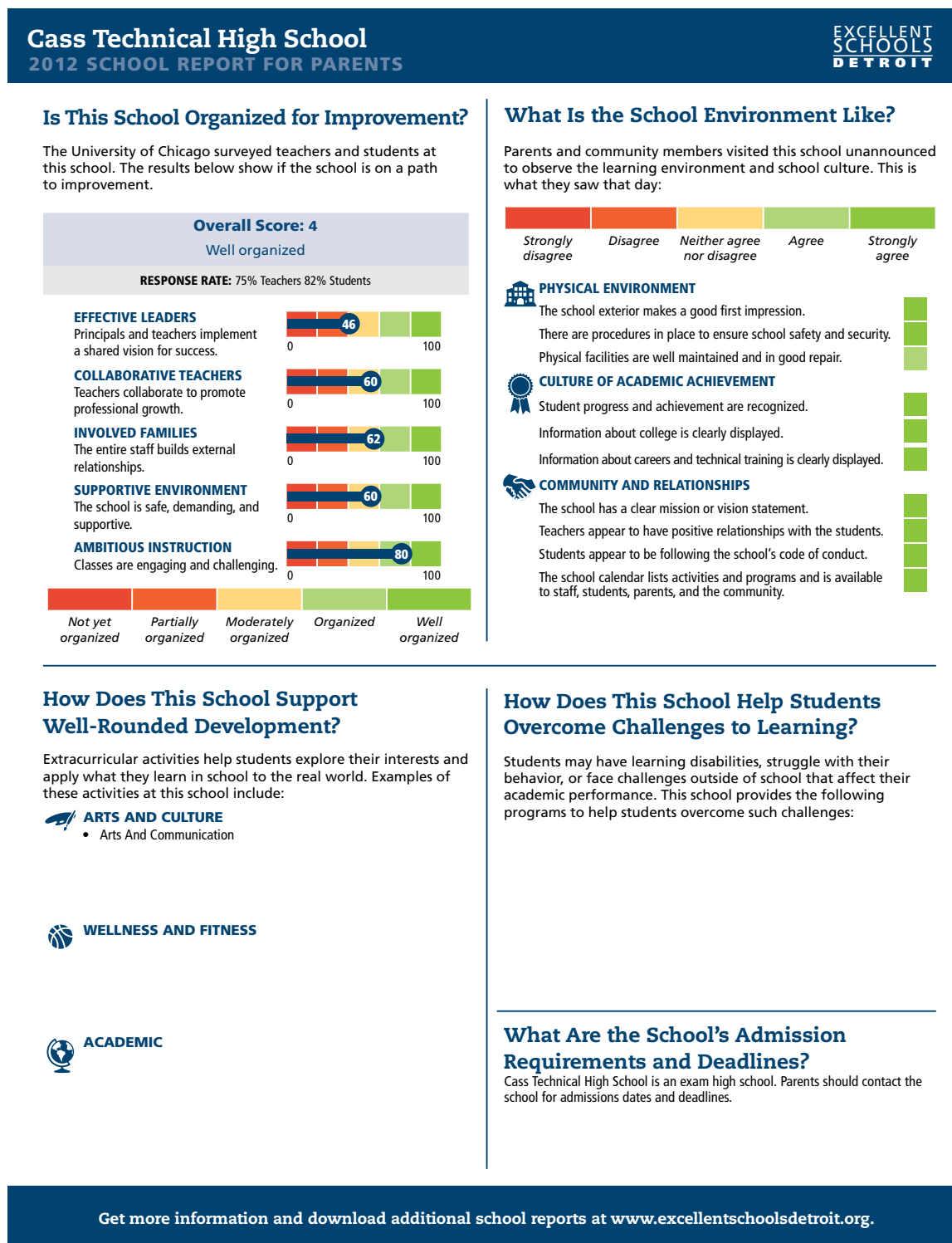Grandchild #6:   Age _____   School _____

Sample Detroit School Scorecard

Figure A.1 Sample Detroit School Scorecard

Figure A.1 (cont'd)

Is This School Organized for Improvement?

The University of Chicago surveyed teachers and students at this school. The results below show if the school is on a path to improvement.

Overall Score: 4
Well organized

RESPONSE RATE: 75% Teachers 82% Students

EFFECTIVE LEADERS
Principals and teachers implement a shared vision for success.
46
0   100

COLLABORATIVE TEACHERS
Teachers collaborate to promote professional growth.
60
0   100

INVOLVED FAMILIES
The entire staff builds external relationships.
62
0   100

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT
The school is safe, demanding, and supportive.
60
0   100

AMBITIOUS INSTRUCTION
Classes are engaging and challenging.
80
0   100

Not yet organized | Partially organized | Moderately organized | Organized | Well organized

What Is the School Environment Like?

Parents and community members visited this school unannounced to observe the learning environment and school culture. This is what they saw that day:

Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
The school exterior makes a good first impression.
There are procedures in place to ensure school safety and security.
Physical facilities are well maintained and in good repair.

CULTURE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
Student progress and achievement are recognized.
Information about college is clearly displayed.
Information about careers and technical training is clearly displayed.

COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS
The school has a clear mission or vision statement.
Teachers appear to have positive relationships with the students.
Students appear to be following the school's code of conduct.
The school calendar lists activities and programs and is available to staff, students, parents, and the community.

How Does This School Support Well-Rounded Development?

Extracurricular activities help students explore their interests and apply what they learn in school to the real world. Examples of these activities at this school include:

ARTS AND CULTURE
• Arts And Communication

WELLNESS AND FITNESS

ACADEMIC

How Does This School Help Students Overcome Challenges to Learning?

Students may have learning disabilities, struggle with their behavior, or face challenges outside of school that affect their academic performance. This school provides the following programs to help students overcome such challenges:

What Are the School's Admission Requirements and Deadlines?

Cass Technical High School is an exam high school. Parents should contact the school for admissions dates and deadlines.

Get more information and download additional school reports at www.excellentschoolsdetroit.org.

APPENDIX H

School Visit Observation Forms

<u>Community Reviewer Notetaker</u>

_____
School Name

_____
Review Data

_____
Team Number

_____
Community Reviewer Name (first and last)

_____
Community Reviewer Number

School Surroundings

What is your impression?	
What did you see, hear and smell?	Is this evidence related to one of the following? ❏ Safe & Caring Environment ❏ High Expectations for Learning ❏ Welcoming School Community ❏ Safe & Caring Environment ❏ High Expectations for Learning ❏ Welcoming School Community ❏ Safe & Caring Environment ❏ High Expectations for Learning ❏ Welcoming School Community ❏ Safe & Caring Environment ❏ High Expectations for Learning ❏ Welcoming School Community ❏ Safe & Caring Environment ❏ High Expectations for Learning ❏ Welcoming School Community

Checklist			
	YES	NO	N/A
The parking lot is free of trash.			
The main entrance is clearly indicated.			
The school's outdoor signs are visible and in good repair.			
The school grounds are well maintained.			
The school exterior is in good repair.			

Main Entrance & Main Office

What is your impression?

What did you see, hear and smell?	Is this evidence related to one of the following?
	❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community

Checklist			
	YES	NO	N/A
The outside of the main entryway appears well maintained.			
The main entryway is staffed or has an electronic entry system.			
The inside of the main entryway appears well maintained.			
Visitors are greeted and directed in a polite manner upon immediate entry or being "buzzed in".			
Upon entering, there are immediately visible signs (or a person) that direct visitors toward the office.			
The school office and reception area are orderly and free of clutter.			

The main office is clearly identified.			
The main office has copies of the most recent parent newsletter or parent information sheets.			
The most recent parent newsletter/info sheet was published within the last 3 months.			
Upon request, visitors are provided information about student achievement.			
Parent materials are provided in multiple languages.			

Common Areas (Hallways, Restrooms, Cafeteria, Auditorium)

What is your impression?	
What did you see, hear and smell?	Is this evidence related to one of the following? ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community

Checklist			
	YES	NO	N/A
Stairways and hallways are well maintained (adequately lit, in good repair, and free of graffiti and litter).			
Lockers are clean and in good repair.			
Food provided in cafeteria appears nutritious and well prepared.			

Food service areas appear clean and tidy.			
Restrooms are clean, functional, accessible, and adequately stocked with supplies.			
Drinking fountains are clean, functional, and accessible.			
A space is dedicated to address family or community needs (community closet, parent room, bulletin board, health clinic, section of library, etc.).			
There are public displays of student work (other than standardized testing scores).			
There are images of role models and cultural works.			

Shared Learning Spaces (Library, Media Center, Art/Music Room, Science Lab)

What is your impression?			
What did you see, hear and smell?	**Is this evidence related to one of the following?** ❏ Safe & Caring Environment ❏ High Expectations for Learning ❏ Welcoming School Community ❏ Safe & Caring Environment ❏ High Expectations for Learning ❏ Welcoming School Community ❏ Safe & Caring Environment ❏ High Expectations for Learning ❏ Welcoming School Community ❏ Safe & Caring Environment ❏ High Expectations for Learning ❏ Welcoming School Community ❏ Safe & Caring Environment ❏ High Expectations for Learning ❏ Welcoming School Community		
Checklist			
	YES	NO	N/A
Periodicals in the library or media center include issues from within the last 3 months.			

Books and materials in the library/media center are in reasonable condition.				
Computers appear to be in working order.				
There is a space for fine-arts instruction				
There is a gym available to students				
There is at least one science lab				
The library or media center provides college-going resources (e.g., lists of colleges, college majors, scholarships, etc.)				
The library or media center provides age-appropriate career guidance (books, resources, information).				

Classroom #1 (if invited)

What is your impression?	
What did you see, hear and smell?	**Is this evidence related to one of the following?**
	❑ Safe & Caring Environment
	❑ High Expectations for Learning
	❑ Welcoming School Community
	❑ Safe & Caring Environment
	❑ High Expectations for Learning
	❑ Welcoming School Community
	❑ Safe & Caring Environment
	❑ High Expectations for Learning
	❑ Welcoming School Community
	❑ Safe & Caring Environment
	❑ High Expectations for Learning
	❑ Welcoming School Community
	❑ Safe & Caring Environment
	❑ High Expectations for Learning
	❑ Welcoming School Community

Checklist				
	YES	NO	N/A	
The temperature is within normally accepted ranges				
Classroom is free of clutter				
Classroom furniture is in good repair				
Classroom displays examples of student work				
Classroom prominently displays the current day's/period's activities				
The teacher's degrees or college information are posted inside or immediately outside the classroom.				

Classroom #2 (if invited)

What is your impression?	
What did you see, hear and smell?	Is this evidence related to one of the following? ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community

Checklist				
	YES	NO	N/A	
The temperature is within normally accepted ranges				

Classroom is free of clutter				
Classroom furniture is in good repair				
Classroom displays examples of student work				
Classroom prominently displays the current day's/period's activities				
The teacher's degrees or college information are posted inside or immediately outside the classroom.				

Classroom #3 (if invited)

What is your impression?	
What did you see, hear and smell?	Is this evidence related to one of the following? ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community ❑ Safe & Caring Environment ❑ High Expectations for Learning ❑ Welcoming School Community
Checklist	

	YES	NO	N/A	
The temperature is within normally accepted ranges				
Classroom is free of clutter				
Classroom furniture is in good repair				
Classroom displays examples of student work				

Classroom prominently displays the current day's/period's activities				
The teacher's degrees or college information are posted inside or immediately outside the classroom.				

APPENDIX I

The Community Reviewer Final Rubric

Figure A.2 The Community Reviewer Final Rubric

*Figure A.2 (*cont'd)

Common Areas (Hallways, Restrooms, Cafeteria, Auditorium)	YES	NO	N/A
Stairways and hallways are well maintained (adequately lit, in good repair, and free of graffiti and litter).			
Food provided in cafeteria appears nutritious and well prepared.			
Food service areas appear clean and tidy.			
A space is dedicated to address family or community needs (community closet, parent room, bulletin board, health clinic, section of library, etc.).			
There are public displays of student work (other than standardized testing scores).			
There are images of role models and cultural works.			

Common Areas (Hallways, Restrooms, Cafeteria, Auditorium)	# Observed	# Yes	# No
How many locker areas did you observe?		-----	-----
--- How many were/were not in good repair?	----		
How many drinking fountains did you observe?		-----	----
--- How many were clean, functional, and accessible?	----		
How many restrooms did you observe?		-----	----
--- How many were/were not clean and functional?	----		
--- How many were/were not adequately stocked with toilet paper and hand soap?	----		

Shared Learning Spaces (Library, Media Center, Art/Music Room, Science Lab, Gym)	Yes	No	N/A
The school has a library.			
The library has periodicals (newspapers, magazines, etc.).			
Periodicals in the library include issues from within the last 3 months.			
Books and materials in the library center are in reasonable condition.			
There is a media lab or a laptop cart with at least 20 computers.			
Computers appear to be in working order.			
The school provides a visual-arts instruction space (painting, sculpture, etc.).			
The school provides a music/band instruction space.			
The school provides an auditorium for drama/theater.			
The school provides a gym for exercise/athletic instruction.			
There is at least one science lab.			
The library, media center, OR classrooms provide college-going resources (e.g., lists of colleges, college majors, scholarships, etc.).			
The library, media center, OR classrooms provide age-appropriate career guidance (e.g., books, resources, etc.).			

Classrooms:

This section asks about the classrooms you visited. For each question, please look at your note-taker and add up the total number of classrooms that you marked "Yes". Enter that number into the answer boxes below.

For how many classrooms was the following true?

	# Visited	# Yes	# No
The temperature is within normally accepted ranges.			
The classroom is free of clutter.			
Classroom furniture is in good repair.			
The classroom displays examples of student work.			
The classroom prominently displays the current day's/period's activities.			
College information and/or the teacher's university information are posted inside or immediately outside the classroom.			
The classroom has 3 or more computers.			
The classroom has its own library.			

*Figure A.2 (*cont'd)

Safe & Caring Environment:

Please share your observations on the first two questions. Then, for the rest of the questions, please tell us how much you agree with the following statements?

How many of the houses around the school seem to be lived in?	None, Some, Most, All
How much of the area or how many blocks surrounding the school seem safe and well maintained?	None, Some, Most, All
The school grounds are welcoming to students.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school's interior is positive for students.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
It appears that adults (staff, volunteers, etc.) care about the school's appearance.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
There are procedures in place to ensure school safety.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Teachers have positive interactions with students in classrooms.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Non-teaching staff has positive interactions with students.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Common areas display substantial social/emotional support options for students.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school displays positive images and role models that reasonably reflect the ethnic makeup of the student body.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Adults appear to care deeply about student well-being.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend other schools use this school as an excellent example of a safe & caring environment? *As a guideline, use the following statements to help you decide how to answer:* **Answer 1** if you would **never** recommend this school as an example of a safe & caring environment. This school doesn't seem at all safe and caring. **Answer between 2 and 4** if the school is generally **not a good example** of a safe and caring environment but it does have some strengths. **Answer 5** if this school is an OK example of a safe and caring environment, but the school could do much better. **Answer between 6 and 9** if the school seems to be a **good example** of a safe & caring environment but has some weaknesses. **Answer 10** if you think this school is the very **best example** of a safe & caring environment. There isn't anything you think they could do to make the school safer or more caring.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

High Expectations for Students

How much do you agree with the following statements?

The school displays its academic progress throughout the school (e.g., hallways, classrooms, etc.).	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Displays of academic progress are clearly labeled for parents and visitors to understand.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school celebrates individual student work in public displays throughout the school.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Displays of student work include descriptions of the topic and the quality of work.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Students are on-task and appear engaged in school activities.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school promotes a college-going culture.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school clearly displays information about college throughout the school.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school clearly displays information about a variety of career paths or technical trainings throughout the school.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school clearly displays a variety of enrichment courses and extra-curricular activities throughout the school.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend other schools use this school as an excellent example of having high expectations for students? *As a guideline, use the following statements to help you decide how to answer:* **Answer 1** if you would **never** recommend this school as an example of having high expectations for students. It doesn't appear to have high expectations of students at all. **Answer between 2 and 4** if this school is generally **not a good example** of setting high expectations for students, but it does have some strengths. **Answer 5** if this school is an **OK example** of setting high expectations, but it could do much better. **Answer between 6 and 9** if the school generally is a **good example** of setting high expectations for students, but it has some weaknesses. **Answer 10** if you think this school is the very **best example** of setting high expectations for students.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

*Figure A.2 (*cont'd)

Welcoming School Community

How much do you agree with the following statements?

There is a school-wide culture that supports the community.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Teachers are warm and welcoming toward visitors.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Non-teaching staff members are warm and welcoming toward visitors.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Visitors feel welcome and are not treated like they are a nuisance.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school clearly displays or distributes information for parents and visitors about recent news and student activities for parents.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school clearly displays or distributes information for parents and visitors about school policies.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Parents can get up-to-date information about student achievement at the school.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
Parent resources provided by the school are in languages that match the ethnic makeup of the students, families and community.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school publicly displays images or evidence of parent and/or family involvement.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
The school publicly displays information to support parents on a range of issues related to parenting and their child's education.	Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely
On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend other schools use this school as an excellent example of a welcoming school community? *As a guideline, use the following statements to help you decide how to answer:* **Answer 1** if you would never recommend this school as an example of a welcoming school community. It doesn't appear to be a welcoming school at all. **Answer between 2 and 4** if this school is generally **not a good example** of a welcoming school community, but it has some strengths. **Answer 5** if this school is an **OK example** of a welcoming school community, but it could do much better. **Answer between 6 and 9** if the school is generally a **good example** of a welcoming school community, but it has some weaknesses. **Answer 10** if you think this school is the **very best example** of a welcoming school community.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Thank you for your submission.

Your time and efforts are helping to improve schools for children in Detroit.

APPENDIX J

Research Participant Information and Consent Form-Survey

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

> *Study Title:* Involving Low-Income, Minority Parents in Schools: An Examination of a Parent Involvement in Program in Detroit
> *Researcher and Title:* Ashley Johnson, Doctoral Candidate
> *Department and Institution:* Department of Education Administration, Michigan State University
> *Address and Contact Information:* 555 Brush St, Detroit, MI 48226
> *Sponsor:* Bets Ann Smith, Ph.D.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH
You are being asked to participate in a research study of parent's experiences and participation with schools. The purpose of this research study is to better understand how to engage parents in their children's education. Particularly, this study examines the experiences of parents who participate in Excellent Schools Detroit's Site Visit Process. You have been selected as a possible participant because you are a participant in the Excellent Schools Detroit Site Visit program. From this study, the researcher hopes to learn about parent's perspectives regarding parental involvement with schools. Your participation in the surveys will take about 30 minutes for each survey.

WHAT YOU WILL DO
You will complete two surveys in which you will be asked to talk about your personal experiences with schools and with your child's schools. The first survey will occur during Site Visit program training and the second survey will occur after the program is complete, during the program debriefing. You will also be asked to talk about your experiences with Excellent Schools Detroit's Site Visit Process. The surveys will be completed for research purposes only, and the results will not be shared with anyone except the researcher and the participant.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
You will not directly benefit from participation in this study. However, your participation in this study will contribute to the understanding of the different experiences parents have when participating with schools. Your participation will also contribute to the understanding of factors that are related to parental involvement in schools. This research, along with future research, may increase our knowledge about ways to support parent and school relationships that can potentially benefit children, families, and schools in the future.

POTENTIAL RISKS
This study poses a minimal risk for you as a participant. You will be asked to answer questions about your thoughts and feelings about schools. Answering some of the questions may cause you to experience some discomfort or distress. You can skip any question that you do not want to respond to. Additionally, you may discontinue participation in the interview at anytime.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The data for this project will be kept confidential. No one will be able to link data to you or your child. With your permission, the interview will be recorded for future examination. After you complete the survey, an identification number will be assigned to the survey and your name will be removed from all paperwork. The surveys will be kept in a locked file cabinet, only accessible to the researcher. All documents will be destroyed three years after completion. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous. It will not be possible for readers to know who participated in the study.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study. Your withdraw will result in no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also choose not to answer a specific question or stop participating at any time. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this study will not make any difference in the quality of services that you will receive from Excellent Schools Detroit.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY

It does not cost anything to participate in this study. If you choose to participate in the survey you will be eligible to receive a $20 gift card for participating in this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researcher is an employee of Excellent Schools Detroit. However, this research is not affiliated with Excellent Schools Detroit and will not be shared with Excellent Schools Detroit in any way that will reveal your identity. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this study will not influence the quality of services that you will receive from Excellent Schools Detroit.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researchers:

Ashley Johnson
662-380-6522
555 Brush St
Detroit, MI 48226
John3253@msu.edu

BetsAnn Smith
517-353-8646
409 Erickson Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824
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If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 202 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

☐   Yes, I would like to participate in this research study

☐   No, I do not want to participate in this research study

_____   _____

Signature   Date

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

APPENDIX K

Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

Directions: *To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please circle the applicable response. Please use the following scale to assess the statements: Not at all, Somewhat, Mostly or Completely.*

Question	Not at all,	Somewhat,	Mostly	Completely
1. I feel confident that I know how to help my child do well in school.				
2. I feel confident that I make a significant difference in my child's school performance.				
3. I feel confident when communicating with my child's teachers.				
4. I feel confident when communicating with my child's principal.				
5. I feel confident when communicating with other parents at my child's school.				
6. I feel confident that my child's school values my involvement.				
7. I feel confident that I know how to identify a good school for my child.				
8. I feel confident that the school I selected for my child to attend is a great school.				
9. I feel confident about how to become involved at my child's school.				
10. I feel confident about voicing my opinion about my child's school or other schools in Detroit.				
11. I feel confident about making suggestion for improvement for my child's school or other schools in Detroit.				

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