TRANSFORMING SALVADORAN PARENTAL BEHAVIOR: DETERMINANTS AND OBSTACLES

A thesis presented
by
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to
The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
in the field of
Teaching, Curriculum, Learning and Leadership

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
Spring 2018
Abstract

El Salvador experiences a high incidence of community violence, crime, school dropout, and low school retention rates. Children and youth participating in gangs have lower levels of academic achievement in addition to the risk of injury or death. The purpose of this study was to better understand how Salvadoran parents view their experience in a program created to help equip them to more effectively raise their children, decreasing their children’s involvement in risky behaviors that are often associated with crime and violence. Parents, with guidance and training, can help their children develop coping mechanisms and strengthen support systems. The study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to identify key themes. The research approach that framed the study included Social Behavior Change Communication, adapted from Fishbein & Cappella’s (2006) work, which puts emphasis on identifying the key determinants and obstacles related to behavior change and Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler’s (1997, 2005) parental engagement framework. Parents often initially enrolled in the program out of curiosity or to learn specific techniques. They expected to receive information passively. Their views drastically changed after a few sessions in which they interacted with parent peers as a cohort. Parents recognized they may be causing harm and needed to change after exchanging individual stories and participating in role play scenarios. Emergent themes included the importance of communication through discussion and dialogue, recognizing the need for change (including perceptions of shame, aspiration, role, efficacy, and invitation), fear (including issues of gangs and control), and barriers to behavior change. The findings of this study provide insights linked to the personal experience of a small sample of program participants which can be used to inform implementers, donors/funders, school officials, and other
practitioners. However further research with a larger sample could both validate and expand on existing findings.

Keywords: parental engagement, crime and violence prevention, community outreach, El Salvador, Central America
Acknowledgements

Researching and writing this thesis has been a long process. I greatly appreciate all of the support that has been shown to me along the way. I would like to thank my committee — Dr. Kristal Clemons, Dr. Lynda Beltz, and Dr. Yolande Miller-Grandvaux — for the time and effort that they spent keeping me on track. I would also like to thank the participants for their time, patience, and understanding. And, of course, I would like to thank my family for their support and encouragement.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Study

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to garner insight into the essential content and structures of a program that effectively trains and builds capacity of parents to engage, increasing parental self-perceptions of efficacy of their own efforts in supporting their child’s academic development. In particular, this study sought to understand how a parental engagement program, like Thousand Hands (Miles de Manos in Spanish) was successful.

Program Background

The program was created to help equip parents to more effectively raise their children, decreasing their involvement in risky behaviors often associated with crime and violence. The program exists to help parents be an effective in strengthening support systems around their children. Parents, with guidance and training, can help their children develop coping mechanisms and critical thinking skills which lead to great youth resiliency and decreased vulnerability. As noted in the Miles de Manos Promise Study, “Youth violence in Central America (CA) stems from an array of complex and varied circumstances. Empirical studies point to several main correlates of violence in the region such as (1) drug trafficking; (2) social exclusion of male youth; (3) high incidence of domestic violence, which often manifests in elevated occurrences of gender-based violence; and other factors including poverty, political violence, lack of opportunities, and social isolation.” (Batz, Cáceres, Christ, Eddy, Esmail-Arndt, R., Flores, B., Flores, C., Martinez, C., McClure, H., & Ruth, B., 2016, p. 2).
The program was developed through academic research, much of it with experts from the University of Oregon’s Center for Equity Promotion. The program seeks to develop positive social factors in schools, communities, and families, often referred to as protective factors, and end violence perpetrated in any of these venues. In particular, the focus is on parents/guardians and educators. Presently the program is being implemented in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

This research sought to highlight the role of parental engagement programs generally, to encourage schools—especially those with a high incidence of community violence, crime, school dropout, and low school retention rates such as those found in El Salvador—to implement parental engagement programs that target parents of youth in neighborhoods with high rates of crime and gang activity. The goal was to better understand the essential content and structures of programs that most effectively train and build the capacity of parents to engage, increasing parental self-perceptions of efficacy of their own efforts in supporting their child’s non-participation in gangs while supporting their academic development.

El Salvador experiences a high level of gang-related violence. Gang participation by children and youth not only results in lower levels of academic achievement, but often their injury and/or death. As noted in USAID’s 2017 El Salvador Education Sector Assessment, “Among the causes of student homicide are: links with gangs; refusing to belong to a gang; or not paying extortion. On the other hand, teachers are killed for: being considered police informants; not paying extortion; or not altering the grades to the children of gang members” (López, 2016). Previous research in this area identified key drivers including displacement due to violence and the links between male school dropout and female led homes where mothers work and are not at home (Berk-Seligson, Orcés, Pizzolitto, Seligson, & Wilson, 2014). El
Salvador’s chronically high murder rate is often attributed to it having “the highest concentration of gang members per capita in Central America” (Seelke, 2017).

The theory of change for the Miles de Manos (MdM) project is that parents, if taught more effective approaches, could influence whether their children participate in a gang. Most often the challenge was that parents replicate the same approach they remember from their childhood. When the situation was different or their approach does not work, parents often are not sure how to respond. A key driver of parental engagement in El Salvador and indeed in other spots around the world seems to be whether or not a parent believes they can actually help their child—what academics call parental self-perceptions of efficacy. In El Salvador, the non-governmental organization associated with the German Development Cooperation, Prevenir, has responded by supporting training for parents to more effectively decrease youth participation in gangs. Training and support that does not increase parental perceptions of efficacy is ineffective, even if it tries to convey valuable information. Respondents noted that parents do not effectively exercise a counter influence to gangs when they are not supported to become more adept at execution.

**Research Question**

The overarching research question this study sought to understand was how do parents perceive the efficacy of their own parental engagement in the context of participating in a parent program focused on preventing community crime and violence. In other words, how could a program help parents feel more empowered and better equipped at supporting their children and reducing undesired behaviors.

A related sub-question asked what factors limit the effectiveness of a parent-education program as they relate to parental perceptions of efficacy. Through this question, the research
tried to understand what might be the most effective structures for programs and curricular
design considering the key drivers and obstacles related to parents feeling more empowered and
better equipped.

Narrowed to the El Salvador context, this research seeks to better understand why and
how the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ, known as Deutsche
Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit in German) three-month long, school-based,
parental engagement project in El Salvador known as Thousand Hands or Miles de Manos in
Spanish has been successful at helping parents feel more empowered and better equipped at
promoting positive behaviors in their children, reducing the likelihood of violent outcomes such
as gang participation. Data analysis was conducted considering the following three questions:

1. How and why do Salvadoran parents who participate in the “Thousand Hands” (Miles de
Manos) program in El Salvador feel more empowered and better equipped at promoting
positive behaviors in their children, reducing the likelihood of violent outcomes such as
gang participation?

2. How did the Thousand Hands parental engagement program in El Salvador help parents
feel more empowered and better equipped to monitor, supervise, mentor, encourage
youth, and strengthen relationships between schools and families?

3. What types of academic and personal supports worked best within the Thousand Hands
program? Why did these specific supports help transmit the cultural capital necessary for
parents to play a more effective role towards reducing their children’s at-risk behaviors
that often lead youth to violent outcomes such as gang participation
Statement of the Research Problem

Parents can be a strong influence on student learning outcomes (Henderson, 1994). This influence can present in how they relate to their children regarding academics, by their individual advocacy, as part of a group pressing for greater accountability from schools and government officials, or through their involvement in school-related decision-making (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Bolivar and Chrispeels, 2010). Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997, 2005) noted that key predictors for parental engagement include how parents are invited to engage, parental perceptions of how they view their own role as parents, and perceived efficacy; whether parents believe that they have the skills and ability to positively influence the learning outcomes of their children.

When parents are open to the invitation to engage and see that engagement as part of their parental role, they often do not receive information on how to fulfill this role from schools and/or civil society organizations (Mapp and Kuttner, 2013). This is a challenge to schools both rich and poor, public and private, domestic and international—though there is greater impetus at struggling and poor performing schools to find ways to leverage all drivers, including parents, into the school improvement process.

If a parent believes he can help his child academically, he will. However, if he does not believe what he knows can help, having a low perception of self-efficacy, the parent is less likely to engage (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 2005). To help such a parent feel more confident in the effectiveness of their engagement, many schools seek to provide support through training and other resource materials (Mapp and Kuttner, 2013). It is in this context that gaps and constraints in the curricular design and implementation can transform into barriers that inhibit successful outcomes of parent-focused trainings. It is essential to not only identify the support and training that most effectively increases parental self-perceptions of efficacy relative to parental
engagement for improving student academics, but also the best response to barriers that arise in parental engagement initiatives.

One of the drivers of parental engagement is parental self-perceptions of efficacy—does the parent believe they can actually help their child (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 2005; Mapp and Kuttner, 2013). Schools have responded by supporting training for parents to more effectively support improved educational outcomes, for example, in the form of shared reading or efforts to improve behavior, etc. (Jeynes, 2005). Training and support that does not increase parental perceptions of efficacy means that schools are consequently unable to maximize the positive influence on their children’s educational outcomes. Furthermore unsatisfying training and support that creates barriers to perceived parental efficacy drives lower follow-on participation at such activities (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

**Significance of the Problem**

“The evidence is now beyond dispute” (Henderson, 1994, p. 1)—parental involvement has a significant effect on student achievement, more accurately predicting student success than income or social status (Henderson, 1994; Henderson and Mapp, 2002). “School-based parental involvement programs have a positive relationship with the academic achievement of youth” (Jeynes, 2012, p. 729). However, in spite of the broad recognition of parent engagement as a driver for student achievement, parents are consistently underutilized (Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems, 2003). The potential for parental engagement to help prevent youth-related community violence is particularly significant in El Salvador because existing interventions are not effective enough and the parent-focused facet has been historically underutilized.
Theoretical Framework

The research was analyzed using an interpretivist approach by which emergent trends were identified considering the topic, framework, and methodology. The research approach that framed the study relates to Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) (also sometimes referred to as the Integrative Model) that has evolved from Fishbein & Cappella’s (2006) work. This theory puts significant emphasis on the determinants of behavior across a range of categories. In other words the framework sought to identify the key determinants and obstacles related to behavior change. This framework is important because it drives systematic consideration of the facets and determinants of behavior and prioritizes their level of influence in a way that incorporates a wide array of component theories. This is especially important in the design and implementation of programs that are trying to change behaviors.

Below is a graphic adapted from Fishbein & Cappella (2006) theory to illustrate the component parts.
This theoretical framework is appropriate because it helps to analyze the data for actionable recommendations (e.g., insights from IPA that could potentially evolve to a future mixed methods study). SBCC requires consideration of the determinants of the desired action or behavior such as parents having the skills and ability to perform the task and that there are no constraints on that behavior, environmental or otherwise (Fishbein & Capella, 2006, p. S1).

Fishbein & Capella’s SBCC model also places significant importance of intent, possibly related to its link to phenomenological studies in the health sector. For example, if a parent feels the replacement behavior is positive or viewed positively or that their existing behavior is negative, this would likely affect the probability of behavior change and relate to determinants and obstacles. Fishbein & Capella (2006) identify three categorical determinants of
behavior: “attitude toward performing the behavior, perceived norms concerning performance of the behavior, and self-efficacy with respect to performing the behavior” (p. S3). These three factors combined result in “a very high probability that the behavior will be performed” (p. S2).

Methodological Approach and Key Components

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is focused on “how people make sense of their major life experiences” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 1). This happens when people both experience and “reflect on the significance of what’s happening to them” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 3). The origins of IPA hold “that human beings are not passive perceivers of an objective reality, but rather that they come to interpret and understand their world by formulating their own biographical stories into a form that makes sense to them” (Brocki & Weardon, 2006, p. 88). According to Smith (2007), IPA recognizes an implicit link between what people say and their thinking and emotional state. The researcher needs to also consider what is not disclosed when discerning meaning (p. 54). This focus on interpretation is especially important since IPA “does not test hypotheses, and prior assumptions are avoided” (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 10).

The rationale for why this approach was appropriate for this research study is that IPA focuses on the lived experience of the participant. I did not attempt to test a hypothesis or an approach, but understand trends that arose from the data. The outcome was “a set of themes, often organised into some form of structure” (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 23). Brocki & Weardon (2006) referencing Willig (2001) noted that IPA is particularly “suitability for understanding personal experiences as opposed to social processes” (p. 100).
Positionality Statement

My interest in this area links to my own background: My mother who was a naturalized US citizen, originally from Ecuador, raised me by herself after my father, US-born and from Boston, died when I was eight years old. Very early on it became clear that as a parent and immigrant, my mother was unfamiliar with how the school system worked and how to leverage both formal and informal networks to optimize results. This was in spite of her coming from a family of educators, with siblings teaching from grade school through university, and a father who had been a provincial education official.

My mother engaged more when she was able to discern “the rules of the game,” and determine a clear path towards her goals. The clarity usually came through an explanation from non-immigrant, American friends. Similar to what is seen in the literature (Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003), results were often left to chance and hope. What I observed as a child, influences my understanding of parental engagement and perceptions of parental role.

I also view parental engagement through the lens of having been a middle and high school teacher. As a high school teacher, I called at least six parents each week to discuss (more often positive) student progress. I believe the frequency and resulting familiarity from regular contact not only affected what Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997, 2005) referred to at the invitation for parents to engage, but parental perceptions of their own potential efficacy. However more marginalized groups that do not experience well planned outreach by school officials are less likely to understand how to interact. This is particularly true in more traditional communities.

As a high school teacher I was part of a pilot home visit program to students’ homes, along with another teacher. We followed a very specific protocol to explore student and parent aspirations and allow for a broader information exchange and relationship development. While
Similarly contributing to perceptions of the school invitation to engage and individual parental perceptions of efficacy, I believe the experience contributed to parental perceptions of what Bolívar & Chrispeels (2011), call intellectual capital, the “knowledge and capabilities of a bounded collective” (p. 5), more fully realizing the potential of parental agency in affecting their child’s academic outcomes.

Through my own experience, I have observed many of the challenges that Bolivar & Chrispeels (2011) ascribe to immigrant parents including lack of familiarity with the formal structures and having dissimilar informal networks than non-immigrant, middle class parents. Bolivar & Chrispeels (2011) note that immigrant parents often lack technical professionals within their informal networks to help inform their views. Such technical networks can give parents information to better decide how to respond when schools make recommendations about their children.

**Interest in Parental Engagement**

I became involved in parental engagement programs through my work. Between 2011 and 2013, I helped design a program supporting parents’ home literacy efforts. Parent activities and training were based out of school-based, parent resource centers. Parents could come to these centers for instruction, resources, and advice to help them better support their children academically and as parents. Based on Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler’s (1997) framework for parental engagement, if certain conditions were met (including parents having the training to feel capable), the parents could be an otherwise untapped point of leverage in improving student outcomes. This experience influenced my interest and positionality.

Since late 2016, I have worked in El Salvador. The program that is the focus of this study has no formal organizational connection to my present work, but parental capacity and
engagement is widely accepted as a potential key driver in prevention activities that help children and youth avoid crime and community violence. The study focuses on parental self-perceptions of efficacy, one of the three key components of Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler’s (1997, 2005) conceptual framework. The other two predictors of engagement are perceived parental role and invitation.

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler’s (1997, 2005) framework also assumes that all “normal” parents have a humanistic desire to support and improve their child’s educational outcomes. To mitigate this bias, I needed to consider alternate views where enhanced parental efficacy is a less central variable of parental agency. For example, there is the view that either parental role or how parents are invited by the school are more significant factors or that the three variables, along with efficacy, are inseparable. There is also a view that the development of social and intellectual capital related to formal and informal networks is an essential enabling component for enhancing perceptions of parental efficacy (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011).

Second, because most of my experience with this topic was supporting the development and design of an educational intervention, it is one of the lenses through which I examined the reading. Other lenses are as a parent and former teacher. To mitigate, I needed to balance and consider the varying perspectives.

Third is an issue of ethnicity and race. I am very familiar with the non-Hispanic/Latino, white perspective of parental engagement. However I am also a white Hispanic/Latino of an immigrant parent with other family-related sources of positionality. I needed to remain aware that the distinction between the self and the “other” can form “the basis of knowing who one is by contrasting oneself to both those outside and inside one’s group” (Briscoe, 2005, p. 25). To avoid conducting a “deficit” analysis, as researcher I had to remain cognizant of how the socio-
economic, cultural and political landscapes and access to each component varies through social constructs of race, ethnicity, gender, etc. (Parsons, 2008).
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

The importance of efficacy has long been recognized. “Efficacy beliefs are the foundations of human agency,” wrote Albert Bandura, the Canadian psychologist whose name is most often associated with the concept of self-efficacy (Caprara, Regalia, Scabini, Barbaranelli, & Bandura 2004, p. 247). The literature indicates that parental perceptions of their own efficacy is a key predictor in determining parental engagement. As Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) noted in their own work, if parents feel confident that their actions will have a positive effect, they are more likely to act. In a study by Shumow and Lomax (2001), a correlation was noted between parental feelings of efficacy and reports by their children of “doing better in school and feeling happy, safe, and stable” (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 33). Parents from disadvantaged groups are more likely to have concerns about their own efficacy as compared to parents who have higher levels of education. Shumow & Lomax (2001) noted that considering the link between efficacy, parenting, and outcomes, “one important goal of programs for parents of adolescents might be to bolster their sense of efficacy,” also noting that “research has not been published on programs that have attempted to change parental efficacy,” (p. 147).

Policymakers increasingly look for ways to leverage parental involvement. “Parent involvement in education is widely recognized as important, yet it remains weak in many communities (Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy 2009, p. 2209). Though parental engagement likely helps improve student learning outcomes, efforts are often thwarted due to three engagement predictors identified in the work of Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997): Parent perceptions of their role, self-efficacy to help, and how they are invited to participate.
If one uses early grade reading as an example of a specific learning outcome, then parents first need to believe what they are doing aligns with their own understanding of the parental role. If a father does not recognize part of his parental role includes providing reading support, he probably will not participate. Second, parents need to believe they are capable of helping their child and that there is efficacy in their efforts. If a parent believes they do not know enough about reading instruction, she will probably resist participating. And finally, the parent’s perception of the school’s and teacher’s invitation must represent a genuine desire for the parent’s involvement. Coupled with these factors are the demands on parental time (Martini & Sénéchal, 2012).

Frameworks posited and subsequently refined by Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, (1997, 2005) and Sheldon & Epstein (2002) most often guide the resulting literature. However, the question still emerges regarding what exactly is meant by parental involvement. Does it mean that a parent contributes a cake or time for fundraising at a PTA bake sales? Is it reading to one’s child in the evenings or providing extra subject-specific tutoring? Or is it advocating, either individually or as a group for school policies or engaging in school-level discussions over curricular content? Epstein’s (1995) original framework on family-school relations has helped provide categories by which schools consider the potential for parental engagement, including: “parenting, communicating, volunteering, helping children learn at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community” (Lopez, Kreider, & Coffinian, 2005, p. 81). However Jeynes (2010) posits that the parental involvement that is most effective in raising student achievement is actually subtle, less deliberate and overt, supporting the view that “parental styles with a combination of high levels of love and support and a beneficial degree of discipline and structure” (p. 753) is where capacitation efforts should be focused.
With higher levels of education comes higher confidence that is directly related to self-perceptions of efficacy (Warren et al, p. 2213). Parents from less advantaged groups particularly need the knowledge, skills, sense of empowerment and improved perceptions of efficacy if they are to effectively engage (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). An increasingly questioned assumption is the traditional school-centered approach where “parents tend to be assigned passive roles and schools protect their decision-making authority” (Lopez et al., 2005, p. 83). The trend in the literature is to determine whether more active roles correlate to better learning outcomes, especially among more marginalized communities (Gold, Simon, & Brown, 2002).

Social, cultural, and intellectual capital as a vehicle towards greater efficacy

Social and intellectual capital is one often suggested entry point found in the literature for supporting parental perceptions of efficacy. “Trust, understanding school system norms for parent participation, and access to channels of information—all of which supported enhanced relationships, social ties, and access to resources” (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 29) are key elements for creating an enabling environment for improved parental efficacy. Similarly, Lopez et al. (2005) note that parents’ sense of efficacy and subsequent levels of parental involvement is related to what he or she terms cultural capital (p. 81).

“Social or cultural capital” has a range of definitions—though in the literature reviewed, the term generally refers to individual capacity, as opposed to “intellectual capital” which more frequently refers to the capacity of a linked collective. Lopez et al. (2005) describe it as the combination of “parents’ educational values, knowledge about schools, language and vocabulary skills, sense of comfort in relating to teachers as equals” (p. 81). In other words, the development of social or cultural capital is the process by which individuals, in this case, parents,
develop a greater capacity to effectively and assertively interact with their surroundings because of a fuller understanding of formal and informal networks, channels for actions, and community expectations.

Coleman (1988) described social capital as a concept based on the establishment or development of working relationships built around trust, information channels that lead to action, and norms and sanctions that support the collective over individual interests. Social capital is a by-product that develops out of communal activities (Coleman 1988)—in the case of families, this could be the time spent together that supports a stronger parent-child relationship (and consequently, supports the development of human capital). “It might be possible to use or alter these mechanisms to generate social capital,” (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 10) an important consideration for incorporating social capital into the design of a parental engagement intervention. Researchers have also attempted to show how subsequent work of a parental collective supports perceptions of efficacy of action (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011).

Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) article implies that there are two ways for new intellectual capital to be created: combination or exchange. Combination would likely mean that a parent’s existing knowledge would evolve through positive interaction with their social environment into new understanding. This new understanding creates links between previously unconnected information that help the parent grasp a new perspective. The process seems to have some similarities with Guskey’s (1986) theory for changing teacher practice by changing attitudes through teachers experiencing success in experimenting with new practices based on existing knowledge and interacting with their present instructional environment.

Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) article posited that transfer of information or exchange is a second method. This was later tested with Hispanic parents through the provision of leadership
classes which resulted in parents feeling more empowered to affect change, either as individuals or as a group (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011).

The basis of creating social capital, which serves as the basis for creating intellectual capital, is the social interaction. According to Bolivar & Chrispeels (2011), social capital is an outcome of social interaction. This social capital is what subsequently develops into intellectual capital. However, for social capital to develop and for it to have this catalytic effect, other members of those networks need to believe that the meaning making (or the creation of social and intellectual capital) is worthwhile and also perceive a personal return on that interaction. If the individual and group networks evolve into relationships where there is ongoing, bidirectional information sharing, then that recognized value (what might be termed social capital development) can contribute better to intellectual capital. Essential elements for development of intellectual capital include: “(a) combination and exchange of individuals’ knowledge leading to innovation and (b) the generation of new community knowledge that is greater than that possessed by any one individual in the community” (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 11).

Through information sharing, parents increase both their capacity and perceptions of their efficacy for interacting with school personnel (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011). As a result, parents “anticipate a positive and appropriable outcome as the product of their work together, as well as their developing trust, led to higher levels of engagement and interaction involving social knowledge creation and action” (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 31). According to Delgado-Gaitan (1991), this perception, which affects the collective, is an important component in empowering parents and increasing their potential impact. The effect of such interventions and related information are particularly helpful to parents from disadvantaged groups, including those with low English proficiency (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011). “Many working-class and
poor parents assumed that they had neither the capacity nor the right to intervene in such matters under the gatekeepers' jurisdiction” (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003, p. 338). In contrast, middle class parents not only have greater personal social capital, but have intellectual capital in their collective networks, often including professional expertise typically absent from network of parents from disadvantaged groups. For example, Horvat et al. (2003) described a situation where someone’s son was treated unacceptably by a teacher. Upon arriving home and before speaking to her son, the mother already received messages from other parents, what otherwise might be considered simple gossip, telling her a version of what happened and validating possible parental lines of action, reinforcing parental perceptions of the efficacy in any likely action (p. 338).

Absent capacity improvement efforts, “working-class and poor families rarely used network ties to try to intervene in placement processes or to dispute assessments—whether the families were sanguine about the results or not. They did not, by and large, mobilize networks to challenge gatekeepers in schools. Indeed, some parents were wary of contact with professionals and also felt that they should be able to ‘handle it themselves’” (Horvat et al., 2003, p. 336). Parents from disadvantaged groups often stay silent and hope that things will “work out” (Horvat et al., 2003, p. 338). In similar scenarios, middle class parents will actively strategize “opportunities to ‘improve,’ ‘correct,’ and render more ‘fulfilling’ their children’s school experience” (Horvat et al., 2003, p. 337).

According to Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems (2003), the challenge to parental involvement can be further complicated when researchers have considered the differing landscape between primary and secondary school. Parents have difficulty understanding the increased complexity of the secondary curriculum and with the increased number of teachers, with whom they should
communicate. The change of parent role is a point of confusion for both parent and teacher alike.

**A different approach: Focus on positive parental relationships**

Jeynes’ (2010) definition of effective parental engagement differs from the general direction of the literature. While parental efficacy could be enhanced by supporting the development of parental social and intellectual capital, the content is distinct. The importance of parental efficacy could vary depending on the existing understanding of parent expectations, the quality of communication between parent and child, and even whether the parent is more authoritarian or nurturing. Any of these factors could have a significant influence on student achievement (Jeynes 2010, p. 747). He continues, stating that it is not simply asking the right questions, but the “reciprocal communication in families that is important” (p. 752), which fosters an atmosphere more supportive of academic achievement. As such, capacity-building would support parental perceptions of self-efficacy through activities that foster a positive relationship, including “camping trips, fishing, playing sports, playing board games,” (Jeynes, 2010, p. 754) that may form the basis of making other parental efforts effective. Jeynes’ (2010) approach also alters the deficit view of what certain groups are assumed able to contribute to parental engagement efforts, referencing Delgado-Gaitan (1991), Jeynes (2010) notes how “parents of color are often more involved than those with insular definitions of parental engagement” (p. 755).

By questioning where parental involvement should be focused, Jeynes (2010) also challenges the activities parents should be trained to accomplish. Certain activities may prove to be more effective if carried out as intended, but may be too complex for some parents. A key barrier to success is attempting to train participants do activities they are not easily capable of
learning, doing, and replicating. “The aspects of parental involvement that would have the greatest impact in programs would be those that combine the most influential, easiest to teach, and easiest to learn” (p. 765). Essentially there may be a better return on time and resource investment in helping to improve parenting skills that support an improved parent-child relationship because it is something that parents are more likely capable of learning, relating to, and sustaining independently. “This means that teachers must become even more concerned with whether parents possess loving attitudes toward their children than whether they engage in specific quantifiable actions” (p. 753).

**Parents as School Leaders**

Some researchers take this a step farther, suggesting that a more appropriate goal is to empower parents as actors and decision makers (Jackson & Cooper, 1989). Delgado-Gaitan (1991) states this best when she describes this process as:

“…an ongoing intentional process centered in the local community involving mutual support, 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. People become aware of their social conditions and their strengths; they determine their choices and goals. Action is taken to unveil one’s potential as a step to act on one’s own behalf. Implicit here is consciousness of and responsibility for one’s behavior and willingness to take action to shape it as desired through a social process…” (p. 23)

In this analysis, there is a presumption that the power relationship is a key component related to both parental efficacy and agency. It also posits that a key component for getting
parents to take on more leadership roles is by strengthening the structural support around otherwise marginalized parents (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011). “Parent programs focused on community organizing and parents’ collective actions to address structural inequalities” increase self-perceptions of efficacy resulting in their increased participation (Jackson & Cooper, 1989, p. 269).

Sub-group considerations

What promising intervention design practices are identified in the literature to support self-perceptions of efficacy among parents, while considering sub-group factors (i.e., ethnicity, race, and/or socio-economic level)? Bolivar & Chrispeels (2011) note that conceptual models need to “explain the necessary mechanisms and processes” (p. 6) that are relevant for targeted sub-groups, while giving choice to parents as individuals and the greater collective in any formal capacitation efforts. There are racial and ethnic differences, as well as cultural characteristics, that need to be considered when looking at efficacy: Shumow & Lomax (2001) note in their study, “the significant relation observed between (socioeconomic status) and parental efficacy among European Americans and African Americans was not significant for Latin American parents...similarly, the age of the adolescent did not predict parental efficacy among Latin American parents as it did for the other groups” (p. 147).

Specific considerations in the literature regarding intervention designs with disadvantaged parents as the targeted sub-group note that “negative effects of poverty on student achievement can be partially alleviated when parents engage in learning activities with their children and communicate effectively with teachers” (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Shekdon & Epstein, 2005) but that a key driver is often this group’s lack of experience in accessing resources and lack of knowledge in how most effectively to engage in
the way schools expect (Horvat et al., 2003). The issue of social capital also arises as a key driver because of non-mainstream cultural characteristics affecting the development of effective strategies by disadvantaged parents (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Coleman, 1988). According to Bolívar & Chrispeels (2011), this translates into a significant lack of representation among disadvantaged parents in “decision making and policy implementation” (p. 6) and that “parents’ opportunities to understand the school culture, structures, and functions have been restricted” (p. 6). It goes on to note that disadvantaged groups (economic or non-English-speaking) do not reap the same benefit from PTAs and similar such groups.

A key consideration is how to differentiate capacity-building activities relative to the need of parents. Lareau (2002) extensively explored the distinction between middle and lower income parents, describing a lower income parent concerned about her child’s inability to read as “baffled, intimidated, and subdued in parent-teacher conferences” (p. 770). In contrast, middle class parents typically have more education allowing them to articulate concerns, advocate for their own views, and more confidently counter views they oppose. This lack in perceived efficacy cascaded down to lower income children. Lareau (2002) states: “Implicitly and explicitly, parents taught their children to keep their distance from people in positions of authority, to be distrustful of institutions, and, at times, to resist officials' authority. Children seemed to absorb the adults' feelings of powerlessness in their institutional relationships” (p. 773).

As previously noted, perceptions of self-efficacy often are enhanced through discussions with the broader collective of parents. Middle class parents often develop resourceful linkages through their children’s activities, such as attending a child’s baseball or soccer game where they compare perceptions and experiences (Horvat et al., 2003, p. 344). Involvement in such
activities was less common among lower income parents where social networks are more often family-related and less activity-linked (Horvat et al., 2003). Family-related networks of disadvantaged parents typically include fewer professional specialist within those networks as compared to middle class parents (Horvat et al., 2003). As such, this is yet another example where middle class parents are able to receive efficacy-supporting advice from professionals within their informal network, supporting Bolivar & Chrispeels’ (2011) interpretation mentioned previously, that if the individual and the related networks develop a relationship where there is an evolution into ongoing, bidirectional information sharing, it can contribute to better intellectual capital of the larger group, contributing to both individual and group perceptions of efficacy. The converse of this is true for disadvantaged parents: “Working-class and poor parents tend to undertake individual responses and do not receive much concrete support through their networks in doing so” (Horvat et al., 2003, p. 344). In contrast, middle class families, possibly because of more active linkages to their collective, are more willing to take action “or use even the threat of such action—to gain access and resources” (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 5).

**Trust-building and the Best Ways to Reach Parents**

A significant challenge is identifying the most appropriate design for the target population considering the goal of the parental engagement being pursued. Often these factors are inadequately considered by school leaders in the “‘rush’ to hold workshops that they think are important to school reform goals, but few parents attend” (Warren et al., 2009, p. 2248).

If the objective is to support the development of a social network that can enhance the social capital of members and thus improve their self-perceptions of efficacy, then trust building is an essential component for ensuring productive group interactions (Bolivar & Chrispeels,
Similarly, if the goal is to involve underrepresented parents, then that goal is more likely to be reached if parents are “assisted by a third, nongovernmental party whose role is to defend their children’s right to a quality education” (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 15). Within the context of trust building efforts for developing the social networks that support efficacy-enhancing, past participants have noted “that trust was enhanced when they recognized that all participants had a genuine and shared reason to be there” (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 16).

**Norms for interacting**

Repeatedly noted in the literature is the need to help disadvantaged parents simply understand how to effectively interact with officials, getting their point across, whether as individuals or as part of a collective (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011). Significant “opportunity for capacity building lies in bridging the cultural differences between schools and the communities they serve” (Lopez et al., 2005, p. 83). Lopez et al. (2005) highlight an activity named the “Right Question Project” (RQP) that strengthened parents’ sense of efficacy in relating with schools through a broad strategy for interacting:

“RQP believed that parents must be able to ask the right questions to be active partners in their children’s education. Rather than give parents a list of questions, RQP produced an educational strategy to help parents identify educational issues that were important to them and to develop their own questions. By practicing to formulate their own questions, parents developed the skills to prioritize their concerns to communicate them. Parents also learned a simple framework on the three roles they could play in their children’s education—supporter, monitor, and advocate. This framework became the foundation for their action plans, which were specific tasks the parents committed to doing on behalf of
their children. Unlike many other models that tend to give parents proposed solutions to their problems, RQP helped parents create their own solutions…” (p. 90-91)

Parent-focused training programs have the potential of being catalytic, helping parents recognize their role and place relative to school expectations (Boethel, 2003; Chrispeels and Rivero, 2001).

Information channels

If the goal is for parents to influence decision-making, then participants need opportunities to understand the education system, including very explicit descriptions of how to access both information and officials (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 20; Coleman, 1988). Some programs have shown success through the development of parent initiated group projects that address a key issue (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 25). In one profiled program, activities focus on best practices of group formation, communication, and developing a plan that would sustain efforts beyond the training activity. Sustainability efforts may include the development of more formalized working groups to help parents address concerns, as well as both school-based and non-school-based groups that function to support parent action plans as they progress (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 25). In some cases, activities have provided “Community Support Coordinators” (Lopez et al., 2005, p. 90) so that parents that become hesitant during the process of implementing their action plan can receive essential coaching and support.

Learning about what has worked in the past help to focus parent group project activities and function as prompts for further interaction. Meaning-making discussions around past activities help to personalize the link between parents. According to Coleman (1988), the establishment of norms, ways and frequency of interacting, and knowledge management
contribute to the sustaining and replicating of what could reasonably be determined enhanced perceptions of parental efficacy. A guided, participatory process whereby parents process new information as a group appears to empower parents and increase the positive effect they can have on their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

**Training for specific content knowledge**

Also found in the literature is the recognition of how specific skills training on curricular content such as reading (Kroll, Sexton, Raimondo, Corbett, & Wilson, 2001) and on how to discuss educational issues contributed to parent “efficacy in initiating school projects” (Lopez et al., 2005, p. 90). If the target population of parents already have pre-existing knowledge on leveraging formal and informal networks and are familiar with educational systems, then focusing more narrowly on specific content can increase parental self-perceptions of efficacy. For example, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence worked with parents that were already school leaders and active. By informing parents on policy reform and standards, parents “could effectively monitor school performance and promote the goals of reform through specific projects” (Lopez et al., 2005, p. 89). The same researcher noted that though parents did do an action plan, what they really needed was to better understand school data analysis before perceived self-efficacy increased enough for parents to contribute.

In some cases, the challenge is that parents may not know the content and are overwhelmed by the learning potentially required. In such cases, parental efficacy can be supported by identifying achievable goals that can gradually expand with parental ability and perception of efficacy. For example, with mathematics—the initial goal may be that “parents convey to their children the value of math and have a positive attitude about it” (Lopez et al.,
The same researchers noted that a parent became motivated enough to enroll in math classes to increase her content-specific capacities.

**Implementation: School-based versus community-based organizations**

Community-based organizations may be more appropriate venues for cultivating parental perceptions of self-efficacy towards support greater leadership (Lopez et al., 2005). Leadership development and supporting parental sense of efficacy are not necessarily where schools have core competence and schools “may want to remain focused on student learning; and they may remain apprehensive about parent power” (Warren et al., 2009, p. 2242). According to Lopez et al. (2005) the original six areas for parental engagement identified by Epstein (1995), included “parenting, communicating, volunteering, helping children learn at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community” (p. 80) has evolved into involving families in “participation to improve student achievement, community and parent organizing, standards development and implementation, strategic planning and community visioning, public conversation and deliberation, governance and shared decision making, and legislation and policy development” (p. 80).

Many community-based organizations are collaborating with public schools. These collaborations might potentially offer effective strategies to engage families more broadly and deeply in schools (Warren et al., 2009). Lopez et al. (2005), for example, described how four nonprofit organizations with parent education programs built capacity at three different entry points. The first was helping the individual parent understand their role and place as related to the school. This contributes towards efficacy by providing the knowledge and skills for better contextual understanding which leads to the confidence to get involved. Second is what Lopez et al. (2005) call the relational level. Beyond the knowledge, skills, and confidence focused on
individuals, at this level parents learn how to develop a positive link with schools. Facilitators consider parent culture, class, professionalism, and power. The third component focus on organizational structures to support an environment that enabled positive school-family relates. Researchers in this area have found that “successful organizing strategies contributed to increased student attendance, improved standardized-test score performance, and higher graduation rates and college-going aspirations in several sites” (p. v). The role of the community-based organization is often to help parents with “models, training, evaluation, and fund-raising support to implement and sustain family involvement” (p. 80).

**Literature Review Conclusion**

This review of the literature considered how parental perceptions of their own efficacy could be enhanced in support of greater parental engagement. Overarching themes that emerged include the evolution of what is understood by parental engagement—whether it means parents reading to their children and participating in a bake sale, focusing on a trusting parent-child relationship in the home while setting high expectations, learning how to provide content-specific tutoring and analysis of school specific data, or moving into leadership and assertive advocacy roles in the context of school management. Within this context, the literature highlighted key challenges of developing differentiated interventions depending on existing parental capacity, often linked to parental socioeconomic factors. Cross-cutting in the literature seems to be the potential for developing individual parent social/cultural capital towards intellectual capital of the broader group. Research around intervention design specific to certain socioeconomic targets would likely be a good focus of future resource.
Chapter 3 – Methodological Report

This research examined youth at risk for gang participation filtered by a subset target population of parents. These parents are defined in part by their children. The target parent is located in El Salvador; participated in a non-governmental organization-run intervention focused on crime and violence prevention; and fit within the defined socio-economic profile that would reasonably put their children at risk for participation in an urban gang. Their children were between ages 12 and 18, and not currently members of a gang. The purpose of this study was to explore how parents perceive the efficacy of their own parental engagement in the context of participating in a parent program focused on preventing community crime and violence.

The selected research approach is Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, referred to hereafter as IPA. The rationale for why this approach was appropriate for this research study is that IPA focuses on the lived experience of the participant. The approach does not attempt to test a hypothesis or an approach, but to understand trends that arise from the data. The outcome would be “a set of themes, often organised into some form of structure” (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 23). Brocki & Weardon (2006) referencing Willig (2001) note that IPA is particularly “suitability for understanding personal experiences as opposed to social processes” (p. 100).

Data collection

To operationalize IPA, I conducted in-depth interviews with participants, looking for ways to patiently “allow rapport to be developed; allow participants to think, speak, and be heard; and are well suited to in-depth and personal discussion” (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 22). The plan was built around finding participants, interviewing them, transcribing the data, analyzing, and writing up the results (Gee, 2011, p. 8). Focus was on the lived experience of the
participant coupled with mutual sense making. Outcomes were “a set of themes, often organised into some form of structure” (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 23).

For my research plan, I identified between four and 10 interviewees “based on their expertise in the phenomenon being explored” (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 20); focusing on fewer participants in greater depth. Gee (2011) citing Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) state that research steps are built around “first impression, initial notes, descriptive, linguistic, conceptual/psychological comments and emergent themes” (p. 8). I believe in-depth interview was a better option than focus group for my topic because each participant evolved very specifically in relation to and when reflecting on their individual contexts.

Some of the key question types included descriptive, narrative, structural, contrast, evaluative, circular, comparative, prompts, and probes. Question types best avoided include those that are over-emphatic, manipulative, leading, or closed (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 60).

The semi-structured interview with a flexible interview schedule is the most commonly employed form of data collection (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 4) and what I opted to use. “Interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim before being subjected to analysis” (Smith, 2011, p. 10). Interview schedules can often be “too long, overly extensive and detailed, and therefore constraining” (Heffron & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011, p. 3). Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) recommend, “between six and ten open questions, along with possible prompts will tend to occupy between 45 and 90 minutes of conversation” (p. 60). Other important considerations included attention to question sequencing and “funneling”, where one gradually works towards more sensitive topics (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 61)
The norm for IPA’s smaller, purposive sample size is typically “from four to ten data points for professional doctorates” (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011, p. 2). Reid, Flowers, & Larkin (2005) note that “the mean number of participants involved in IPA research to date is 15” (p. 10). The sample is often homogenous and closely related to the research question (Smith, 2007), in contrast to nomothetic approaches where “analysis is at the level of groups and populations, and one can make only probabilistic claims about individuals” (Smith, 2007, p. 56).

Brocki & Weardon (2006) conducted a literature review of 52 IPA articles and cited the following observations: Alexander and Clare (2004) described their interview process as “collaborative, emphasizing that the participants were the primary experts” (p. 82). Though most interviews were conducted face to face; Turner, Barlow and Ilbery (2002) conducted telephone interviews; Murray and Harrison (2004) did email interviews (p. 90); and Murray (2004) collected his data for analysis from “communications made over a two-year period on an online discussion group” (p. 94). Smith and Osborn (2003) noted that there is value is moving away from the schedule depending on interpretative aspects. Brocki & Weardon (2006) also explored interview design with the “possible use of IPA within a pre-existing theoretical framework” (p. 92).

**Analytic Methods.**

There are varying views of how best to operationalize analysis: Gee (2011) succinctly summarizes the process of analysis as “first impressions, initial notes, descriptive comments, linguistic comments, conceptual/psychological comments, emergent themes, and writing up” (p. 9). Smith (2011) focuses on the importance of engagement and interpretation of a hermeneutic perspective, specifically the joint meaning making represented by the “double hermeneutic” (p. 11). Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) identify the following steps for analysis (with some sub-
areas worth mentioning): 1) Reading and re-reading; 2) initial noting (descriptive comments, linguistic comments, conceptual comments, deconstruction); 3) developing emergent themes; and 4) searching for connections across emergent themes

Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) recommend “looking for patterns and connections between emergent themes” (p. 96) and suggest specific strategies: Abstraction means “putting like with like and developing a new name for the clusters” (p. 96). Subsumption is similar to abstraction, but where an emergent theme “acquires a super-ordinate status” (p. 97) under which other themes can be combined. Using polarization requires identifying “oppositional relationships” (p. 97) may help clarify patterns. Contextualization means focusing on the “temporal, cultural, and narrative themes” (p. 98) and can help clarify connections between themes. Numeration focuses more specifically of frequency, while function leads the researcher to look the role or function played by the emergent theme within the overall transcript (p. 98)

Larkin, Watts & Clifton (2006) note that the two-fold aim of IPA research is to understand the participants’ world, describe what it is like, and “develop a more overtly interpretative analysis, which positions the initial ‘description’ in relation to a wider social, cultural, and perhaps even theoretical, context” (p. 104). Focus is on participant sense-making. Smith (2007) notes that the hermeneutics involved in IPA are both empathic and questioning. Besides seeing the situation from the participants view, one must ask “critical questions of the texts from participants, such as…What is the person trying to achieve here? Is something leaking out here that wasn’t intended? Do I have a sense of something going on here that maybe the participants themselves are less aware of?” (p. 53)

According to Brocki & Weardon (2006), IPA differs from other methodologies, such as grounded theory in that IPA aims is to select participants in order to illuminate a particular
research question, and to develop a full interpretation of the data. Grounded theory, on the other hand, uses theoretical sampling, which aims to keep collecting data in the light of the analysis that has already taken place, until no new themes are emerging (p. 93). Brocki & Weardon (2006) also note that there are competing approaches for analysis methodologies. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper, some variations include starting from broad themes and gradually make them more specific; making notes as related known theoretical models and literature on a topic; identifying themes and connections within the specific text (as opposed to anything external). After themes are identified, some researchers conduct what might be called an audit to consider the frequency of the theme, as well as “articulacy and immediacy” (p. 97)

**Presentation of Findings.**

This focused on emergent themes, their connection, and what was unexpectedly learned. Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) recommend the presentation be structured with a title, abstract, introduction, method, and discussion. The researcher needs to show a “set of themes, organized into some form of structure (a coding overview, table of themes, hierarchy, or model)” (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 23). This contextualizes analysis and links participant interviews. Presentation of findings should also “very clearly situated in the cultural and historical context of their productions” (Larkin, Eatough & Osborn, 2011, p. 322). Brocki & Weardon (2006) citing Smith (1999) note that “from an idiographic perspective”, conclusions need to demonstrate “levels of analysis which enable us to see patterns across case studies while still recognising the particularities of the individual lives from which those patterns emerge” (p. 95). Finally, presentation should consider “the possibility of transferability of findings from group to group rather than generalisation” (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, p. 4).
Chapter 4 – Analysis of Findings

Research Question

The goal of this research project was to understand why and how the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) three-month long, school-based, parental engagement project in El Salvador known as “Miles de Manos” (MdM) in Spanish or “Thousand Hands” in English has been successful at helping parents feel more empowered and better equipped at promoting positive behaviors in their children, reducing the likelihood of violent outcomes such as gang participation. Specifically, the study focused on answering the following three questions:

1. How and why do Salvadoran parents who participated in the “Thousand Hands” (Miles de Manos) program in El Salvador feel more empowered and better equipped at promoting positive behaviors in their children, reducing the likelihood of violent outcomes such as gang participation?

2. How did the Thousand Hands parental engagement program in El Salvador help parents feel more empowered and better equipped to monitor, supervise, mentor, encourage youth, and strengthen relationships between schools and families?

3. What types of academic and personal supports work best within the Thousand Hands program? Why did these specific supports help transmit the cultural capital necessary for parents to play a more effective role towards reducing their children at-risk behaviors that often lead youth to violent outcomes such as gang participation

The focus of this study was to understand how parental engagement programs, like Miles
de Manos are successful, particularly from the perspective of parents. This research highlighted the role of parental engagement programs generally, encouraging schools--especially those with a high incidence of community violence, crime, school dropout, and low school retention rates--to implement parental engagement programs that target parents of youth in neighborhoods with high rates of crime and gang activity.

This theoretical framework was deemed appropriate because it helped to analyze the data for actionable recommendations (e.g., insights from IPA that could potentially evolve to a future mixed methods study). SBCC required consideration of the determinants of the desired action or
behavior such as parents having the skills and ability to perform the task and that there are no constraints on that behavior, environmental or otherwise (Fishbein & Capella, 2006, p. S1).

Fishbein & Capella’s SBCC model also placed significant importance of intent, possibly related to its link to phenomenological studies in the health sector. Fishbein & Capella (2006) identify three categorical determinants of behavior: “attitude toward performing the behavior, perceived norms concerning performance of the behavior, and self-efficacy with respect to performing the behavior” (p. S3). These three factors, combined, result in “a very high probability that the behavior will be performed” (p. S2).

Method

The employed method closely followed Smith’s (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, by seeking to move from particular to shared, from descriptive to interpretive, and in particular, I sought to focus on both the view of the participant and their psychological meaning making.

Each interview was recorded digitally and was conducted wholly in Spanish. The digital recording was then uploaded to NVivo software. In NVivo, audio was listened to and key phrases were simultaneously transcribed and translated into Spanish by the researcher.

Initially I leaned on descriptive and In vivo coding though with concern that I need to shift towards a more interpretative process. One particular phrase that I kept in mind from Saklaña (2016) was to focus on “processes--participant actions that have antecedents, causes, consequences, and a sense of temporarility”...choosing friends, dispelling stereotypes” (p. 84). Per Smith (2009), key points of focus needed to include “relationships, processes, places, events, values, and principles” (p. 82) and both the interviewee’s context and the language they used.
The process was very iterative with categories evolving and combining into sub-categories. I made a conscientious effort to avoid defaulting to key terms linked to my own biases and instead, let the data speak for itself. As the interpretive process evolved, coding incorporated affective methods “that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions, especially in matters of social relationships, reasoning decision-making, judgement, and risk taking” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 125). I also used values coding to “reflect participant values, attitudes, and beliefs--perspectives or worldview” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 131).

I repeatedly listened to interview audio focusing on the nature of participant experience, their lived experience, and what was it like being a participant in this particular context (Smith, 2009, p. 71). I used this framework to narrow onto key areas, though keeping in mind tenants of the selected theoretical frameworks.

The coding process required continued memo drafting that was essential in the analysis. Upon completion of initial coding, I sought to identify where parallel or similar themes could be identified. Referencing Smith (2009, p. 96), I tested some suggested strategies including abstraction, opposition, polarization, contextualization, and function to tease out implied meaning. Subsequently I used NVivo software to run a combination of variables (e.g., data coded under gangs or authoritarian along compared to participant gender, age, or travel experience outside El Salvador) to identify trends. I also considered text frequency messaging that implied a greater magnitude (Saldaña, 2016, p. 84) as part of subsequent coding review. This process was the source of data interpretation.
Participant Profiles

Demographic information.
All participants were parents within the ages of 37 and 55, living within 10 miles of the interview location where the MdM program also took place. Most were originally from the department (equivalent to the province) where the interviews occurred, though three participants were born in other parts of El Salvador.

Interview space.
The first day of interviews were held in a school classroom. The room was relatively small, approximately 12 by 12 feet with a somewhat noisy, overhead air conditioner. The interviewer and interviewee each sat in a school desk for the discussion.

The second day of interviews were held in an office in the school in the same hallway. The room was approximately the same size as the classroom, but the interviewer and participant each sat in an office chair on either side of a larger office desk. I could not discern if the seating arrangement made a difference. The conversation seemed to follow a similar structure and dynamic. However in the second day, I was sitting behind a larger desk that has the symbolic power representation of a school official.

Relationship with participant.
The researcher had no previous relationship with the interviewees. The participants were learned about the research through approved protocol and volunteered their participation. They all knew the school director and he facilitated scheduling the timing of their visits. The researcher met each participant in the school lobby, which was small with lots of student traffic, and very close to the highly trafficked street outside. Upon arrival, I brought the interviewee back to the classroom or office.


Participants.

Siria.

Siria was a married, 39-year-old female with two children (13-year-old son and 17-year-old daughter). She self-identified as Catholic and she worked as a hairdresser. Siria was the youngest of three siblings from a smaller town in the same department. She was a high school graduate and never traveled overseas. I interviewed Siria on June 23, 2017.

Siria noted that she came from a very poor background and a harsh upbringing. At one point, she talked about how as a child she was always barefoot, walking in the fields during harvest time. Her own words best paint a picture of her background.

“The generation now--those that are my age, we are the last generation that experience mistreatment (on a large scale)....They treated us badly, but they also taught us how to work. They taught us--how to make a living and be responsible...When I was seven and from the point I could understand, I worked the land. I took care of cows and pigs. I also helped my father with the harvest and store it. After work I went home to do more work.

Then school. And I tell my children, all you have to do is study and then chores. When it rains...I tell my children, I have a problem on my feet. I have to scrape my feet with a razor blade because when I was little my father sent me to walk in the mud and we couldn't use shoes. So every eight days I need to scrape my feet.”

She described her first impression of the program in the following way:

“When I arrived to the classroom (to first participate in the program), they told us about how we should behave with our children....it felt strange, the way that our own parents treated us was very different from what the program taught us. It was very different. I couldn't have imagined it would have been that way.”
Siria’s description of her childhood illustrates the difference from program goals, Siria’s experience, and how she likely defines her own role as mother.

“As a mother, I believe I’m a bit aggressive—as a result of the way my parents raised me....I’m badly behaved. Here in El Salvador, that’s how they raised us when we were young—by hitting us...by hitting us. We had to do everything very quickly so they wouldn’t punish us. And I worked...we worked. And studying—that was the least important things. In contrast, this program has taught me that studies are the most important and afterwards, its work...the chores of the house. Many people now tell me—"Hey, you look very different." I don't look like that (she makes an angry face) because my attitude has changed a lot. I was very angry before. This project has taught me to lower my aggression.”

Siria further described how the program changed the way she related to her children:

“I believe the program helped me a lot. Its taught me to be a better mother. To understand that education is first and work and responsibilities second. Its taught me to be more patient and less aggressive with my children...I don't yell at them anymore....The best experience was that they taught us to be better parents. We were all aggressive....we all yelled and we all hit.”

The role play dramatizations also helped her though she noted that it was not until session “eight or 12 during which I realized...I’m failing as a mother”. She then talked about her experience with others in that context and how it evolved towards a changed perspective:
“What we didn't like were the dramas (role-playing)....because we had to see the bad things that we were doing with our children. So, it shamed us...all the parents...we all realized we were aggressive...We looked at each other and said, "Yes, that's what we're like."...I was angry with myself. I asked both my children and my husband for forgiveness. Of my daughter, I told her that she is all that I could have asked God. We are repeating the same things that our parents did to us. We don't want to repeat it with our children.”

Siria also talked about how the project helped her adhere to what was learned in the project, making her children partners in holding her accountable:

“At the end of the program they had me trace my hand...on the hand, they have your children write the things at home that they don't like. They wrote--"I don't like it when I'm yelled at or when I'm hurried to do something..." They said if someone yells at them, they need to show that hand and it should cause that the family works together to resolve this. They wrote on the hand what they didn't like about what I do. And then the facilitator said, "Put it where you'll see it most often", and we put it on the refrigerator. And when there is something they don't like; they just point to the hand."

Siria also spoke about her perception trust changed, something that drove her previous behavior:

“We learned to treat our children better. To trust them more. Before when our children would go out, we'd suspect where they were going--to go see a girlfriend. We didn't trust them. All that helped us trust more. The situation or the role of mother changed. The
trust changed a lot. The program has helped me a lot...because now I'm no longer the same woman as before...the way I am. Before I was very violent. Not anymore. I have learned to be more patient. To understand better things--because even that, they taught us.”

Finally, Siria well-articulated the impact of learning about new behavior to replace her past behaviors, stating:

“I said, "I want to be different", but I didn't know how. The difference with this program is that it gave me the techniques. The practices so that you can be different...Without the technique, I don't think I could have done it. As I said, sometimes they treat you (raise you) like an animal.”

Dama de Hierro.
Dama de Hierro noted that her marital status was “nothing” and there was no partner or spouse to identify. She was as 53-year-old female with two children (30-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter). She self-identified as Catholic and worked as a high school teacher. She is the middle of two sisters and she had two deceased brothers. Dama was originally from another department in a different part of El Salvador. She had a college education and had traveled to Guatemala three times, Nicaragua once, and the U.S. six times.

I interviewed Dama de Hierro on June 23. She showed a level of confidence and awareness of the school and parent dynamic that aligned with her profession as a long-serving high school teacher.

Key things Dama noted include how her communication with her daughter has increased through her own explicit efforts focused on improving the relationship, increasing the level of
trust, counseling her daughter about things going on in her life (such as relationships with men), and becoming more informed. Though Dama brings the wisdom of someone who has taught for many years, when she talked about the effect of the program, she seemed to open up more and recognize its value:

“Yes, things have changed. Before I couldn't get her (her daughter) to go to the market for me. I couldn't get her to move...to the market. And now, I'm even able to convince to go to church. Before it was, "Aye mom...". Now, between me and her older brother. I'm trying to put her on a path.”

More than other parents, Dama identified ways that she contributed to the parental discussions, informing them. For example, though she noted that through the discussions she came to realize areas where she was weak, Dama also said that she advised other parents the following:

“...you feed your children, but what you don't know—-if you give your child beans, do you have any idea what type he likes or how he likes it prepared? Do you know if he likes his beans baked, boiled, refried, on rice, mixed with rice? I'm sure many of you don't know—not even your son or daughter's favorite color. As a teacher, I know that about my students—but do you know that about your own child?”

She also talked about stories in her own school which validate what the program recognized and the fears of many parents. In one instance she talked about different levels of problems and noted, “there was an incident where a student brought a razor blade, another took it out of its protective sleeve, and cut another student--a big injury. How little time it all took. I tell
him”. Similarly, she noted the risk she observes among parents who cannot set aside time for their children. In her own school she noted that “these are parents that work in the market or are farmers. These people have to work so they have enough to eat for the day and so they leave to one side their communication with their children due to other demands.”

In a particularly interesting story, Dama described the following situation of what is the dynamic in schools for teachers vis-a-vis parents, even though her participation in the MdM activity was as a parent and not as a teacher:

“As a teacher, I have many boys who do not have a mother. Others are with their stepfather or step-mother. So they come from complex home situations--I see that as an obstacle. I have a child (in my class) whose father is a gang-member. And on the weekends, he goes to see his father. But his father doesn't go outside because he's totally tattooed. And he tells me, "They are looking for my father....he has bought a certain type of gun"...he tells these things. I say, "These are things you don't talk about. You should only tell this in family." He responds, "No, I tell you; you are like family." I tell him, "No. Not even to me..." It's a very delicate situation. Imagine if someone hears you and he is not from the side your father is on. Something could happen to you. These are very delicate things you can't talk about."

As a parent, she recognized herself as an “overprotective mother, wanting the best for my children” and noted that the program helped her accept she was not always right. “And though I was wrong, I didn't allow them to say anything to the contrary to me.”
Marisol.
Marisol was a married, 39-year-old female with three children (8-year-old son and two daughters aged 17 and 21). She self-identified as Baptist and was a housewife. Marisol was the youngest of three sisters in her family. She studied computers at university, though it was unclear if she graduated. She had traveled overseas once, to Guatemala. We met on July 23.

Marisol focused on how the program helped participants become more open. She noted that there were people for whom, “everything is a sin”. She stated:

“...they opened up and understood that our children are children and they want to live that way. For all--there was a change that was very radical. This dynamic may have shamed us, it also helped us to open up and learn something more...not everything is bad. It opened my ideas/thinking. I was more closed. I didn't want to do things different--now are different times. We need to update our ways with our children. For example, Facebook--a super change.”

Another key focus area was being systematic in communication. For example, Marisol highlighted the importance of consistency with consequences:

“We needed to fulfill what we said. We couldn't say like a game--like we don't punish them. If you say you're going to punish, then you need to do it whether you like it or not. Because if your kids convince by coming and saying, "Oh mom, I love you.." and you say, "okay take your phone"...no no no. No...if they're punished, you have to punish them. They know you're not playing when you speak with authority.”

As many other parents, Marisol also noted the role of pride and forgiveness in her experience:
“When we talked about pride and how was our character...sometimes as parents we don't like to recognize that it was me who was mistaken in how we treated our child and ask for forgiveness. That part--I started to cry because sometimes I am very hard in telling my children things, but I wouldn't say anything when I was in the wrong. So we parents have our pride. I learned we need to ask for forgiveness. In our time, the parent didn't ask for forgiveness. The children asked for forgiveness from the parent...”

Marisol also discussed how parents can lack trust in their children which contributes to dependence on more authoritarian parenting methods, which can marginalize and disempower their children. As a result, the gang can appear more nurturing, something that was a driver in changing Marisol’s behavior:

“They say..."Mom doesn’t listen to me, but my friends listens to me..." And what can their friend tell them? "Don't listen to your parents. They have old fashioned ideas. Let’s go to the street." And they find more love and attention in the street than in their home. That helped me....sit with them. "Let’s go have coffee or chicken...and talk”

_Elsa._

Elsa was an unmarried, 55-year-old woman with two children (17-year-old son and 24-year-old girl). She self-identified as Catholic and her profession as a seamstress. She had three younger brothers and one older sister. She completed high school. Elsa has never traveled overseas.

We met on July 24. Elsa’s demeanor seemed a bit nervous. I was a bit confused because responses were nonlinear: She might start addressing the question, but would talk into a completely different area and her response would be completely stream of thought. It might be
good information, though it did not necessarily respond to the specifics of my question (though incidentally might answer another question). In other cases, she would start responding, but her answer did not seem to have a link to what I was saying. Initially I tried to decipher how what she was saying was linked to the question. However quickly I decided I would analyze her responses for information, even if it was not directly linked to the questions.

Elsa was probably one of the most economically marginalized participants I interviewed. At the start of the interview, she mentioned that, “Maybe had I not participated in the program, I might have helped them (her children) stop studying and more quickly start working because I had lots of anger...one can grab a stick and hit in anger, which is not good.”

She repeatedly referred to the program brochures which helped her to remember key lessons and she noted that they help her internalize those lessons more over time.

“I have the brochures during our program. Whenever I have time, I go back and read them over and over. These brochures have helped me so much...because maybe at the moment you don't change, but over time you start recognizing what you're doing wrong and you start learning how to treat your children differently--how to punish them in a different way, how you can help them, and it's a very nice connection.”

She also repeatedly referred to balancing opposite sides of the spectrum in her approach, for example regarding tolerance and the mother’s role:

“You have to be intolerant, loving, but have to have the two forms...you can be tolerant when it's necessary. But when the child chooses the wrong thing, one needs to be strong because to separate him from the bad....As a mother I am strong....strong because one can't be too tolerant.”
Regarding how to manage her children’s involvement with risky behaviors, Elsa suggested that the key lesson is to learn how to live in that risky context, but also learn how to not associate with the negative influences. “You can live in an environment where you are mixed with all types of people, but you don't need to participate in what they do.”

As all parents, she referred to her close oversight of her children: “I like to keep them near me. I know where they are going and what time they are coming home. And if they don't come on time, I worry. I call them or they call me.”

Though her manner was very gentle, she repeatedly referred to anger. Elsa noted that before the program she was “too angry. Now I am more patient. I treat my children good.” Referring to the effect of the group sessions, she noted,

“One doesn't feel ashamed to tell about your anger, that you get a stick or belt to punish your child. But thankfully, my own experience wasn't that way. My own experience was that with my two children, I've never hit them or punished that way.”

Many participants made references to their children’s technology use and the need to be familiar with social media. Elsa spoke more specifically about this area, stating:

“I didn't have any idea how to manipulate a cell phone. They could be there chatting and doing whatever and I had no idea. The boy could close himself in his room and the girl would be sitting there and I was too embarrassed to go near and see what they were doing. So learning how to manipulate a phone--I feel like I've advanced--they know the password to my phone and they check. So, why can't I go to look over their phones?”
**Lucy.**

Lucy was a married, 36-year-old female with one teenage daughter. She self-identified as Catholic and she was a housewife. She had one younger brother. Lucy had completed high school and had never traveled overseas.

Lucy was one of the first persons I interviewed. She seemed very reserved and not very expressive. At first, it was difficult to get her to express her views, but during the interview she became somewhat more expressive.

Lucy was the first person to raise the issue of cultural machismo and how it could be a barrier to participation, stating:

"Between her family and mine--I feel like there is a big barrier--a wall. The reason is that the father of the girl never tells the girl...I love you. It's not that he doesn't want to say it, its machismo...and generally, when this happens, it's an issue of the husbands, of the fathers, who are the ones that most repressed in demonstrate the love they have for their family."

This was a key discussion point for her. She continued, expanding how she viewed limits on emotional expression as a barrier to family communication. She told about her cousin who--

"prays that God changes her husband...that, in that home, if my cousin has a problem or difficulty, in that house, one does not cry. Everything inside. It's different. We, as a family, sometimes we have had situations where we cry together, considering the difficulties that we have with our children. It's something that--no, one cannot do. Only the girl--she is a class peer for my son. She has told my son, "I feel like my father doesn't love me." And we both participated in the program, but he (the father) never came and never participated......he is always an obstacle."
Lucy’s other key issues related to gang-related risk, violence, and the need to exert more control and protection over one’s children. She notes that the “lack of wholesomeness is what is around us in which the delinquency thrives. It’s where the country is going. I remember my mother sometimes would go out at 1am. And now...now in the day time, someone at 9pm gets killed. You need to go with someone else.” She contrasted this with the time of her parents, as did many participants: “I remember my mother ...she'd go....in the (local community) Carnival. People would stay until dawn. Not anymore. We as a family, as I said, we don't...it’s not the same now as before. One can't do certain things....”

Lucy also noted her son’s feeling of being over protected:

“I worry a lot about my son. One of my worries is that as a boy he has a higher rate of risk to falling to delinquency. I am an overprotective mother. My son told me one day, "When are you going to give me freedom? I feel I'm not free." I understand his feeling that he doesn't feel free, but the situation related to delinquency that we live in makes us be protective. We don't anything bad for our children. The delinquency is such that--if someone sees a pair of shoes they don't like, they could end up doing some sort of harm to the youth.”

However, in response to an attempt to give her son more freedom, she recounted the risk her son encountered:

“He said this year--"Mom. I need you to give me freedom. I need to go from home to school. I spoke to my spouse. I said I didn't agree because that's my route--I take him and
bring him. But I said, let's come to an agreement. We let him do it, though we were anxious and anguished about it. And one day he came, running, sweating. I said, "What's going on son...?". He said that on the way there is a path to get to our area. In that area, they were assaulting a student near the school that is on the way to his schools. The ones attacking had firearms. Instantly, they went back to look. It was two boys that came by foot. They ran because of the fear. So I said, "Now you can see why my concern is about you. It's not that I don't want to give you freedom or that I don't trust you. It's a situation where we, as parents, make us to be very strict so we can protect them."

Jose.

Jose was a 47-year-old, married male with three children (sons aged 18 and 15 and a daughter, aged 8). He self-identified as a Christian and he worked as a mechanic. He was an only child--no siblings. He had studied until the ninth grade. He had traveled to the US three times. We met on July 23.

Jose was one of the most impressive and reflective persons of the entire group. He provided some of the most profound insights, leading me to reflect on some of my own parenting practices. He spoke in a gentle, humble voice. As a researcher, he left me frozen, reflecting on my own interactions with my son, and left me feeling my own sense of shame for when I made errors as a father. His reflections and words will stay with me for a very long time. He made me wonder about my own prejudices---I was surprised that someone who called himself a mechanic with limited education would provide some of the deepest and most impactful insights.

Jose talked about how he and his wife continued to “fight to maintain what we learned before...we’re not letting the program just pass...”
He provided a clear contrast to the “Parents School program, noting that “usually one arrives and leaves empty. You come and you don't do anything. However with this program, it was completely different. It met up to many expectations.....It gave more than we expected…”

When I asked him to clarify, Jose stated,

“when we came to the program sessions, the difference with the Parents School was that here, we, the parents, put forward our ideas and solutions. They let us express ourselves. The Parents School, it was the opposite. There--they give. So us here, they let us do this here and we brought out a large mix of ideas among ourselves. We used dramas (role plays) and things like that, things that we really needed.”

Jose weaved into his responses the importance of his Christian faith and practices, making multiple references to God:

“We give thanks to God for what we have. Thanks to him, we are in a solvent economic situation and thanks to him we are able to continue our struggle. For us, the most important thing has been that as peaceful people we are able to speak and we understand each other.”

In a different moment, Jose stated, “Before anything, we go to church and we ask God that he helps us so we can teach our children and so that they can--make a difference facing the problem of the gangs.”

He noted how the program changed the way his family interacted and that it started from a review of statistics about delinquency, gangs, and related killing.
"When we started to see this, I took this home and shared it with my wife. It was something very nice...not sure how to explain...we had to recognize our children positively when they did something good. Not necessarily do a huge thing, but make them feel good.” He continued, “I started to share more with my children...it (the program) put high importance on spending time with our children--but quality time. Not just to say, "let's all watch TV together" and that's it. Instead, that we share time--ask questions, see how they are doing, play, things like that.”

Jose was especially articulate in sharing his observations of the program and talked about how he shared his learning with this life, who was not originally a participant:

“They gave us reflections to do. I asked the facilitator so I could come to the school with my wife to do that reflective session. At the school, I shared this with my wife. When this happened, my wife noticed that various parents were crying. They had their head lowered. Others said, "Yes. How much have we done error?" I said to my wife, this is good for you because you're seeing this reflection. But how are we going to do this to put it into practice? That was one of the things that helped us start changing things at home.”

In this same vein, Jose talked about the gradual transformational process he experienced and how other family members can be an important part of progress:

It was that drama (role-play). Many laughed. They considered it as a joke. Some said it was good. I meditated and meditated. I asked myself, "how much harm am I doing?"

"How much harm am I showing my children so that they end up replicating it in their
children". I began to meditate on this and I spoke with my wife. First she just looked at me. She started to smile. She thought I was playing, but when she saw that wasn't the case—that this was a genuine reflection, she began to get involved.

Like other participants, Jose largely focused on how the program improved communication, but was especially helpful in unpacking what that meant. In one instance he noted that the program helped parents by showing them—

"...how to treat them (their children), how to have a positive, healthy relationship with them. How to correct them without offending them or hitting them; what before was the way we were accustomed. That's the way we were raised...the program helped us speak with our children. They gave us homework that we had to observe our children and our children had to give us, the parents, a grade. It was fun. We started and my son said, "Now I'm going to be the parent and we'll see if you behave well.""

Finally, Jose spoke about the process of asking for forgiveness and stepping away from the authoritarian father role that is so common in his community:

“For me the key determinant to accept that I wasn't do things the best way possible. From that point forward, everything changed. We recognized the value in speaking to our children and saying, "Son, in this I have been doing things wrong. I ask for your forgiveness." It was the way I was taught. That same way, I was doing with them. On TV you see people saying this sort of thing to their children. However in real life you see things very differently. In accept my error, I would speak with them. They could see that
Francisco.

Francisco was a 51-year-old, married male with three children (two boys ages 17 and 18 and one girl, aged 13). He self-identified as Catholic. He identified his profession as a doctor. Francisco studied university. Francisco was from a neighboring department. He had traveled extensively overseas--apart from having studied in Mexico, he had visited the following countries the following number of times: US-3, Honduras-6, Poland-1, Costa Rica-1, Venezuela-1, Brazil-1, and Italy-2. Francisco had four brothers and four sisters (he was the second youngest).

Francisco was very methodical in how he communicated and extremely linear and logical in the progression of his narrative. He looked like someone who might play a village doctor on television. He also made repeated, seemingly purposeful reference to his deep involvement with his local Catholic church, including support of the “Parents Schools”, an alternate parental engagement program. Based on his statements, it was obvious that his Catholic identity was very important to him. He noted:

“I have always participated in Church since I was 12 or 13 years old. It’s something of which I am always conscious of how one should act within the context of the family. But being in the program, it’s something that reinforces the details that one needs to improve. It gives more consistency. For others who have a different sort of life, but for us who have already received education in church--it reinforces. But it’s a positive--the more you reinforce, the more you try to improve the things you can.”
From the start of the interview Francisco noted that he was an introvert and that his level of communication depended on how much he trusted the other person. Throughout the conversation, he seemed to convey a recognition that this communicative reticence was a liability with his family. Francisco’s examples of his effort often seemed to be centered on tasks or activities that he would do with his children or family out of which communication might flow (as opposed to communication by itself):

“With my son--I tried to teach him to do certain technical works that I can do--like repairs or electrical installations, to do it together. He likes it. But also doing things that we both like, we have an opportunity to learn something he wasn't learning elsewhere and we can spend time together where we can enjoy the relationship.”

Francisco seemed very focused on the methodical processes that he learned from program. He was also very methodical and deliberate in how he responded to questions. For example referring to communication, Francisco noted how important it was--

“to be willing to be able to listen with attention and be sure that you know what your son or the other person wants to say so you can answer appropriately. The other is maybe, a bit more important, always try to identify more good things rather than negative things. The tendency is to just correct what isn't good, but not congratulate, even the small things, that are positives.”

Francisco’s oversight of his children was more nuanced and subdued than other participants, but at its base, he seemed to convey the same level of concern:
“When my children ask that they want to go out and hang out with friends...something that is important—that we can discuss adequately so we know who are those friends, where they will go, how long, what activities can they do, and --we discuss and say we are in agreement that they go out with their friends and even help them, take them and pick them up from seeing their friends. Or getting them something so they can get a snack....”

Francisco also reiterated the same obstacles families experience to make a positive change:

“The attitude of the rest of the family...it's possible that a mother comes to the meetings and tries to put into practice what she learns with her child for example, to improve the relationship. But the father has a negative attitude or maybe there is a home with violence. The family and their attitude can be all the difference. In my own case, I think it’s positive because we all have Christian principles and we try to base ourselves in that. But that's not the case of everyone. In which case, there can be situations of vice, attitudes...or sometimes the environment in which they live.”

**Juan Pueblo.**

Juan Pueblo was a 37-year-old married, male with two sons, ages nine and 15. He self-identified as Catholic. Juan worked as a computer specialist for which he had studied at university. He was the oldest of one sister and one brother. He was original from a more distant department that is known for its poverty and higher crime. Juan had traveled one time each to Costa Rica, Honduras, and the US and twice to both Guatemala and Nicaragua.
Juan was pretty relaxed in his demeanor, but he was very proud of his ability to speak English which he gained while working in Boston. He offered at the start of the interview that he could speak in English and only fall to Spanish in cases where his language was not clear. (However the interview was conducted in Spanish) He spoke about the time he lived in Boston and its winters with great nostalgia, noting a strong desire to return. His personal story was characterized by the poverty of his childhood and how that manifested in relationships with his parents and relatives--because they often worked simply to survive and their home lacked many basic amenities. This seemed to be a key driver of what motivated him to ensure that his children had all the resources they required.

Juan also noted the importance of the dialogue within the program that contributed to change: “They were always open. There was a space to participate. There were many instructional tools to illuminate or illustrate their points.” He also noted a negative, that, “there are certain topics, that while there may be a level of trust, an adolescent is not going to want to discuss with their parents. Sometimes there is a fear that there will be punishment or some sort of consequence.”

Broadly referring to the importance of communication, Juan stated:

“Communication was the most important. Because if you're going to buy--you can get anything. But what are you doing with your child. So I feel the most important thing is communication---with that, everything goes. If you have good communication you're going to know when he's in problems or needs help. If not and it’s only, "Pay Dad...”, then you won't know....”
One theme in Juan’s interview was his focus on providing his children not only all their material needs, but also a high degree of social-emotional support. This seemed linked to his own childhood, which he clearly conveyed more than once, was both poor materially and emotionally:

“I try to be a person more open with my children. Since they were babies, they’ve had my trust. I have fought so they can be self-sufficient in their lives. I try that they trust me, so they can express their uncertainties or concerns to me. My old childhood was very limited, so I have tried to ensure they have the necessary resources in their education in both the resource side, as well as access to academic people.”

In another instance, Juan notes:

“My parents had...almost no education. They did the best they could. We had the best experience we could. Here we are. We’re not delinquents. The law isn't looking for us. We don't have public shame. We try that my son has a better relationship with his father.”

In a third example, Juan states:

“I try to be a better uncle for my nephew. I didn't have such a good experience with my uncles for the same reason—they worked (long hours, manual labor, migrating)—one here, one there. I tell my sister--I'm going to try and be a better uncle that my uncles were for me.”
Juan, similar to other participants, highlighted how, “before the program some of us and maybe all of us thought we were doing things correctly, I've considered. But when you enter the program, at some point, you realize, "I don't have good communication." Or...maybe I'm behaving badly or those friends or external factors.” This was a common point among participants. Most identified that it was not until some undefined midpoint, during the group discussions, that they became aware of areas where they needed supported, a key insight that parents are unlikely to demand the program or recognize its value well after the starting point.

**Beto.**

Beto was a 41-year-old, married male with two sons, ages 10 and 16. He self-identified as Catholic. Beto stated his profession simply as employee and had studied through high school. Beto has a younger sister age and two older brothers. He had never traveled outside of El Salvador. We met on July 22, 2017.

Beto noted his concern that if he could not provide enough support at home, youth will look outside the home for what they needed and that is where gang related risks can come. He placed a high value of discussions with his children noting that for reducing gang-risks, “More than anything, it’s discussing things with them (one’s children). He specifically noted that when he tries to speak with his son when his son seems frustrated, he makes clear that it's not punitive exercise. Beto noted that during the program he felt he became less authoritarian and more open and that all communication in the home improved.

Beto noted that the interactive component of the program, the discussions, was particularly impactful. “One loses the fear, though not the respect, so that one can speak with the teachers, interact with the teachers for a better relationship with your children.”
Beto seemed concerned about finding the right balance between discipline and understanding which he seemed to associate with his parental role. “Sometimes you don’t consider that your children have their own capacity to resolve their own problems. So sometimes we limit them. So--be a person or parent more flexible, but always with the discipline....”

As many parents, Beto noted that he only realized what he was missing after starting the program. Then when he heard people talking about things he recognized in his own behavior, she stated, “You don't even want to raise your eyes. What one does in the home is being identified there...” He continued, stating:

“Until one is in the program--because before, you think you're doing the right thing--the question is, when you're like that (think you're doing the right thing), not even your spouse can say, "look, you're wrong"--no. This is how it is. Something a person needs the reality that persons from outside give their views and say, "no, you're wrong in this..."

You don't believe it until someone from outside. From that point, you see. In the program, I realized I was mistaken quite often as a parent.”

He noted the effect of the program was that afterwards, “I perceive that there is more communication with my child and among everyone at home---we know how to discuss to consider the problems we have at home. I feel much better than before because we take decisions on a consensual basis.”
### Overview of themes

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**Theme 1: Communication through discussion and dialogue.**

One thinks you communicate with your children--but I tell the parents--you feed your children, but what you don’t know---if you give your child beans, do you have any idea what type he likes or how he likes it prepared? Do you know if he likes his beans baked, boiled, refried, on rice, mixed with rice....I’m sure many of you don’t know--not even your son/daughter’s favorite color.
Communication as an overarching theme was clearly and quickly visible from the first interview. Additional analytical strategies such as polarization and opposition highlighted further the diversity of linkages of communication to the outcomes of participants. The term included efforts at improving parent-child relationships, group communication that drove socially-linked learning (including shame-related), and dramatization (role play).

This theme is a key method to reduce undesired behaviors in both parents and their children and support other more positive actions. The program provides a venue for participants to realize or recognize what was problematic in their behavior, learn replacement behaviors, and practice the new techniques.

Parents realized that the communication needed to be actively considered or planned to be of better quality. It was not just watching television together, but sharing “time--ask questions, see how they are doing, play, things like that.” However there was also a strong recognition that parents often did not know how to communicate effectively: “If you want to communicate something to your children and you don’t know how to say it, that’s the basis where you end up entering in a conflict instead of having a good conversation.” A father noted that, “As a father, you are taught that you need to have authority. If you make a mistake, you don’t ask for forgiveness. Instead, you just move on. That was what impeded me.”

Another parent stated:

“One has things you want to say to your children, but you’re afraid...that your child won’t respond well or will say, "Oh, you’re with your things again...” In the program, it was one of the things--that if you don’t tell you kids that you love him or care for him. These were things as a parent, you don’t do. Or if you do it, we don’t do it with
frequency. Or maybe we say it for his birthday. In the program, they said that this was a topic to think about for the entire life—not the age or time, but it's for always. That day I felt the necessity and I remembered from the program and I said, why would I not say this to him. Sometimes it's hard for us to say. This was the opportunity to say and show to my son how important they are for us.”

Parents recognized that they lacked self-awareness in their communication: “Sometimes we say things that can offend our children. Sometimes I...Salvadorans say things clearly and directly and sometimes our children are not in the age where one cannot speak with so much clarity.”

They noted how through the program they gradually became aware of how little communication they were having with their children, that the communication was often based on default methods on which they had not previously reflected on and that they had not realized how important communication could be in having a positive influence on their children. They also noted the need to communicate their affection for their children, something not commonly done:

“One has things you want to say to your children, but you’re afraid. That your child won’t respond well or will say, "Oh, you’re with your things again...” In the program, it was one of the things—that if you don’t tell you kids that you love him or care for him. These were things as a parent, you don’t do. Or if you do it, we don’t do it with frequency. Or maybe we say it for his birthday. In the program, they said that this was a topic to think about for the entire life—not the age or time, but it's for always.”
Parents also described how they communicated before participating in the MdM program. Their communication was unidirectional; parents decided when they wanted to communicate and about what, leaving little options for choice or variety to their children. “Before I didn’t let them say, "Mom...this thing..." I was the mother. I was the perfect one. And though I was wrong, I didn’t allow them to say anything to the contrary to me.”

Communication was also a cross-cutting theme in MdM program learning—changing parent perceptions of their roles, what was possible for them to do as parents, their understanding of what represented positive parenting practices, and reflecting on past and new behaviors.

“For me the key determinant was to accept that I wasn’t do things the best way possible. From that point forward, everything changed. We recognized the value in speaking to our children and saying, "Son, in this I have been doing things wrong. I ask for your forgiveness." It was the way I was taught.”

When communication was not positive, these parents became increasingly aware of the negative impact:

“When I had an argument with him, I felt like...I thought...how can I do things so this doesn’t happen again? What can I do? How can I say things to him without us causing harm to each other? Sometimes the children use words that it makes you worse as a parent. And the same thing as a parent, unconsciously you say something that you end up hurting your feelings.”

Parents consistently identified the use of group discussion and roleplay dramatization as a key driver essential for not only program learning. This was the venue where participants
realized that they needed to learn more about parenting. As one parent stated, “Sometimes it’s not easy to do what we’re not accustomed to. Sometimes that had us do dramatizations with specific roles. I had to play the role of a child. Sometimes one has to put themselves in the shoes of the child. I felt uncomfortable. But it helped us.”

Participants recognized that in “a small group...we could share in the space and the trust to be able to share our experiences.” In this context, another participant noted that “each parent speaks and tells their experience...one doesn’t feel ashamed to tell about your anger.....” In the context of sharing with 20 to 30 parents, another participant noted that “each opinion of each parent helped teach each one of us. Maybe your opinion isn’t mine, but we get an element of your teaching to put in practice with my own family.”

Participants highlighted that what was so important was that hearing the experience of all parents is what triggered changes: “Until we hear it from a mouth outside of the home, we don’t realize we’re doing the wrong thing. The sharing of each experience of each family--that’s how we started to realize that.....” Another parent noted, “The best experience is learning about the experience of the other parents.”

This communication from both the roleplay dramatization and related discussions triggered reflections. As one father noted his experience after doing the roleplay dramatizations:

“I meditated and meditated. I asked myself, "how much harm am I doing?" "How much harm am I showing my children so that they end up replicating it in their children". I began to meditate on this and I spoke with my wife. First she just looked at me. She started to smile. She thought I was playing, but when she saw that wasn’t the case--that this was a genuine reflection, she began to get involved.”
Communication also was key in changing the relationship—not simply in communicating differently, but in explicitly recognizing that something different should be happening:

“For me the key determinant to accept that I wasn’t do things the best way possible. From that point forward, everything changed. We recognized the value in speaking to our children and saying, "Son, in this I have been doing things wrong. I ask for your forgiveness."

The quality of communication was also noted as important. This is something that participants did not typically recognize in advance of the course: “The biggest thing is communication. We should have this...the time that we dedicate to our children. The quality time, not quantity. It could be five minutes, but well spent with them.” They also noted the importance of parents considering how they communicate:

“because sometimes as parents, we have our anger and we offend our children because we don’t use the right words. But now I immediately remember how I should calm myself and think about how I’m going to speak with my children. It’s a help which before I did not consider. When I’d have something to say, I’d just say it. Now I think and calm down and then again. I feel like...I’m going to say things correctly; something which I didn’t do before. That’s a big change.”

Parents recognized the importance of communication not only for closing the gap between home and school, but also helping parents develop the social capital to feel confidence in actively reaching out to interact with the school as an equal partner. Regarding the gaps, one parent noted that there is a “barrier between parents and teachers because at home our child is one way, while at school they may be different.” However, another noted that, “This program
helps ensure that the parent checks on their homework, understand what are the challenges their children is having, what is their behavior at school. This helps the program so the families are aware of that. In the public schools, these are parents that work in the market or are farmers. These people have to work so they have enough to eat for the day and so they leave to one side their communication with their children due to other demands.”

Parents also noted how communication can appear differently in contexts where there are economical constraints: “these are parents that work in the market or are farmers. These people have to work so they have enough to eat for the day and so they leave to one side their communication with their children due to other demands.” One father highlighted other pressures in the context of communication:

“If at some point you tell me that I need to spend time with the family and spend time with your children. But if I don’t make enough money and I need to spend 12 hours of my day to just feed my home. How can I be at home and working? And that happens day-in and day-out in our country. There is an abundance of work and not enough money. So--I may want to be a better father, but if I don’t have work or my work pays badly, then I need to leave at 6am and I get home at 6, 7, or 8pm at night--when am I going to be able to spend time with my child? It’s not that I don’t want to do it. It’s that, I’m either at home or I’m working. If I’m at home, I’m going to lack what I need to get from my work.”

Theme 2: Key determinants: Realization need to do something new.

I knew I had needs and I believe a lot in God. I always asked God, but...like God listens...and I said, "Oh with this boy, what am I going to do?" And then the invitation
came and the program, but I didn’t have any idea what were the topics. And when we studied the different topics, I said, God, I really need this. Because often as a parent, we assume we know things. Who is going to come and tell me how to do things? I know how to teach my kids. But we need to recognize that we don’t know everything. There isn’t manual to be mother and father. Sometimes it’s nice to let yourself be helped. Yes, there is a need and there are still needs, daily, one needs to guide oneself.

Participants realized with great clarity that they wanted and/or needed to do something new. In most instances, it was not recognized so clearly at the start of the program or with the same intensity. Indeed, many parents began the program simply hoping that there must be a better, more effective approach towards parenting. However, most parents talked about the moment they realized that they have an acute need. This typically happened during or after the role play dramatization and related parent discussions which triggered both clearer and more comprehensive recognition that they wanted to try something new.

Key drivers included a recognition by participants that their behavior was causing harm, that they were unaware of other approaches or with what to replace their behavior, and often a strong sense of shame as part of this recognition. Participants often lauded the guided practice for applying to ways of parenting which along with meeting regularly with other parents helped participants apply other approaches.

When parents realized they needed to make a change, this often coincided with a recognition that their existing practice was not effective. However parents did not know with what to replace their existing behavior. “I want to be different, but I didn’t know how. The
difference with this program is that it gave me the techniques. The practices so that you can be different.”

Greater environmental risk was a trigger that led to parent behavior change. As one parent noted, “If it’s not me (guiding), he’s going to learn from outside...and they’re not going to do it the best way.” One father noted how the social context of youth delinquency was a factor in his seeking out a new approach:

“If one at home doesn’t know how to give enough.... they (the kids) look outside. The situation as it is now in our country, it's easy that outside they can find a place to get what they want. That's where they start to look—that's where they start to look to the streets. I need to change for the good of him because it’s my responsibility as a parent to ensure his well-being and emotional stability to our child. I had to change. I had to understand his mind...”

Statistical data provided by the program also led parents to reflect and change how they interacted with their children.

“They started to give us statistics about delinquency in the country. That the majority of the youth are going into gangs and they are getting killed. When we started to see this, I took this home. We met once per month. I took it home and shared it with my wife. It was something very nice...”

Working in parent peer groups was an overarching theme that linked to both communication and to triggering behavior change. One father noted that:
“until we hear it from a mouth outside of our own home, we don’t realize we’re doing the wrong thing. The sharing of each experience of each family—that’s how we started to realize that—it’s not an issue of how bad things were happening at home...everyone home has problems. The issue is how do you resolve those problems. All homes have problems. We all live in this world and we all experience problems, the issue is in how we resolve those problems.”

Another parent said something very similar in that, “Sometimes a person needs the reality that persons from outside give their views and say, ‘no, you’re wrong in this...’ You don’t believe it until someone from outside. From that point, you see. In the program, I realized I was mistaken quite often as a parent.”

A significant driver were alternate options other parents provided. As another participant stated, “each opinion of each parent helped teach each one of us. Maybe your opinion isn’t mine, but we get an element of your teaching to put in practice with my own family... It helped each parent in that each parent had a view that helped all of us.” Or as another parent stated, “The best experience is learning about the experience of the other parents because....sometimes one thinks your own problem is the biggest problem and you discover that other parents have worse problems than your own. Mine--maybe they were about communication. There are others--where there is violence.”

Another key factor was the safe space provided by MdM that allowed parents to open up and tell about their concerns without being shamed or critiqued by others: “In the program, each parent speaks and tells their experience...one doesn’t feel ashamed to tell about your anger, that you get a stick or belt to punish your child.” Another parent stated: “...each parent speaks and
tells their experience...one doesn’t feel ashamed to tell about your anger, that you get a stick or belt to punish your child.”

The role play dramatization functioned as a trigger for many. Sometimes parents did not immediately see the connection, but overtime, the roleplays and dramatizations contributed to parents realizing something needed to change. As one particularly reflective father stated,

“It was that drama (role-play). Many laughed. They considered it as a joke. Some said it was good. I meditated and meditated. I asked myself, "how much harm am I doing?"

"How much harm am I showing my children so that they end up replicating it in their children". I began to meditate on this and I spoke with my wife. First she just looked at me. She started to smile. She thought I was playing, but when she saw that wasn’t the case—that this was a genuine reflection, she began to get involved.”

Another mother noted, “Yes, I needed it (help to be a better mother)....during the sessions...the 8 or 12...during which I realized, but towards the end, I thought, "I’m failing as a mother".

Within the context of peer discussion groups and dramatizations or roleplaying, the feeling of shame played a particularly strong role that similarly overlapped into the theme of communication. Participant statements were especially compelling. One father noted, “At the school, I shared this with my wife. When this happened, my wife noticed that various parents were crying. They had their head lowered. Others said, "Yes. How much have we done error." I said to my wife, this is good for you because you’re seeing this reflection.”

Parents noted that only through the role-plays and dramatizations, having to put themselves in the shoes of the children, did parents “see the bad things that we were doing with
our children. So, it shamed us...all the parents...we all realized we were aggressive.” Multiple participants noted variations of, “the realization were the program discussions.....I’ve reflected a lot. I am ashamed with myself. Much shame. I have asked for forgiveness from my children.”

Participants also noted there were certain accountability mechanisms that supported and reinforced the sought-after behavior change. One parent said, “At the end of the program they had me trace my hand. I traced and then they didn’t tell us anything. And then as we were leaving they said, okay...on the hand, have your children write the things at home that they don’t like. They wrote--"I don’t like it when I’m yelled at or when I’m hurried to do something..." They said if someone yells at them, they need to show that hand and it should cause that the family to work together to resolve this....the facilitator said, "Put (the hand) where you’ll see it most often", and we put it on the refrigerator. And when there is something they don’t like; they just point to hand" which leads to behavior modification.

**Theme 3: Fear (of gang-associated violence) and control.**

*The majority of the mother’s that participated---we all agreed that we wanted to keep our children in a bubble. That we feel that they complain because we don’t give them freedom, but we’re trying to protect them from the crime and violence present in the country.*

Fear was another theme that emerged in interviews. Fear seemed to be a driving factor affecting parental behavior and how they treated their children. The project helped parents to deal with those fears and develop more effective strategies. Overwhelming parents were fearful of the environment and the risk they perceived it represented to their children. This was exacerbated by a parental sense of helplessness or lack of control. One of the repeated sub-
themes was the lack of trust by parents in their children before starting the program. Trust levels strengthened through program participation.

This theme contributes to better understanding of the research question in that it drove parents to seek ways they could support their children without being oppressive or authoritarian, while keeping discipline as a valued variable. Theme emergence and meaning-making regarding fear was social in that it developed through the group discussions, as well as personal reflection of participants.

Through the program, parents realized they do not need control or that their default strategies for control are not giving them the assurance they desire. Another mother stated that she recognized that she needed

"to give up control trying to protect because it will actually be better for my child and help me to be less fearful. I need to accept and understand that she (the daughter) needs to go out, to have fun, and to relax with a bit of liberty and trust. That’s something I didn’t give her before out of fear she might lie and go somewhere else. She hasn’t given us any reason to doubt this trust that her father and I have put in her. She (the daughter) says, "Mom. I’m going to go out with this person, this is where I’ll be, and I’ll be there this long." I feel that fear has gone away...that she’s going to go out and lie to me."

One father noted that his fear stemmed from the sense that “If it’s not me (guiding), he’s going to learn from outside...and they’re not going to do it the best way. With this program, I am now more open to the situation to learn to live or remember to live in a more open way. Everyone was young once.”
Parents noted perceived dangers in areas where their children go. This compounds their concern. As one stated, “...there are people that come from locations farther away. So these people hide in the path. I know a mother who gives her daughter only $1.50 for lunch...These persons come, assault, and you need to leave with nothing.” For this reason, this mother (and other interviewed parents) stated that in cases where they had a car, they would take their children to and from school, even in cases where their children would prefer to have the freedom to walk or take public transport: “I feel fortunate because I have a way to transport my children. But many don’t have that option, so they only give the children bus fare and the daily minimum and the delinquents end up doing things. The youth feel trapped; we feel trapped.”

Within the dynamic of fear exists a sense of guilt—that in trying to protect their children, these parents recognize that their children are losing something, possibly the sense of liberty that the parents felt when they were young. One mother noted that, “The majority of the mother’s that participated---we all agreed that we wanted to keep our children in a bubble. That we feel that they complain because we don’t give them freedom, but we’re trying to protect them from the crime and violence present in the country.” Another mother noted that, “My children have a different perspective or opinion of me...they might say that I’m very strict or that I just want to be right behind them. The smallest has told me--’you’re in everything. You don’t give us freedom’.” A third parent said, “We, for whatever game (sports), we have to go--the both of us, me and my spouse, present...at least one goes. So they feel and maybe say, not that we’re bad parents, but that we don’t give them their freedom.”

However, as a parent noted about their child:

“They learned more and are more mature...understanding that a parent isn’t trying to damage the child, the protect them. And if they act in a certain way, it's because of the
problems like the gangs. One doesn’t want their daughters to be mixed up with that. It seems like they’ve matured from the program also. And we also became more mature parents. There is more communication. There aren’t so many lies.”

Countering this sense of guilt is the perceived risk:

“At present, we aren’t given the same situation as our parents—that we give our children more freedom. As a mother, I’d like to give them same life I had when I was young. I told my mother—I’m going to go buy something. Easily I could walk the streets or take a bus. Now with my children—they say they need something. I need to get involved because the people who cause the crime and violence; they’re on the buses.” This fear extends to the friends of their children. One father described how he imagined, the temptation, “And what can their friend tell them? ‘Don’t listen to your parents. They have old fashioned ideas. Let’s go to the street’.”

With a certain sense of resignation, parents expressed either the actual or hoped realization by their children that parental action was based on actual risk that should not be viewed negatively or oppressively:

“They (the children) learned more and are more mature...understanding that a parent isn’t trying to damage the child, the protect them. And if they act in a certain way, it's because of the problems like the gangs. One doesn’t want their daughters to be mixed up with that. It seems like they’ve matured from the program also. And we also became more mature parents. There is more communication. There aren’t so many lies. It’s for them...for their well-being.”
Theme 4: Barriers: Transformation and getting from point A to point B.

If you don’t want to try something different, it’s because I am afraid I would not be able to do it...not because I don’t want, but because I’m not able or I don’t understand. But if someone could guide me to try something new, I think..

This theme really emerged as the flip side of some of the others--when there was a desire to do something different, parents talked about what was blocking their way forward. This block in some cases was obvious, like not knowing what to do different. In other cases it was less clear--such not being fully aware that a parent was doing something in a way that was detrimental to their child.

This theme contributed to the research question in that it clarified how teachers and parents can close the link of more effectively engaging, directing, monitoring, and supervising activities that support children and youth with greater effectiveness.

Parents noted that at the start of the program, they did not really think they need to improve their parenting. That awareness only came after they starting discussing their experience with other parents. As one parent stated, “Because often as a parent, we assume we know things. Who is going to come and tell me how to do things? I know how to teach my kids”. Parents noted “until we hear it from the mouth outside of the home, we don’t realize we’re doing the wrong thing. The sharing of each experience of each family--that’s how we started to realize that’. Another mother noted, “Something a person needs the reality that persons from outside give their views and say, ‘no, you’re wrong in this…’ You don’t believe it until someone from outside. From that point, you see. In the program, I realized I was mistaken quite often as a parent.”
The first area was simply knowing how to do something. As one parent stated, “how are we going to do this to put it into practice? That was one of the things that helped us start changing things at home.” These parents noted that the project gave them statistics, but they were unsure “how we can keep our children occupied, not thinking about bad things...also how to treat them, how to have a positive, healthy relationship with them. How to correct them without offend them or hit them; what before was the way we were accustomed.”

These parents recognized that without knowing how, they were limited in doing something new. As one stated, “If you want to communicate something to your children and you don’t know how to say it, that’s the basis where you end up entering in a conflict.” Another stated, “If I don’t want to try something different, it's because I am afraid I would not be able to do it...not because I don’t want, but because I’m not able or I don’t understand. But if someone could guide me to try something new, I think…” In that particular instances, I checked what I was hearing, asking the father, “an obstacle is that you don’t feel capable that you haven’t received the adequate support and training to do something.” He responded, “Yes, yes…”

Other barriers related to social and intellectual capital associated with parents linkages to schools and teacher. Many parents noted a degree of apprehension and being overly deferential to school representatives. There is also the perception that their children may be different people at home and school. As one father stated, there is a “barrier between parents and teachers because at home our child is one way, while at school they may be different.” Another parent noted how “in the public schools, these are parents that work in the market or are farmers. These people have to work so they have enough to eat for the day and so they leave to one side their communication with their children due to other demands”. The program helps provide some basic stepping stones for ensuring engagement, even when it begins from a low base.
Economic factors were also noted as a barrier. One father, coming originally from a low-income background himself, noted that, “If at some point you tell me that I need to spend time with the family and spend time with your children. But if I don’t make enough money and I need to spend 12 hours of my day to just feed my home. How can I be at home and working? I may want to be a better father, but if I don’t have work or my work pays badly, then I need to leave at 6am and I get home at 6, 7, or 8pm at night--when am I going to be able to spend time with my child? It’s not that I don’t want to do it. It’s that, I’m either at home or I’m working. If I’m at home, I’m going to lack what I need to get from my work.”

Other noted barriers linked back to the fear theme. Though parents noted that maintaining the authority of the parental role was key to the program, one parent noted, “You could have a situation where communication improves and the child feels like they can insult the parents because there are not the limitations or authority.”

Concern about loss of control or authority was a cross-cutting. One way or another, each parent expressed how losing authority was a barrier to action at the start of the program. “As a father, you are taught that you need to have authority. If you make a mistake, you don’t ask for forgiveness. Instead, you just move on. That was what impeded me.”

Multiple parents referred to the negative influence of other family members to applying what they learned in the program. “If other family members don’t want this level of communication or reinforce the opposite” of a more flexible or less authority-based role, due to general issues of control or specifically noted cultural perceptions. Specifically referencing machismo, one father noted, “Sometimes when my cousin wants to say something, she doesn’t because her husband is there and she doesn’t say it”.

This father expanded on the story about his cousin, which was similar to stories told by two other participants: “She has been married 16 years--maybe more. She says that she prays that God changes her husband, after 17 years. That, in that home, if my cousin has a problem or difficulty, in that house, one does not cry. Everything inside. It's different. We, as a family, sometimes we have had situations where we cry together, considering the difficulties that we have with our children. But one needs to let it out. There--no. It's something that--no, one cannot do. Only the girl--she is a class peer for my son. She has told my son, "I feel like my father doesn’t love me." And we both participated in the program, but he (the father) never came and never participated. I would have loved it had he come...he is always an obstacle.”

Related to this, participants agreed that it would be a barrier if both parents were not “in agreement and each help the other. If it’s just you--if you’re just one of the two parts to try and change to sustain a good relation and the other does not? No. Then it’s like to throwing away water. It doesn’t work. There needs to be good communication and so that both parents work together.”

**Synthesis of Themes**

The themes that emerged indicate certain key insights conveyed by the participants.

- Participants didn't recognize they needed support/help until after they were in the sessions and heard from other parents.

- Cohort support and structure of that support was very important in moving forward. For example, advice and stories from other parents and discussions with the group were how parents most often realized they should do something different and learned how to do things differently. This was repeatedly identified as a distinguishing factor from the Escuelas de Padres model (where there was info provided, but not necessarily
a result of parental choice regarding what was most important/what they wanted to know.)

- Role plays were the most uncomfortable but often most impactful
- Parental authority remains, though most alluded to something akin to a social contract between parent/child being established as a result of participation (the only possibly negative noted were in the case that someone would confuse this "social contract" with the giving up of parental authority, but it was the best guess offered as something that could somehow go awry).

**Reflexivity**

**Student.**

As a graduate student conducting this research, my personal role as a parent at times burst through. When I spoke with two particular participants, I found myself losing my breath for a moment. I realized that they were talking about the same lack of attentiveness, focus on quality time, and absence of key knowledge about their children that at times I have had with my own son. I realized that, just as was the participants’ experience, I only paid attention to their message because they were someone from outside--making me see where my own parental practice was lacking. The sense of shame and sadness for not having lived up to my own expectation as a parent was something I felt at that moment. In spite of all my education on children and youth, at least initially I was left intellectually grasping at what I could do that would most appropriately and effectively replace the practices I realized were lacking.

All this influenced how I listened to interviewees. This likely influenced how I coded the data. Similarly, I made efforts to balance my own views, likely similarly affected by my bias, by looking for insights in what statements were made that were opposite of key emergent themes.
(i.e., instead of communication, where was there discussion about the absence of communication).

**Researcher.**

As a researcher, I was interested in defaulting to certain themes that seemed to logically make sense. I began using In Vivo coding to require myself to group existing terms apart from anything I might elect to chunk on a descriptive or values basis where I thought positionality would be more likely to manifest. Instead, by concurrently doing In Vivo coding, I wanted to determine whether the emergent themes were shared.

My previous research in parental engagement programs was aligned to many of my findings. For example, I expected that parental perception of their own efficacy would be a driver of their behavior change. However, I was surprised how clearly and open parents were to receiving specific techniques and strategies, even to the degree of something as prescriptive as a manual, as an acceptable and effective source of content. I was also surprised how enthusiastic parents seemed regarding "guided practice", including role play dramatizations as a method to become proficient in these newly introduced strategies and techniques.

Based on various parental engagement theories, I expected certain themes would emerge in a more pronounced way, while I expected others to not appear as quite so significant. Some of these I mention in the Practitioner and Change Agent section.

**Practitioner and Change Agent.**

As a practitioner and change agent, I did not expect the extent to which participants did not recognize a need in their behavior change until multiple group sessions. This insight spoke to the concept of meeting participants where they are, even if they do not recognize a need. The practitioner role may be more to help reveal, identify the need, and progress. Since my
practitioner role is more in the intervention design process and approving of intervention work plans, this tells me that more time may be required. The structure of a program as effective as this also requires a high cost per beneficiary. However the qualitative impact on the participants make me infer that the cost to benefit ratio makes this worthwhile; there is value for money in this scenario.

Though intellectually I was very aware of the influence of group dynamics, the importance of the group was greater than anticipated. This is another factor that I would have underemphasized. As a result of this study, I will seek to ensure there is an adequately allocated level of effort to this component because of the likely return on investment.

Participants also referred to the importance of choice in topics and that parents felt that they drove group discussion topics. This is by no means an unexpected driver of parental enthusiasm for programs directed at them (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). However participants did draw contrasts between the Miles de Manos (MdM) program and that of “Escuela de Padres”. They noted that in Escuela de Padres, parents had no say on the topics. Instead a facilitator would visit and present to them about key issues, possibly including guest speakers.

**Desired outcome of study.**

My desired outcome of this study were to get a more robust understanding about parental engagement programs. In particular, I was interested in considering participant experience in the framework of the seminal article by Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997), which focuses on parental perceptions of efficacy of action, parent perceptions of their role, and the invitation by the school for the parent to participate. Secondly, I was interested in understanding how participants understood their experience and processed in the context of Social Behavior Change
theory specifically related to key determinants of behavior change and barriers (Fishbein & Cappella, 2006).

From that understanding, I believe I could better evaluate existing parental engagement programs and provide more informed input into the intervention design process for programs related to my work.

The data collected does let me achieve these outcomes.
Chapter 5 – Implications

Implications and Utility of this Study

Study results will provide key insights to implementers, donors/funders, school officials, and other practitioners. After initial data analysis, program managers were asked verify certain information that came out during interviews. Program implementers noted that various insights could influence the structure and resource allocation of the program--either as new information or validation of their own observations. For example, there was particular interest in identifying specific points on a timeline or among a range of activities at which parents most frequently realized they needed to learn other approaches. That was the point at which they became active participations in internalizing the new approaches and seeking out relevant information specific to their own goals.

At the start of program involvement, participants did not recognize they needed support or help. In many cases, they joined out of curiosity or because they hoped to learn a specific technique. Based on past experience, they often expected to be passive recipients of canned information session. However their views changed after they were in the sessions and were heard by and heard from other parents. Many facets of the identified themes, including communication, role play, and interaction with parent peers, contributed to this change among parents. For program implementers, this sort of information would help more effectively allocate resources. For program designers and donors, this information helps elevate the value of certain criteria for evaluating proposals. It also puts greater emphasis in certain performance indicators related to monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

This study has significant potential for serving as a platform for future quantitative studies based on the identified thematic areas. Presently, the findings allow for qualitative
reflection on where emphasis and effort should be placed. However, there is a need for a clearer sense of the effect size associated with different components or intervention types—either in isolation or combined with other interventions. Such a quantitative study could help this and other programs increase their overall effectiveness and provide better value for money through more narrowly focusing on activities that show the highest effect size relative to the target population.

Another key insight was that cohort support and the structure of that cohort was very important in helping parents move forward. Group discussions among participating parents, particularly parents recounting their individual stories and role play scenarios were often triggers leading parents to realize they needed to change their ways and learn to do things differently. Parents noted that role plays were the most uncomfortable but often most impactful. This is helpful for facilitators to know that there is a return on their efforts in spite of any demonstrated resistance—and often parents resist the role plays.

Participants repeatedly identified their ability to discuss topics that were important for them as a distinguishing characteristic of this program compared to other parental engagement models where involvement was passive. In other programs, the provided information was not the result of parental choice. In this program, the personal parental discussions, guided by facilitators, ensured that agenda items were relevant and purposeful to those specific program participants. This was restated during interviews and linked to identified themes; communication, fear, barriers, and key determinants. Such key insights help practitioners hone in on these aspects of future project proposals to ensure greater effectiveness. Similarly, there are many components that lend themselves to quantitative research and identification of effect sizes varied by intervention and disaggregation of target population segment.
Study findings may also indicate the value of incorporating opportunities for parents to quickly experience success. For example, Guskey (1986) has noted that when training teachers, participants will not change behaviors or attitudes until they personally experience success with a method or an approach. Considering the role of experiential triggers that lead participants towards more actively driving the learning process, program designers may wish to identify “quick wins” that could potentially accelerate this process.

Participants also noted their strong level of interest in a next level or follow-on program. This means that there is the potential for a multi-level program if that is desired. This could also serve as a basis for sustaining and strengthening the role of the cohort group as an informal support network. Alternately, this insight conveys that participants don't necessarily feel ready to act or experiment based on their unguided or self-structure reflection. If the intent is for participants to indeed feel ready, then something some key determinant for that behavior change is missing or there continues to exist an obstacle that was not overcome in the course of the program.

The importance of parental authority and perceptions of control are valuable for project implementers. Most parents alluded to something akin to a social contract between parent and child being established as a result of participation. There was some concern whether one could confuse the concept of a “social contract” with the giving up of parental authority. Program managers noted that their intent was not to take away from parental authority, but to teach parents how to be less authoritarian in their approach. This concern linked to control appeared in various emergent themes and may be a contextually specific factor (e.g., El Salvador). Project facilitators can be helped by staying cognizant of this dynamic. This is also an area where future qualitative and quantitative research could take place.
**Limitations**

The findings of this study provide key insights linked to the personal experience of a small sample of program participants. These findings give an indication of the likely experience and dynamics of other participants in this program and are likely indicative of the evolution of perceptions in similarly structured programs. However, the limits of the population sampled mean that further study is necessary before one could extrapolate effectiveness of program components.

This study can provide parameters and contexts for considering future program design, monitoring and evaluation, and project implementation. It should also provide opportunities to identify specific quantitative studies regarding specific interventions or groups of interventions across variations of the target population. Absence such quantitative analysis regarding effect sizes, there are limitations to using this study for predict specific levels of resource allocation and effort relative to outcomes desired.

**Research questions and Themes**

The overarching research question focused on how parents perceive the efficacy of their own parental engagement in the context of participating in a parent program focused on preventing community crime and violence. The data showed that parental perceptions of efficacy went through an unexpected wave: Parents often joined the program unsure if they needed to do something different, possibly just looking for ideas and situation-specific techniques. At their point of entrance, parents may have had a higher level of confidence in their skills and effectiveness as parents than they would during the stage that parents realized they may actually be causing harm.

As parents became involved in the program, discussing how their interaction with their children, parents began to realize that they may not be applying best practices. In multiple
instances, parents recognized they might be harming their children. At this stage, parents experienced significant doubt, shame, and sadness. Parents likely had the lowest levels of perceived efficacy in their actions. This is when they were most interested in learning new approaches. It was likely the moment of the highest potential for transformation because participants were hungry not only to do something different, but to accept and experiment with both other methodologies and participate in guided practice. This information is important because it adds significant color to the contextual landscape of what is a transformational process for parents. Understanding this context is helpful to implementers, designers, and project donors/funders.

Parents identified their time with peers, the facilitators, and the materials is particularly relevant and purposeful. Far from being passive recipients of information, they came to sessions with concrete ideas. They listened to their colleagues for opportunities to mine information. They also sought to share their own insights and experiences to help other members of their cohort. In this stage, parents become reflective practitioners with gradually increasing perceptions of perceived efficacy of action. This information is important because it indicates the point at which project activities should focus on offering alternate approaches with the opportunity to practice these activities. It also indicates how other programs can go about creating an enabling environment for participant receptivity to new ways of doing things.

The teachers and schools were linked into program activities. Since during this stage parents were particularly interested in gaining tools and understanding regarding how to actually apply the new approached they were learning and reading about, parents were similarly more open to consider how they fit with the school. Instead of being seen as a separate unit, parents referred to a greater sense of partnership with school personnel. This strengthened relationship
between schools and families are transmitted to parents providing them the necessary cultural capital to play a more effective role vis-a-vis teachers and the school. This reaffirms the importance of school involvement and clarifies the often-confusing role of what Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) called the invitation for parents to engage.

As the program would near its completion, participants spoke about having the necessary tools to be more effective parents; they felt empowered and better equipped to monitor, supervise, mentor, and encourage their children. However more importantly, they talked about having a conceptual space or framework whereby they could consider new situations. In this sense, participants had a metacognitive space of which they were not aware when first entering the program. Parents were not only more confident, but they were more ready to be attentive and engaged when new situations arose. Often when first entering the program, parents had default behaviors about which they had not thought about (e.g., yelling, hitting, making demands) that were often what they experienced from their own parents.

Themes
There were four key themes that emerged which included the following: 1) Communication through discussion and dialogue 2) Key determinants: Realization need to do something new; 3) Fear; 4) Barriers: Transformation and getting from point A to point B.

Within the context of the communication theme, key sub-areas included discussion/dialogue, related barriers, and peer group linkages. The link to the research question was that through communication (between each other, with their children, and the realization of alternate strategies) parents perceived the efficacy of their own parental engagement which evolved in the context of their participation in the parent program. The program functioned as a venue where parents could recognize when they might be causing harm, they lacked knowledge
of alternate strategies, they felt shame upon recognizing the effect of harmful behaviors, and where parents received the support (through peers and facilitators) for guided practice toward an alternate approach.

A second theme was also a key determinant for behavior change--parental realization that they needed to do something new. This related to sub-areas such as a sense of shame once the parent has realized their action may have caused harm. Parents recognized their potential to provide better parenting. They also recognized the parental role as something that should be innately positive. These factors made parents more amenable to active participation in guided practice and group discussions, supporting their improved effectiveness. The link to the original research question is that all of these factors contribute to more effective parenting, increasing the possibility of reducing risky behaviors in their children. The program provided a structured venue where parents can come to this realization, attempt to replace ineffective behaviors, and practice their application in a safe space.

Another significant theme is fear, which was very closely linked to this are sub-areas of gangs and parental perceptions of control. Repeatedly parents commented on the sense of fear, related to gang-associated activities, and their desire to control their children’s exposure to the outside as part of an effort to protect them. The link to the research question is that through alternate strategies, parents can support their children without being oppressive or authoritarian. It also helped parents develop discipline related strategies that are more positive and less punitive. As a result, parents perceived the efficacy of their own parental engagement which evolves in the context of their participation in the parent program.

The fourth theme was also a potential barrier to behavior change: the transformative process of moving from how one viewed their role when entering and how that changed through
the program. Sub-themes concentrated on behavior change. A sense of shame played a key role. Participants often noted that the sense of shame that opened them up to experimenting was something that helped them overcome the obstacles toward change. This change typically included the learning of new strategies, including communication and emotional control. This linked to the research question in that through this transformation, parents became more engaged and effective in monitoring and supervising their children. They also became more effective partners with schools and teachers, helping to leverage that relationship in support of reducing risk-related behaviors in their children.

**Themes link to frameworks**

The themes reveal the importance of identifying the key drivers and obstacles in social behavior change. The themes reaffirm the framework of Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) that the three key drivers of engagement are parental perceptions of the efficacy of their actions, perceived parental role identification, and the invitation to participate. This also aligns with Fishbein & Capella’s Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) model.

The themes accentuate the importance of behavior determinants. This is a key construct in Fishbein & Capella’s (2006) framework and key when considering participant experience. The themes which emerged provide a guide for systematically considering which facets and determinants of behavior are most essential. These essential facets and determinants help clarify which interventions should be considered for quantitative evaluation regarding possible effect sizes. Fishbein & Capella’s SBCC model also places significant importance on intent, identifying three categorical determinants of behavior: “attitude toward performing the behavior, perceived norms concerning performance of the behavior, and self-efficacy with respect to performing the behavior” (p. S3). These three factors combined result in “a very high
probability that the behavior will be performed” (p. S2). These are conceptually similar to the key tenets of Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) seminal theory on parental engagement. Themes that emerged through participant interviews helped narrow, focus, and solidify both potential quantitative and qualitative efforts to design effective parental engagement interventions.

**Link to Literature Review**

Study findings align to insights highlighted in the literature review. In brief, participants needed to recognize the value of an alternate strategy (possibly through experiencing success with the new approach) before they began to drive the learning process. As participants gained a new knowledge and greater awareness, there was a change in perceptions of their own efficacy. Often participants from less affluent or advantaged backgrounds had lower confidence for a variety of reasons, some noted below. In particular, less affluent socio-economic groups often have informal networks made up of people largely like themselves and have fewer individuals with technical and/or professional skills to advise them. The program cohort has the potential of informing participants with such higher value skills so that the cohort could function as a more diversified and effective informal network for participants.

This study added to what is known about this subject matter in that the data provided a strong indication that parents needed to first lose confidence in their existing practice before they could really become engaged and essentially drive the process for learning and practicing new approaches. Some parents upon program entry felt they were generally capable, but wanted to learn techniques for specific situation so they could become more engaged. This aligned with the view that, “Efficacy beliefs are the foundations of human agency” (Caprara, Regalia, Scabini, Barbaranelli, & Bandura 2004, p. 247). This was also supported by Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler...
that if parents feel confident that their actions will have a positive effect, they are more likely to act.

The study further supported the view that parents from disadvantaged groups are more likely to have concerns about their own efficacy as compared to parents who have higher levels of education. With higher levels of education come higher confidence that is directly related to self-perceptions of efficacy (Warren et al, p. 2213). This was borne out in the interview responses—parents with higher levels of education consistently seemed to demonstrate a higher level of confidence, both when they spoke about their practice before joining the program and their transition over time.

Social and intellectual capital functioned as an entry point for supporting parental perceptions of efficacy and connections to the school. Teacher participation was a key determinant. At the start of the program, parents often assumed that the school would not be their natural allies. Instead, parents preferred to keep their distance from people in positions of authority, to be distrustful of institutions, and, at times, to resist officials' authority (Larreau, 2002). This is something that the program sought to remedy. Development of social capital is also helped by participation of wider family. In the case of the program, children of participant’s played this role. This supported theories that elevate the importance of parent-child communication as a key determinant in positive parental engagement.

The study also reinforced the role of social capital, as defined by Coleman (1988), a by-product that develops out of communal activities (Coleman 1988)—in the case of families, this could be the time spent together that supports a stronger parent-child relationship (and consequently, supports the development of human capital). Children of participants also had opportunities to participate and specific roles to play. This helped increase the overall capacity
of all family members to function as a mutual support unit, as well as supporting their connection to the school.

The study also affirmed the value of social and intellectual capital as an entry point for supporting parental perceptions of efficacy. By involving teachers in the process and the context of the school, it helped parents develop greater trust, understanding of the system, and access channels of information, “all of which supported enhanced relationships, social ties, and access to resources” (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011, p. 29).

This study very much validates the theories of Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) regarding how new intellectual capital can be created, especially as related to their concept of “combination”. This means that a parent’s existing knowledge evolved through positive interaction with their social environment towards a new understanding. This new understanding creates links between previously unconnected information that help the parent grasp a new perspective. As noted previously, the process seems to have some similarities with Guskey’s (1986) theory for changing teacher practice by changing attitudes through teachers experiencing success in experimenting with new practices based on existing knowledge and interacting with their present instructional environment. This study also affirmed the view that a guided, participatory process whereby parents process new information as a group appears to empower parents and increase the positive effect they can have on their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

One noted finding was how initial participation interactions directly contributed to participants recognizing their own need for the program and allocating more value to it. This aligns with and contributes to the existing understanding of social capital creation serving as the basis for the creation of intellectual capital through social interaction (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011). The key factor noted in the program was the catalytic effect of social capital because
other members of the group similarly believed the meaning making (or the creation of social and intellectual capital) was worthwhile and perceived a personal return on that interaction. Both individual and group networks evolved into relationships where there was ongoing, bidirectional information sharing resulting in the recognized value (what might be termed social capital development) contributing better to intellectual capital. According to Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011 (p. 11), essential elements for development of intellectual capital include: “(a) combination and exchange of individuals’ knowledge leading to innovation and (b) the generation of new community knowledge that is greater than that possessed by any one individual in the community”.

A possible area for expanded research could include how the creation of such program or class-based cohorts can be sustained as informal networks with the capacity of providing quality guidance to members. This was shown in the data collected: Most parents did not have anyone in their social network that had the technical or professional skill to provide alternate strategies. Participants often noted that their original method of parenting was something that they and their extended family had simply defaulted. They did not have anyone in their network suggesting alternate strategies.

Many working-class parents often have a greater proportion of similarly skilled extended family members in their informal networks (Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau, 2003, p. 338). In contrast, middle class parents not only have greater personal social capital, but have intellectual capital in their collective networks, often including professional expertise typically absent from network of parents from disadvantaged groups (Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau, 2003). The program cohorts have the potential of continuing, particularly considering the expressed interest by members for a follow-on program. If, indeed, members gain characteristics of what is often
referred to as a reflective practitioner, these cohort groups may have embedded a higher-level skill set which can guide these parents towards greater success.

This study and particularly the emergent theme of communication very solidly supports Jeynes’ (2010) definition of effective parental engagement which places particular emphasis on the quality of communication. Jeynes (2010) states that it is not simply asking the right questions, but the “reciprocal communication in families that is important” (p. 752), which fosters an atmosphere more supportive of academic achievement. Both the program and literature affirm the value of interventions focused on disadvantaged parents that have “parents engage in learning activities with their children and communicate effectively with teachers” (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005)

Participants noted that they originally viewed the school as something distant. Their assumption was that the school would not be their natural allies. The relationship was almost antagonistic in that parents assumed that if they raised a question to the school, school staff would view it as a question of their authority and, by reflex, would take a position most advantageous to school personnel and at the expense of the parent. This view aligns with Lareau (2002) statement: “Implicitly and explicitly, parents taught their children to keep their distance from people in positions of authority, to be distrustful of institutions, and, at times, to resist officials’ authority. Children seemed to absorb the adults' feelings of powerlessness in their institutional relationships” (p. 773). It is valuable to note that the program sought to change parent perceptions of their potential relationship with the school.

**Direct application and Reciprocity with participants of this project**

Key findings of this research will be shared with project management at the German International Development Cooperation (GIZ). Findings will also inform parent-program related
components of education program design efforts at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)\(^1\) offices in El Salvador and will be disseminated internally in USAID as appropriate. It is expected that key findings will also be shared with the National Directorate of Violence Prevention within El Salvador’s Ministry of Education which has a Memorandum of Understanding with GiZ, the key donor funder of the program.

\(^1\) The opinions and views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of USAID.
References


Appendix A: Interview Questions

Info collected on arrival: Municipality and department of birth and residence

Introductory material
1. How did you come to participate in this program?
2. How would you describe yourself as a person?
   a. Prompt:
      i. What is your life like outside of this program?
      ii. How do you feel about yourself?
3. What did you expect the program to be like?
   a. Prompt:
      i. How did the program compare to your expectation?
4. Could you tell me what you are like as a parent?
   a. Prompt:
      i. How you see your role related to your child?
      ii. What you did before as compared to how you do things now?
5. What is your best experience in the program?
   a. Prompt:
      i. Your worst or most difficult/challenging experience?
6. Can you tell me when you realized that you needed parenting help?
   a. Prompt:
      i. How did you feel at that time?
      ii. What prompted it?
      iii. How has the program helped?

Parent communication and guidance
7. What aspects of the program help you feel like you can better guide your child?
   a. Prompts:
      i. How is that helpful?
      ii. How did the program help you better understand how to work with the school and other service providers (intellectual/social capital)?
8. How did your situation change as it related to your role as a parent?
   a. Prompts:
      i. In what ways?
      ii. Does anything make it better?
      iii. Does anything make it worse?
      iv. How do you feel about these changes?
9. How are you able to be more effective now when you communicate with your child?
   a. Prompts:
      i. Why is that more effective?
      ii. Why is that important?
      iii. How is that different from what you did before?
      iv. How do you feel after an interaction with your child considering what you learned from the program?

Drivers of behavior change:
10. Can you tell me about a recent time when you feel you were able to leverage something you learned from the program?
   a. Prompts:
      i. What happened, how did you feel?
      ii. How did you cope?
      iii. Focus on learning, utility, efficacy, agency

11. Can you describe how some aspect of the program has affected your relationship with your children and/or other people?
   a. Prompts:
      i. Key drivers-obstacles to change?
      ii. Focus on child/partner

12. Do you experiment with new ways of doing things now compared to before? Why/why not?
Appendix B: Letter of Permission
April 24, 2017

Ms. Rubeena Esmail
Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
Prevencion de la Violencia
Juvenil en Centroamerica
PREVENIR
Director

Dear Ms. Esmail:

I am currently doing graduate work in education at Northeastern University, and am preparing to begin work on a research project. My research topic is to understand how parental engagement programs, like “Miles de Manos” is successful, particularly from the perspective of parents. This research will highlight the role of parental engagement programs generally, encouraging schools—especially those with a high incidence of community violence, crime, school dropout, and low school retention rates—to implement parental engagement programs that target parents of youth in neighborhoods with high rates of crime and gang activity.

No participants in the research will be enrolled at project schools, though their children likely will be. Given the central location of schools in the community, there may be occasions where the interviews will take place on campus in a quiet but visible location. The interviews that form the bulk of data will be collected in accordance with all acceptable Institutional Review Board protocols, including signed consent forms. Participation will be voluntary and will not involve any conflict of interest.

This research will also support work I do as part of my normal responsibilities as Education Team Leader for USAID/El Salvador and our efforts towards effective collaboration with the GIZ Prevenir in the education development sector in El Salvador.

In following accepted research protocol, I will keep all the data I collect completely confidential and will not use any student’s or parent’s name in any research reports.

No information that I present will be linked to any personal information that could be used to identify individual parents or students. I am confident that I have taken the necessary steps to ensure that my research will be conducted in ways that meet ethical standards and will begin research once I have received permission from the Institutional Review Board. I have attached the consent letters that I wish to give to participating parents.

Please sign below and return a copy of this letter to me indicating whether or not you give me permission to conduct this research project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Timothy G. Curtin
Appendix C: Informed Consent

**Northeastern University**

*Human Subject Research Protection*

(Universidad de Northeastern: Protección de Sujetos Humanos de Investigación)

**Signed Informed Consent Document: Department of Education**

**Name of Investigator(s):** Kristal Clemons, Principal Investigator, Timothy G. Curtin, Student Researcher

**Title of Project:** Empowered and Equipped: Salvadoran Parents Helping Their Children Continue in School and Avoid Violent Gangs.

**Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have regarding the study or your participation. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

**Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?**

You are being asked to participate because you fit the demographic of a Salvadoran parent from a municipality recognized as having high levels of crime and community violence according to El Salvador’s Security Plans (“Plan El Salvador Seguro”).

**Why is this research study being done?**

The purpose of this study is to understand how parental engagement programs, like “Miles de Manos” are successful, particularly from the perspective of parents. This research will highlight the role of parental engagement programs generally, encouraging schools—especially those with a high incidence of community violence, crime, school dropout, and low school retention rates—to implement parental engagement programs that target parents of youth in neighborhoods with high rates of crime and gang activity.

**What will I be asked to do?**

If you choose to take part in this research, you will be asked to sit for an initial interview. You’ll have questions regarding your background, educational experiences, experience with the GIZ Prevenir Miles de Manos (Thousand Hands) parental engagement activity. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. The transcribed interview will be sent to you, after which a follow-up interview will take place to allow you to clarify your answers or to add to your remarks.

**Where will this take place and how much time will it take?**
The initial interview will take place at a time and location of your choosing, provided that this location allows for a quiet conversation and appropriate privacy. If you do not have a preferred location, the researcher will arrange a quiet location at school to conduct the interview (note that this researcher/interviewer is not an employee of the school). The initial interview will not last more than 90 minutes. After you have had the opportunity to review (read or hear) the initial transcript, a follow-up interview will take place if requested. The follow-up interview will not last more than 40 minutes.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**
There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort to you during this research.

**Will I benefit from being in this research?**
There are no direct benefits for you, although the data that your interview supplies may help other parents who experience similar challenges with their children. Your interview could help inform the researcher how parental engagement support activities can help reduce crime, gang-related recruitment, and community violence.

**Who will see the information about me?**
Your participation in this study will be confidential. Only the researcher on this study will know your real name and/or information about you and what you have shared. A pseudonym will be given at the start of this interview. Only the researcher and you will know which participant is linked to which pseudonym. All data is recorded and transcribed using this pseudonym. Once the transcribed interview is reviewed by you, the original recording will be stored in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's home until it is destroyed along with all information regarding the link between your real name and the pseudonym. No reports or publications will use information that will identify you in any way without your expressed written permission.

The only limit to this confidentiality would be legal-reporting requirements on the researcher, e.g., information regarding child abuse. In rare cases, authorized persons may request access to information to ensure that research was done properly. Only those persons who are authorized by Northeastern University Institutional Review Board would be given that permission, and you would be notified.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**
No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of your participation in this research.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any questions. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate, you will not lose any rights, benefits or services that you would otherwise have.

**Who can I contact if I have a problem or question?**
You may always contact the student researcher, Timothy Curtin at curtin.t@husky.neu.edu or the Principal Investigator (faculty advisor) Kristal Clemons at K.Clemons@northeastern.edu.
Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, Mail Stop: 560-177, 360 Huntington Avenue, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?
There is no monetary compensation for your participation, although you will be given the cost of a small meal and drink (approximately $5-7) and the cost of round trip travel to the location (approximately $3-5) at the end of the initial interview. I will provide the same for a second time after the participant reads through the final transcript and verifies the accuracy of the transcription. These are an expression of appreciation for your time in volunteering for this research.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
There will be no cost associated with your participation in this study.

I agree to take part in this research.

____________________________________  ______________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part    Date

____________________________________  ______________________________
Printed name of person agreeing to take part    Printed Pseudonym

____________________________________
Signature of person who explained the study and obtained consent of above person    Date

____________________________________
Printed name of person above