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Education Organizing, Policy Advocacy and Restrictive Language Policies:  
How Activist Organizations Define and Remedy Educational Inequality for  
English Learners in a Post-Proposition 227 Era

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

by

Gabriel Aristeo Baca

2014

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2014

## ABTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Education Organizing, Policy Advocacy and Restrictive Language Policies:  
How Activist Organizations Define and Remedy Educational Inequality for  
English Learners in a Post-Proposition 227 Era

by

Gabriel Aristeo Baca

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Marjorie E. Orellana, Chair

Given the failure of many traditional educational reform strategies, education organizing is increasingly seen by equity reformers as a promising alternative approach to attain more equitable schooling for students learning English in under-resourced communities. Dozens of organizing groups have entered the field of education reform in the last decade, helping to change the landscape of education politics in powerful ways. In the Southwest, many of these groups hope to remedy the deplorable state of education for English learners, as evidenced by high drop-out rates and poor test scores, and counter the onerous effects of education policies that position English as the superior and legitimate language to be learned in school.

This activism around education has been examined very infrequently either by scholars in education or by scholars of social movements. Moreover, almost nothing is known about how these groups grapple with, make sense of, and ultimately take action around English learner issues. This study begins to fill this gap. Relying on a blended conceptual framework which draws from studies of equity reform in education, scholarship on education organizing and social movement theory and employing a comparative case study design, this study documents how activist groups use a variety of tools to advocate for English learners and hold the system accountable for their learning opportunities and outcomes.

Specifically, the study examines how a coalition focused on equity education policy for English learners, and three of its constituent groups, define problems and their sources; the types of strategies used by these groups aimed at remedying problems identified; and the extent to which organizational factors influence both the problem identification process and the kinds of campaigns and tactics utilized in moving equity agendas forward.

The findings illustrate how activist groups focus not only on a wide variety of issues around English learner policy and practice situating agency and the problem identification process within the context of lived experience but they also differ in the way organizers conceptualize the primary sources of inequality and thus offer distinct approaches in where to locate valuable time and resources aimed at remedying it.

The dissertation of Gabriel Aristeo Baca is approved.

John S. Rogers

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Marjorie E. Orellana, Committee Chair

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2014

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife, Gabriela T. Baca, whose faith and perseverance inspired me throughout the entire dissertation process, and to my two children Natalhie Anastasia Baca and Joshua Alexander Baca, who offered constant support, love and laughter.

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I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to my dissertation committee, Marjorie E. Orellana, John S. Rogers, Gary L. Blasi and Megan L. Franke for their tireless efforts in reading drafts, listening to and addressing any concerns, and for providing insight and inspiration when such a time required it. I'm also indebted to Norm Gold, Shelly Coleman, Maria S. Quezada, Barbara Flores, Gabriel Medel, Stephen Hammell, Veronica Velez and Jeannie Oakes who gave generously of their time in reviewing and enhancing portions of the narrative at different stages of the writing process. Finally, to all my students, past and present, and to all the equity reformers in the community in which I hail from, thank you for your commitment to meaningful change and for making Coachella, California an exciting and wonderful place to live and work.

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**Founder/Editor, Coachella Valley Educational Justice Project, UCLA/Coachella, CA**  
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**Graduate Student Researcher, UCLA Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles**  
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**Intern, Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund or MALDEF, Los Angeles, CA**  
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- Conducted research examining parental programs in the city of Houston
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**Research Associate, WestEd, National Nonprofit and Service Agency, San Francisco, CA**

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- Interviewed state officials and collected data for the completion of a brief examining the extent to which ten state education agencies collect and analyze data for their secondary English learners

**Graduate Student Researcher, UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education & Access (IDEA), Los Angeles, CA**

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- Participated in Education Justice Collaborative meetings, aiding in the development of a strategic action plan around advocacy efforts in the settlement of the case
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**Intern, U.S. Department of Education, OELA, Washington D.C.**

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## **Chapter One**

### **Education Organizing, Policy Advocacy and the Accountability Gap:**

#### **A New Approach for Equity-Focused Education Reform for English Learners**

##### *Introduction*

Given the failure of many traditional educational reform strategies, education organizing is increasingly seen by equity reformers as a promising alternative approach to attain more equitable schooling for students learning English in under-resourced communities. Dozens of organizing groups have entered the field of education reform in the last decade, helping to change the landscape of education politics in powerful ways. In the Southwest, many of these groups hope to remedy the deplorable state of education for English learners, as evidenced by high drop-out rates and poor test scores, and counter the onerous effects of education policies that position English as the superior and legitimate language to be learned in school.

This activism around education has been examined very infrequently either by scholars in education or by scholars of social movements. Moreover, almost nothing is known about how these groups grapple with, make sense of, and ultimately take action around English learner issues. This study begins to fill this gap. Relying on a blended conceptual framework which draws from studies of equity reform in education, scholarship on education organizing and social movement theory and employing a comparative case study design, this study documents how activist groups use a variety of tools, some grounded in political and legal interaction, to advocate for English learners

and hold the system accountable for their learning opportunities and outcomes. Specifically, the study examines how a coalition focused on equity education policy for English learners, and three of its constituent groups each employing very different organizing models, define problems and their sources; the types of strategies used by these groups aimed at remedying problems identified; and the extent to which organizational factors influence both the problem identification process and the kinds of campaigns and tactics utilized in moving equity agendas forward. By situating the study within the context of NCLB implementation in California, attention is given to the complex processes through which education organizing, policy advocacy and restrictive language policies intersect.

These groups do not operate in a vacuum: they must contend with the existing policy contexts that enable and/or constrain them. Because of the power of these contexts, it is important to deconstruct the logic behind much current policy and expose the assumptions and predispositions it reflects. Doing so, we gain a better understanding of the landscape on which equity-focused agendas advanced by activist organizations are constructed and contested. Given the focus of this study, understanding the rationale behind the sociopolitical forces that influence the construction of school-related policies is particularly important.

As Sonia Nieto (1998) reminds us, school reform strategies that do not acknowledge macro-level realities, the larger societal and political forces at play that have an impact on student learning, are little more than wishful thinking since they assume that all students begin their educational experiences on a level playing field. And this becomes particularly important when dealing with issues of language, such as which language to

use for instruction and which language to allow in state testing. School-related policies are the product of political decisions (Freire, 1985) administered by powerful institutions and carry an enormous amount of ideological weight (Shohamy, 2001), and these messages are in turn communicated to students, parents and communities either directly or indirectly with potentially harmful effects (Nieto, 1998; Cummins, 1986, 2001).

## **I. The Policy Context**

### *Market-Based Accountability Systems and Restrictive Language Policies: The Perfect Contextual Storm*

No Child Left Behind and the California Schools Accountability Act of 1999 envision a world in which all students have access to high-quality teaching, adequate instructional materials, and fair assessments that allow them to demonstrate content knowledge, and the range of supports students need to succeed (Public Education Network, 2003). In addition, these policies also envision a world in which parents and school communities use the information reported by local, state and federal systems to help them make informed decisions about the educational welfare of the children and students in their care and motivate and compel the educational system to truly leave no child behind (Rogers, 2006; 2004; Jones, Jones & Hargrove, 2003).

The rationale for the current policy context rests on a presumably simple premise: with reliable information about gaps in student achievement (Public Education Network, 2003) stakeholders will act to build strengths and remedy deficiencies (Linn, 2005) in order to ensure that all students, including English learners, are afforded high-quality educational opportunities and, if not, parents can choose to go elsewhere. Policymakers



are thus banking on the notion that, by requiring the results of assessments and quality of school conditions to be reported on various indicators, school communities and parents will have access to important pieces of information about how well students and schools are performing in their neighborhoods and pressure the education system to address any persistent deficiencies in educational opportunities and outcomes (Rogers, 2006; Fusarelli, 2004).

In California, these market-driven mechanisms for accountability operate within the context of restrictive language policies. In 1998, California voters passed Proposition 227, the “English for the Children” initiative with 61% of the vote, prohibiting the use of language other than English for instruction in the state’s public schools. One major impact of this reform effort was to limit the opportunities for English learners to receive instruction in their home language or to use their primary language for learning purposes (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez & Asato, 2000).

Some analysts have concluded that these English-only policies illustrate the xenophobic tendencies and hostility that the dominant society views of culturally and linguistically diverse student learners (Ovando, 2003). Because of the politics involved in issues around language, arguments surrounding their social construction and use will inevitably come to include complex issues of political power, cultural identity and social status (Ovando, 2003). And with changing demographics and greater media attention on issues such as immigration, it comes as no surprise that a mono-lingual sentiment embedded in “symbolic politics” will be heightened despite the fact that many immigrants are learning English (Cummins, 1986, 2001; Wiley, 1996) and despite the fact that use of the primary language has been supported by government agencies through

corporate contracts and investments and when it suited military purposes (Otheguy, 1982).

Proponents of this initiative were able to capitalize on an existing set of ethnic fears and beliefs of a voting public unrepresentative of the state of California and marshaled the support necessary to ensure its successful passage (Olsen, 1998). Shultz (1998) attributed the inability of opponents to successfully counter the initiative to a lack of mobilization of grassroots support in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, especially among the parents of children in bilingual programs.

In addition, growing dissatisfaction with the public school system by California voters due to decades of funding constraints as a result of Proposition 13—a property tax limitation adopted in 1978 that has led to reductions in per-pupil spending and poor test scores in reading and math—further fueled the fire against any redistributive reforms (Shultz, 1998). Gutierrez, Asato, Santos and Gotanda (2002) argue that this political backlash is grounded in discontent over recent trends in California, “notably the increasing political influence and social presence of people of color, particularly immigrant Latinos coupled with a perceived loss of entitlement due to perceived decreases in access to elite educational institutions and to the marketplace” (338).

The media also played a large role in helping to shape public opinion in favor of the initiative. For example, prior to the passage of the referendum, popular media consistently reported that over 80% of Latinos—the ethnic group most impacted by the initiative—favored the measure, when in fact subsequent exit-poll findings reported that over 63% of Latinos actually voted against the measure (Pyle, McDonnell & Tobar, 1998). According to Crawford (1998), the distorted and unbalanced coverage in favor of

Proposition 227 illustrated the power of narrative, “the creative and compelling use of human dramas and situations, against bilingual education.” In addition, Crawford argues that framing the arguments around language of instruction as the primary variable in public debates, diverted “attention away from factors such as student poverty, lack of access to reading materials, and the shortage of trained teachers,” while also “deliberately portrayed Ron Unz as the advocate against unresponsive schools casting opponents in an unfamiliar and uncomfortable role as defenders of the status quo” (Crawford, 1998).

In the immediate aftermath of its enactment, lawsuits were filed asserting violations of existing statutes and claiming infringement of civil rights. The ruling of the Supreme Court in Lau v Nichols served as the foundation through which subsequent legislation and court precedent established that students’ language rights were also civil rights (Herrera & Murray, 1999). In Lau v. Nichols, the Supreme Court wrote:

*There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum: for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education. Basic English skills are at the very core of what these public schools teach. Imposition of a requirement that, before a child can effectively participate in the educational program he must have already acquired those basic skills, is to make a mockery of public education. We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful (Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563, 1974).*

Proposition 227 has withstood challenges in the California courts (Archerd, 2006). California’s teachers’ union sued the state to invalidate the initiative because it allowed anyone to file a lawsuit against a teacher for using a child’s primary language for instructional purposes (Gándara & Baca, 2008). The union argued that the law was vague and that it failed to provide firm guidelines about what was meant by instruction

occurring “overwhelmingly” in English (Gándara & Baca, 2008). They argued that the law created anxiety in teachers about what amount of primary language was permissible. The plaintiffs also showed how the dictum to teach overwhelmingly in English was interpreted radically differently in different districts (Gándara & Baca, 2008). The common thread, though, was that from classroom to classroom, and from school to school, teachers and principals were making their own judgments about what the law intended (Gándara & Baca, 2008). Nevertheless, the district court found that the language was not excessively vague finding ways to reinterpret the Lau decision in favor of existing state policies.

While under state and federal education accountability policies, student testing and informed parents—parental involvement is mentioned more than one hundred times in the NCLB Act—are seen as the primary levers in correcting a wide variety of educational problems (Rogers, 2006). Under Proposition 227 parents are also seen as potentially powerful agents in educational improvement efforts for students learning English through the newly acquired “power” parents have in requesting and signing parental consent forms for any children receiving instruction in the primary language (Herrera & Murray, 1999).

The confluence of these two very powerful sets of legislation, market-based accountability and restrictive language policies, has created a volatile policy context with serious repercussions for the schools and communities that serve the 1.8 million English learners that comprise almost a fourth of California’s k-12 enrollment, 84% of whom speak Spanish (Gándara & Baca, 2008). Notably, English learners are more likely to be enrolled in high-poverty, “Program Improvement” schools (Oakes, Rogers, Valladares,

Medina, Terriquez, Del Razo, Renee & Ali, 2007), have insufficient access to quality instructional materials (Oakes & Saunders, 2004), be enrolled in greater numbers in inferior facilities and assigned disproportionately to fewer qualified teachers (Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell & Callahan, 2003). We know from research that there is a strong relationship between teacher quality, professional preparation and certification, to academic performance (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

In addition, high-stakes testing in an English-only environment has also had the effect of alienating many English learners by denying them a culturally-relevant curriculum in favor of test preparation (Wright, 2005, 2002; Huempfer, 2004), subjecting them to long hours of “drill and kill” type of exercises and practice exams devoid of any substantive learning (Kornhaber, 2004; McNeil, 2000; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2000), forcing English learners to endure a system that is insensitive and uncaring to their learning and language needs (Nichols & Berlinger, 2007; Valenzuela, 1999), and in many cases encouraging students learning English to drop out especially in the key testing grades (Haney, 2000).

Finally, English learners also face the added challenge of having to meet more rigorous state reporting requirements because of significantly lower baseline data, since English learners persistently score at the lowest levels of academic achievement on state assessments (Abedi & Dietel, 2004), and because of issues associated with the interpretation of test scores for students who are not fully proficient in the language of the test (Wiley & Wright, 2004; Abedi, 2003; Heubert & Hauser, 1999).

*Education Organizing for Equity-Focused Education Reform:  
A New Contextual Force*

Frustrated with the seeming inability of education reform to raise achievement and the tendency to blame educational failure on communities, families and students themselves, some have looked outside the schools for answers (Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Gold, Simon, Mundell & Brown, 2004, 2002). Specifically, education organizing has been seen as a viable alternative to realize more equitable and effective schooling for students of color and students learning English in under-resourced communities.

Community organizing for education reform is becoming more common: four times as many organizing groups have entered the field of education reform in the last two decades (Mediratta, Fruchter & Lewis, 2002; Mediratta & Fruchtnner, 2001). These groups are changing the landscape of education politics in powerful ways to make wave for more equitable policies.

What makes an organizing approach promising is that the methods it incorporates and the assumptions that drive those methods go far beyond the limited technical approach to traditional reforms (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Rather, they deliberately and consciously confront the embedded political and normative aspects of existing school practices (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Traditional reform strategies largely target the technical aspects of school policies with the assumption that “education officials can and will redistribute resources and opportunities in an equitable fashion even if they go against their interests” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Traditional reforms ignore the often intense and contested political climate that surrounds education policy (Wells & Serna, 1996). They also neglect the powerful underlying beliefs about race, class and

intelligence held by members of the school community (Oakes, Welner, Yonezawa & Allen, 1998).

Education organizing with its “intentional building of power” strategy and overt political focus (Mediratta & Fruchter, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001, 1996) begins with the view that these political and normative forces must themselves be changed (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Specifically, organizing recognizes and challenges directly the “deficit assumptions and predispositions that permeate the school environment and that often serve to systematically and covertly legitimize inequitable patterns of schooling” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). This organizing approach has had some notable successes (Shirley, 1997; Warren, 2001).

Beyond these documented success stories, however, education activism has been examined very infrequently either by scholars in the education field or by scholars of social movements (Renee, 2005). As a result, almost nothing is known about how these groups grapple with, make sense of, and ultimately take action when advancing equity-focused agendas around English learner issues. Although education organizing is not without its own set of problems, dilemmas and limitations, it certainly presents an alternative to many years of failed attempts by scholars in the field of education and by school communities to use the findings in empirical studies, no matter how sophisticated, that do not account for the structural forces that come to perpetuate the very things these studies aim to illuminate and eradicate.

## **II. The Comparative Case Study**

This study fills some of the gaps in our understanding of organizing as an equity reform strategy. By situating the study within the context of NCLB implementation in California, attention is given to the complex processes through which education organizing, policy advocacy, and restrictive language policies intersect. Specifically, the study answers the following research question:

- How does a coalition committed to educational equity for English learners define and act on problems and their sources?

The study rests on three fundamental principles regarding educational inequality: (1) The nature of educational inequality is fundamentally social and political; (2) systemic oppression is the root cause of inequalities in educational opportunity and outcomes; (3) educational inequality is multi-dimensional and appears in different forms and, therefore efforts aimed at remedying inequality require multi-dimensional reforms.

Given these principles, the study explores two propositions. The first is that, to be effective, reform driven by education organizing will require different specializations within and across activist organizations; different ways of making sense of the problem around English learner issues; and multiple solutions that account for vertical and horizontal structures, or different entry points, across varied social and political systems. The second is that, activist organizations, to varying degrees, accept the principles above regarding educational inequality and, consequently, rely on multi-dimensional strategies as they pursue their goal of improving the learning conditions and outcomes of English learners.



### *Theoretical Frameworks*

Blending findings from studies of equity reform in education, scholarship on education organizing and social movement theory, I use a theoretical framework that allows me to probe deeply into the phenomenon of education organizing. Through this framework, I address three important elements of the groups' efforts to build power for reform:

- *Research Question #1A:* How does a coalition focused on equity education policy for English learners, and three of its constituent groups each employing very different institutional models, define educational inequality and its sources? By documenting empirically how these groups frame or come to understand existing issues the study sheds some light on multiple conceptions of inequality held by different activist groups, and the organizers that run them, that influence the construction of equity-agendas, solutions and actions. In addition, the study illuminates how varied interpretations of education issues may either hinder or strengthen the capacity to build alliances and advance coalitional work.
- *Research Question #1B:* What types of strategies, or action repertoires, do these activist organizations employ aimed at remedying problems identified? By empirically documenting how groups act and/or react to issues or problems recognized within the schooling context, we gain a better understanding of the different kinds of strategies or tactics that organizations use in the redressing aspects of collective action, all in the service of activism.

- *Research Question #1C:* Finally, how do organizational factors, if any, influence how activist groups define and act on problems and their sources? By recording and analyzing the different kinds of organizing models, or institutional factors, that influence how these groups think and act, the study brings to the forefront a greater understanding of the relationship between organizational structures, the equity agenda setting process and action repertoires, and group arrangements and behaviors that enable and/or constrain organizing efforts.

### *Methods and Cases*

Following from the principles that education inequality has many forms; operates at different levels within a social and political system; and, therefore, requires a variety of multi-dimensional solutions, or disruption of inequality to occur at multiple levels and in a systematic fashion; the study examines how activist groups across different organizational types frame and remedy educational issues. Specifically, it documents the multiple ways in which a diverse set of California organizations grapple with, make sense of, and take action to improve the learning conditions of students for whom English is a second language.

Examining a diverse set of groups working on this issue makes for a richer and more relevant study, since it affords me the opportunity to document their different specializations, different ways of making sense of the problem around English learner issues, and the ways in which their various solutions address existing forms of inequality at numerous levels.

Focusing on California is particularly instructive, since the English-only environment in the state adds a whole new level of complexity to equity for English learners and is intertwined with the state's testing policies. Therefore, the study deliberately includes groups that are either California-based or involved in a significant way in California politics around English learner issues.

The three constituent organizations and the coalition that house them that comprise the cases investigated in this study include:

- *Organization Alpha*: A local, organic, parent-run organization that is involved in advocacy and community building work around issues of English learner policy and school reform.
- *Organization Beta*: This advocacy organization is comprised primarily of professional educators that promote equity and educational achievement for students with diverse cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds and for whom language poses an additional barrier to schooling. Their key initiatives include:
  - (1) A focus on student achievement;
  - (2) A focus on professional development for educators and parents who work with students learning English;
  - (3) A focus on working with legislators and policymakers to ensure educational equity and resources for English learners;
  - (4) A focus on building strong partnerships with educational, business and community entities;
  - (5) A focus on securing the financial resources needed to carry out all key objectives of the organization.

- *Organization Delta*: A nonprofit, Latino litigation advocacy, and educational outreach institution that is national in scope but whose central headquarters is located in southern California. Their primary goal is to secure the development of sound public policies, laws and programs that protect the civil rights of Latinos living in the United States. They concentrate their efforts in the following areas:
  - (1) Employment
  - (2) Education
  - (3) Immigration
  - (4) Political Access
  - (5) Language
  - (6) Public Resource Equity Issues
- *Organization Omega*: A statewide coalition of a wide range of groups focused on education issues and founded in 1998 after the passage of Proposition 227. In response to the state mandated English-only educational environment, parents, teachers, education advocates and civil rights organizations banded together with the commitment to secure equal access to quality education for all children. Organizations Alpha, Beta and Delta are member or supporting groups.

The diversity among these four activist groups permit me to highlight a wide range of specific equity issues and organizing strategies community and education organizations are using as well as to identify beliefs and practices that they share.

Using a comparative case study design, including interviews, direct and participant-observations, and document analysis, this study documents the processes through which

activist groups frame multi-dimensional solutions and use a variety of tools, some grounded in political and legal interaction, to advocate for English learners and hold the system accountable for their learning opportunities and outcomes. Collecting multiple sources of information, using a formal assembly of evidence in the form of a matrix that I have developed for other research projects, and establishing explicit links between the research questions asked, the data collected and the conclusions drawn substantially increase the quality of this case study investigation (Yin, 1994).

The “matrix” is a case study database in the form of a template that allows multiple sources of evidence to be documented and organized; procedures and protocols to be established and tailored to the growing and changing needs of the study; and instruments to be created and used; all for the purposes of triangulation, evaluation, and analysis. The sources of evidence collected for this study include:

- *Interviews:* Interviews consist of open-ended and structured formats allowing for flexibility in responses and for a variety of insights and facts. Respondents are identified in close collaboration with key organizational personnel in leadership roles such as the President, Executive Director and/or Project Manager.
- *Direct and Participant Observations:* The observations range from formal to casual data collection activities. Observational protocols are used and the matrix structured to allow for the documentation and incorporation of a variety of behaviors. Some of the observations include meetings, organizational activities, advocacy efforts, and campaign-related work in Sacramento and local communities. In addition, I also use participant observation techniques as a

special mode of observation in order to build trust and gain access to events and/or groups that might be otherwise inaccessible to scientific investigation.

- *Document Analysis*: Finally, documentary information is used to help corroborate and augment evidence collected from other sources and to make inferences that lead to worthy avenues of further investigation (Yin, 1994). Some of the documents investigated include legal briefs, letters, memorandums, agendas and minutes, administrative documents such as proposals, reports and other forms of internal documents, any formal studies or evaluations conducted by the group and any public sources of information such as newspaper clippings and/or media related publications.

During the data collection process, a number of analytic techniques are used to help triangulate, examine and analyze the sources of evidence collected from all groups. They include: organizing the information into categories; creating displays such as flowcharts and visual representations; and tabulating the frequency of important events with the purpose of identifying patterns and themes (Merriam, 1998). In addition, to ensure that the evidence gets treated fairly and enhance the production of compelling analytic conclusions, the sources of data are triangulated with a given set of theoretical propositions or orientations guiding the original objectives and design of the case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994).

### *The Existing Literature and Potential Contributions of the Study*

Very few scholars have used, as unifying elements in education organizing, both the social movement literature and studies of equity reform in education and applied them to the study of reform efforts on behalf of English learners. While there exists rich bodies of scholarship that are used in this study to inform varied dimensions of community organizing and their use as strategies to inform activism, virtually nothing exists that specifically speaks to the intersection of organizing and policymaking as it pertains to limited English proficient children and youth. This is a theoretical challenge in this study but one that is used to help inform activism more specifically.

Taken as a whole, the social movement literature allows for this study to place education organizing, protest and English learner policymaking into the larger context of social movements. However, this study bridges two strands of the social movement literature that are generally considered and treated separately. Traditionally, political opportunity approaches to research on social movements have neglected the structural need for activist groups to mobilize resources required for change (Rucht, 2006). At the same time, resource mobilization approaches to social movement research have largely ignored the broader political environments in which social movements are embedded (Rucht, 2006). Incorporating both research strands, this study achieves a greater understanding of the varied elements that directly or indirectly influence the kinds of mobilization efforts required to enact social, policy and educational change.

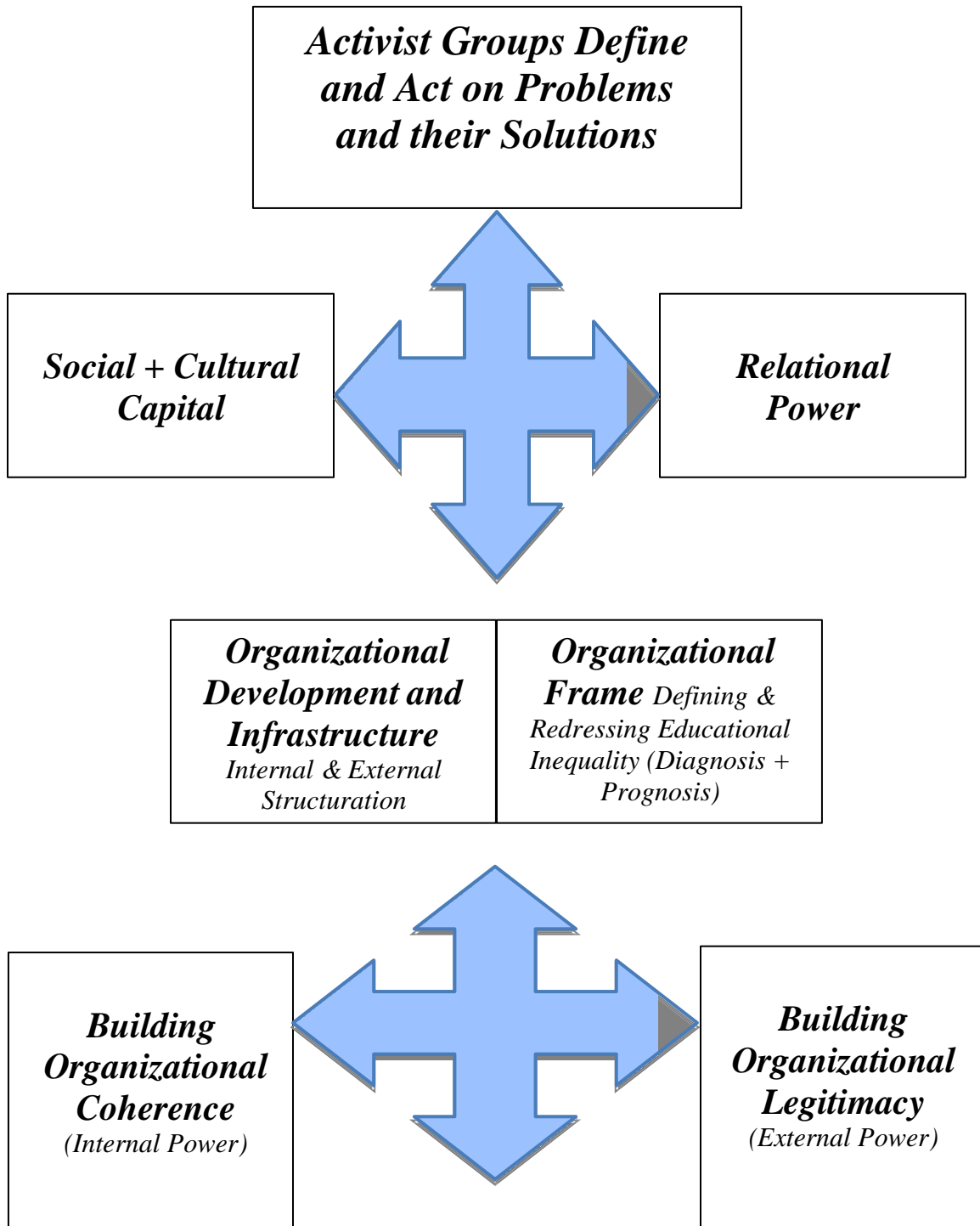
The literature used to inform this study are drawn from three academic disciplines: education, sociology, and political science. Each contends with and is constricted by the assumptions and limitations embedded in each discipline. By using a blended theoretical

framework, the study constructs theoretical synergy in which education reform becomes a legitimate topic worthy of conceptual examination by social movement scholars and both resource mobilization and political opportunity approaches are used to illuminate the context of equity education reform and education organizing. There are also practical contributions to this study. That is, in contrast to the fundamental disconnect between organizing groups and academics who study education reform, the findings of this study have major implications for the work of activist groups by facilitating the use of strategic research to help better inform advocacy efforts.

The visual representation that follows represents a blended theoretical framework that is used to guide the direction of this study. Its intellectual roots are described in chapter 3.



**Figure 1.1: A Blended Theoretical Framework**



## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

Many observers have criticized school reform efforts as being shallow and ineffective for making fundamental changes in schooling (See, for example, Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Cuban & Usdan, 2003). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, compliments the accountability regime adopted by California in 1999 under the Public Schools Accountability Act, both emphasize accountability and the notion of informed parents as agents of change. Together, with Proposition 227, which limits the use of the primary language for instructional purposes, they constitute recent attempts by government and (through the power of referenda) the public to use policy as a tool for correcting a wide variety of educational problems.

In contrast, equity advocates, frustrated by the failure of school reform to improve the educational opportunities and outcomes of students learning English, are increasingly turning to organizing as a strategy for remedying the fundamental disparities between public schools in low-income communities that are struggling for resources and support and those in more affluent, suburban areas.

This study focuses on how activist groups define and act on issues relevant to the advancement of equity-focused education reform for English learners. It places the focus and attention on the multiple layers of politics that education organizations struggle with on a day-to-day basis as they seek to make schools more equitable. After all, studies of the politics of education reform, which are multi-disciplinary, clearly demonstrate how complex and multi-layered the “politics” can be (Wong, 1994). For this reason, this study is embedded within the intersection of multiple bodies of scholarship: social

movement theory, which includes resource mobilization and political opportunity approaches; studies of equity-reform in education, including the politics of education; and scholarship on education organizing. Although, these fields of study are usually treated separately in the academic literature, the activist organizations currently working on educational equity reform efforts in California around English learner issues work at the intersection of the aforementioned academic disciplines. Their range of approaches intricately linked in practice is best understood using a multi-disciplinary lens.

I open this chapter with a brief description of the intent and rationale behind Williams and Coachella both named for their respective lead plaintiffs, Eliezer Williams and Coachella Valley Unified School District, and both aimed at rectifying educational disparities in opportunities and outcomes for low income children and youth not yet fluent in English. All three constituent activist groups, including the coalition that house them, that form an important part of this study either directly or indirectly as supporting organizations or as plaintiffs, have been involved in these two legal battles. As such, they provide a “site” for examining how these groups may be making sense of educational inequality since organizing groups rely heavily on research to help them make sense of complex policy, legal and educational issues (Renee, 2005; National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002).

Since activist organizations do not construct equity agendas in a vacuum, the agendas themselves are a function of how these groups come to define problems and their sources. And research plays a valuable role in that sense-making process whether for purposes of school policy or the basis of evidence levied in a courtroom.

In addition, by situating the opening portion of this chapter around these two judicial campaigns, attention is given to the varied, and sometimes competing, notions of educational inequality advanced by scholars in their pursuit of equalizing the playing field for children and youth. It provides an opportunity to highlight some of the complex processes found in the academic literature that can inform activities at the intersection of education organizing and English learner policy-making. It is important to note that in the description of these two legal battles I am not endeavoring to layout another contextual dimension through which this study is embedded. Rather, it is simply an attempt to use the scholarship that has been highlighted in these two lawsuits as a vehicle for outlining some of the academic literature that speak to the kinds of efforts undertaken by these groups and the manner in which these efforts may be conceptualized.

Following my discussion of these two pivotal cases, I review studies of education organizing and place most of the attention on those studies examining the nexus of organizing and equity education reform. In chapter three I address more fully key concepts found in both the social movement literature, as embodied in political opportunity and resource mobilization approaches, and the equity-focused education reform literature and describe their usefulness in helping to understand the relationship between organizing and equity-minded reform as they both are used to help inform this study.

In chapter four I describe the interactive research design that allows for flexibility and interconnection among the different comparative case study components. In chapter five I describe the major findings that speak to the sets of questions and inquiries that this study has set out to explore and address in terms of how these organizations define

educational problems and their sources. Finally, in chapter six I outline how these groups use collective approaches, and the role that constituencies play in these approaches, to create an organizational infrastructure that maximizes capacity development. I describe the different tactics, or equity agendas, utilized in the redressing aspects of collective action undertaken by these groups, which involve internal and external organizational elements and I offer a new blended theoretical framework in light of existing strategies aimed at bringing about change through coalitional efforts. I also provide recommendations for advancing coalitional work around efforts designed at improving the educational opportunities and outcomes of English learners.

Eliezer Williams v. State of California:  
“Schools that Shock the Conscience”

On May 17<sup>th</sup> 2000, the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education—the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Public Advocates, Inc., the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), and other civil rights organizations, along with Morrison & Foerster, LLP, filed a class action lawsuit against the state of California (Allen, 2005). They did claimed the state and its agencies were denying thousands of California students their fundamental rights to an education under the California constitution by failing to give them the basic tools necessary for that education (Allen, 2005).

The plaintiffs argued that California’s educational system failed to meet its constitutional obligation to educate all students equally (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). The suit aimed to remedy persistent inequalities to access to decent facilities, qualified teachers, and instructional materials, including responsive curricula for English learners

and college preparatory programs (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). The case was an attempt to use the courts to highlight and remedy California's growing inability to educate "fully" and "fairly" and to "unveil the growing population of poor children and students learning English whose life chances were being affected by the state's schooling inadequacies" (Oakes & Rogers, 2006:12).

The defendants responded with assertions and policy assumptions that test-based accountability systems were the important means for rectifying current educational problems, including lack of teacher motivation. They also argued that test-based accountability policies were important tools for, presumably, carrying out and sustaining democratic local participation (Oakes, 2004). The group of experts hired by the state did not dispute the plaintiff's assertion that California schools lacked basic resources or that the system failed to provide those resources equally (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Instead, they argued that providing more teachers, materials, and adequate facilities would be unlikely to help to increase test scores (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Moreover, they reasoned that California's test-based accountability system would provide the incentives necessary to help initiate school improvement efforts that would have a greater impact on student achievement than providing all children with qualified teachers, appropriate materials, and adequate facilities (Oakes & Rogers, 2006).

However, experts for the plaintiffs marshaled a growing body of evidence demonstrating the strong relationship between teacher quality (Darling-Hammond, 2004) and instructional materials (Oakes & Saunders, 2004) to academic performance. This is certainly the case for students not yet proficient in English.

Since English learners generally begin their academic experience behind their English-speaking counterparts they not only have to learn English language skills which includes academic English but also academic content in order to receive the same educational opportunities compared with their grade-level peers that are native English speakers (Hakuta, 2002). Thus, English learners often must receive instruction from teachers with specialized skills and knowledge in both teaching students for whom English is not the primary language and academic content and a growing body of scholarship demonstrates that teachers lack these skills thus depriving students not yet fluent in English of equal educational opportunities (See for example, Gándara & Rumberger, 2002; Hakuta, 2002.)

In addition to rectifying gross inequalities in educational attainments as a result of unequal distribution of resources and opportunities disproportionately affecting low-income children of color, Williams also aimed to “reassert a primary principle of educational inequality—namely that responsible systems must attend to whether students have adequate and equitable opportunities for learning” (Oakes, Blasi & Rogers, 2004: 83). Thus, the case argued that a “responsible” accountability system not only detected or reported, whether “poor children and English learners have adequate and equitable opportunities to learn that disproportionately affect them” (Oakes, Blasi & Rogers, 2004), but also aimed to hold policymakers and high level education officials responsible for inaction (Blasi, 2002) and aimed to systematically address inferiorities in educational opportunities and outcomes across student groups (Oakes & Blasi, 2002).

The case also has had important implications for expanding notions of public engagement in school accountability and for shining a spotlight on the barriers that often

keep poor parents from taking action against structures that sustain unequal learning conditions. School systems are often ill-designed to adequately deal with quality public engagement in school affairs (Rogers, 2004). Rogers (2004) argues that there is a fundamental disconnect between a “rhetoric” that upholds public engagement and policy structures and practices in school communities that sometimes “thwart” public aims to participate in accountability forces. Certainly, there are successful stories that suggest that parents do take collective action around school improvement efforts and become agents of change in school accountability endeavors (Rogers 2004, 2006). This becomes particularly important since NCLB seems to suggest that informed and participatory parents will serve as a mechanism to help improve schools. It is also important in this study since it seeks to try and understand some of the issues and solutions aimed at addressing gaps in schooling opportunities and outcomes within grassroots and advocacy efforts.

The case was settled in August of 2004 resulting in expanded legislation that requires all public schools to develop and make public a uniform complaint process affording students and parents the opportunity to file a complaint if opportunity to learn standards are not present (Public Advocates, Inc., 2007). In addition, it affords every student in the state of California the right to: a fully qualified teacher; books and other necessary instructional materials, in good condition to use at school and for assigned homework; and school buildings and grounds free of unhealthy or dangerous conditions (Public Advocates, Inc., 2007).

In sum, then, Williams asserts that California state policy could and should address an existing “opportunities to learn gap” that disproportionately affect low-income African



American and Latino students and guarantee that all students have basic educational resources and conditions (through, for example, responsible systems of accountability). Only then could the state provide all students with a reasonable opportunity to learn the content and skills identified in the state's standards and, subsequently perform well on the state's assessments (Oakes & Rogers, 2006).

The case is important for issues of equity that are addressed in this study since it highlights a real problem with existing reform efforts and through which activist groups must operate—namely that technical approaches to equity reform that are designed to address gaps in opportunities and attainment often have the opposite effect because they fail to address the norms and politics of education that sustain racial and class privilege (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). These usual approaches to reform that focus on the technical elements of schools—that change rules, structures and practices—are “simply not efficacious enough to counter the multiple forces that maintain the unequal status quo among and within schools” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006:15). Thus, Oakes and Rogers (2006) argue that “in order to make schools more equitable equity reformers must help to alter the politics of educational policymaking that preserve advantages for wealthier and more powerful communities” (15).

Finally, the case counters prevailing assumptions of racial inequality and advances a conception of educational equity that “deliberately confronts the formidable barriers that reside less in the technical challenges of designing equitable schools and more in the cultural norms about race, merit and schooling that underlie the status quo and that mirror the larger social, economic and political systems of society that help to sustain privilege and exclusion” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006:15).

Coachella Valley Unified School District v. State of California:  
“A Test in English is a Test of English”

In June of 2005, The Coachella Valley Unified School District, along with three other state-wide non-profit organizations—The California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE), Californian’s Together (statewide coalition of parents, teachers, education advocates and civil rights organizations) and California LULAC (A state affiliate of the National League of United Latin America Citizens—a Hispanic civil rights organization), filed a lawsuit against the state of California for failing to comply with the provisions of the NCLB Act as it related to academic assessments for Limited English Proficient students, or English learners. The suit was joined by eight other school districts throughout the state of California, including parents and students. They all banded together and jointly retained three major civil rights and education law firms (Garcia, Calderon & Ruiz, LLP—which specializes in education law; Law offices of Hadsell, Stormer, Keeny, Richardson & Renick, LLP; and the law offices of Marc Coleman, each specializing in civil rights litigation).

The objective of the lawsuit was to compel the state of CA to assess the academic progress of its English learners as required by the mandate of NCLB: in a “valid and reliable manner” that included (a) “reasonable accommodations;” and (b) “to the extent practicable, assessments in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data on what students know and can do in academic content areas, until such students have achieved English language proficiency” (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002).

The plaintiffs argued that tests designed for native English speakers were inherently incapable of accurately measuring what children not yet proficient in English knew and

can do in academic content areas. English learners were often excluded from the norming population of standardized achievement tests (Abedi & Dietel, 2004; Abedi, 2003) and there was a growing body of scholarship that demonstrated the significant impact of language factors, linguistic complexity of test items, on test scores (See, for example, Abedi, 2006, 2002; Abedi & Lord, 2001; Butler & Stevens, 2001, 2000). Thus, the plaintiffs asserted that for students not yet fluent in English a “test in English was a test of English” (Coachella Valley USD et al. v. State of California et al., SF Superior Court Case No. 505334). Federal education legislation permitted states to test English learners for academic content knowledge in languages other than English, for up to three academic years with two additional years to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Other instruments were used to measure English language proficiency separately from measuring academic content mastery. Since the “purpose” and “use” of the statewide academic assessments was measuring “academic content mastery independent of English language proficiency” and since the state of California had chosen to test all students in the core academic subjects in English only the plaintiffs asserted that the state was failing to comply with its “mandatory and discretionary duties” concerning English learner academic testing required under NCLB (Coachella Valley USD et al. v. State of California et al., SF Superior Court Case No. 505334).

In addition, the plaintiffs asserted that because tests for English learners were not valid and reliable, it resulted in not only the “sanctioning of school districts unfairly placing them into „Program Improvement” status based more on demographics than competence, but also causing misdirection and misappropriation of taxpayer funds through misguided restructuring efforts in direct violation of existing state statute in

addition to causing low teacher and administrator morale” (Coachella Valley USD et al. v. State of California et al., SF Superior Court Case No. 505334).

While critics of the case argued that testing English learners in their primary language was too costly, the plaintiffs asserted that it was not unreasonable for California to test in the primary language where appropriate, at least for Spanish speakers, since other states with fewer English learners were being tested in other languages (Gándara & Baca, 2008). In addition, California had a history of using a statewide assessment in Spanish for diagnostic and placement purposes and had a standards-based equivalent Spanish version developed up through grade 5, and was continuing to develop the test for upper grades (Gándara & Baca, 2008).<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the plaintiffs claimed that California was in direct violation of its constitutional guarantee that California school children receive equitable educational opportunities. In their constitutional claims, the plaintiffs asserted the following: (a) “that all students have a fundamental right to equal educational opportunities under the California constitution”; (b) “that California”s testing and accountability system discriminates against certain groups of children, namely English learners and children who attend schools with high percentages of English learners”; (c) “that the testing and the consequences of such testing deny these children equal educational opportunities”; (d) and that “as a consequence English learners are disadvantaged academically amounting to a constitutional deprivation” (Coachella Valley USD et al. v. State of California et al., SF Superior Court Case No. 505334).

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<sup>1</sup> There are currently nine states that offer testing of academic content in a language other than English and whose scores are used in calculating AYP proficiency ratings: Delaware, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Colorado, Kansas, Texas, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

While the case was defeated on appeal, there are important implications for public engagement efforts. Policymakers are banking on the notion that by requiring the results of assessments to be reported, school communities and parents will have access to important pieces of information about how well the schools and students in their neighborhoods are performing over time (Public Education Network, 2003) and pressure their schools to respond to this information with improved practice (Gándara & Baca, 2008). However, it is difficult for stakeholders, including parents, to remedy deficiencies and ensure that English learners are afforded equal educational opportunities when the information that they receive from test scores solely in English does not necessarily reflect what students/children know or have learned nor help to identify the areas that require attention (Gándara & Baca, 2008). Lack of “meaningful” data on what students know and can do exacerbates existing tensions and does nothing to better inform educators and parents on how best to address students’ needs (Gándara & Baca, 2008).

In sum, then, the Coachella plaintiffs assert that California state policy could and should address an existing “test/policy gap” that disproportionately affects English learners, their schools and communities and guarantee that all students not yet fluent in English have the opportunity to demonstrate academic content mastery in a language they can understand (through, for example, meaningful systems of accountability).

Whether students should be assessed in their native language is not a recent policy or public debate (Archerd, 2006). In 1981, the Fifth Circuit found in Castaneda v. Pickard that in order to provide a valid test for multiple areas other than English language literacy, a Texas school district should assess its LEP students in Spanish (Archerd, 2006). While the plaintiffs in Coachella claimed that “their lawsuit was not an attempt to

circumvent anti-bilingual education laws or about relaxing the accountability of the schools, nonetheless the case acknowledges that standardized tests may be more than just measurement tools that reflect strategies for pursuing a variety of political goals” (Archerd, 2006).

Both legal cases attempted to address issues of equity and highlight deficiencies in California state policy by arguing that California’s educational system failed to meet its constitutional obligation to educate all students including English learners, equally. While Williams aimed to remedy persistent inequalities to access to decent facilities, qualified teachers and instructional materials, thus placing the focus on the schools themselves, Coachella attempted to shift its attention away from schools and question the reliability and validity of state academic assessments that it felt were incapable of accurately measuring what children not yet proficient in English knew and can do in academic content areas. It is precisely this difference in focus that caused some tension between the Coalition and one of their member organizations that served as a plaintiff in Williams and explains why the latter group failed to participate in Coalition meetings for quite some time.

Since respondents referenced both cases during the interview process, I felt it was necessary to find a way to introduce them while at the same time use its content as a “site” for examining how these groups may be making sense of educational issues since organizing groups rely heavily on research to help them make sense of complex educational problems (Renee, 2005; National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002). As mentioned earlier, activist organizations do not construct equity agendas in a vacuum. The agendas themselves are a function of how these groups come to define

problems and their sources and research plays a valuable role in that sense-making process.

*Education Organizing as a Strategy for Achieving  
Equity-Minded School Reform: What does the Research Say?*

I will now attempt to address some of the literature on education organizing and place most of the attention on those studies examining the nexus of organizing and equity education reform. The interplay between the equity-focused education reform literature and the scholarship on grassroots/advocacy efforts best informs activities at the intersection of education organizing and English learner policy making. In chapter three I address more fully key concepts found in both the social movement literature, as embodied in political opportunity and resource mobilization perspectives, including relational approaches to collective action as this study places its primary focus on coalitional efforts. The chapter also highlights the equity-focused education reform literature and describes their usefulness in helping to understand the relationship between organizing and equity-minded reform.

Since the 1960s, state and federal policymakers have tried introducing a multitude of policies aimed at rectifying apparent educational disparities (Sheppard, 2001). Reform, however has neither changed school practices in any meaningful or long-lasting way (McLaughlin, 1998; Cuban, 1998; Tyack & Cuban, 1996) nor addressed the inequities between low-income and more affluent schools (Nieto, 1998). This is partly due to educational reform policies that often overlook the complex web of political relationships and core normative beliefs about race and class (Oakes, Welner, Yonezawa & Allen, 1998) and relative respect or disrespect given to particular languages and

dialects (Ovando, 2003) that exist both within and outside schools. After all, educational changes tend to favor the interests of those individuals, groups, or agencies that are most powerful in a given society (Hargreaves, Earl & Ryan, 1996).

Studies of detracking reform illustrate this point vividly. Oakes and her colleagues (1998) find that policies that attempt to shift efforts to achieve parity in opportunity and achievement across diverse groups of students will inevitably face substantial barriers because schools as “mediating institutions” filter the “larger cultural norms, rules, values and power relations of society and these cultural forces promote either stability or change” (Oakes, Welner, Yonezawa & Allen, 1998: 958). Since all social organizations are rife with “arenas of struggle” (Ball, 1987; Blasé & Anderson, 1995), communities will construct “arenas of discourse around an issue and create the solutions they seek based on local interpretations and framing of those issues” (Achinstein, 2002). This becomes particularly important in this study since activist groups often operate within very contentious and political arenas and construct equity agendas and solutions around particular views or frames of educational equity.

One potentially promising strategy for achieving and sustaining fundamental, equity-focused school reform is community organizing (Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Mediratta, Fruchter & Lewis, 2002). Education organizing groups may contribute to deep and sustainable education reform because they create the capacity necessary for parents and community members to initiate and participate in a political strategy that builds public support around issues of inequality (Gold, Simon, Mundell & Brown, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1996, 2001).



While ten or fifteen years ago education was simply not high on the agenda for many activist groups, today it tops the list for many organizing struggles across local, state and national efforts (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002). And the issues these organizations place on the agenda of change range from accountability to safety and materials, such as class size and overcrowding, to equity concerns that include bilingual education, access to college prep courses and counselors (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002).

There is a growing body of research that acknowledges that schools need the participation of parents and members of the community to provide the kind of environment where children can grow and flourish (Gold, Simon, Mundell & Brown, 2004, 2002). Community organizing entrusts community members to identify and address important local issues and encourages these residents of marginalized neighborhoods to transform local schools through an “intentional building of power” strategy (Mediratta & Fruchter, 2001). Instead of viewing low-income students, parents and community members as part of the problem for educational failure, organizing for school reform acknowledges the community as a resource, with its own “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 1992) that can enrich student learning and pedagogical practice (Gold, Simon, Mundell & Brown, 2002; Lopez, 2003; Delgado-Gaitan, 1996, 2001).

Shirley’s (2002) work in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, an economically disadvantaged region, illustrates the power of community organizing and activism in support of public schools that has engendered positive academic results. Warren’s (2001) work of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) network is another perfect example of how community-based organizations and their membership can cultivate the

“participation, leadership and values necessary within marginalized communities to advance social policies that address the specific needs of the low income communities being served revitalizing”, according to Warren, “an important aspect of democracy by connecting politics and community” (Warren, 2001: 19).

Research on education reform strongly suggests that it takes the engagement of political and civic leaders to create the stimulus and energy for the development of “enabling structures” (Mazzoni, 1994) necessary to mobilize the resources needed for school improvement (Stone, 2001). Taking current reform efforts into consideration, market based accountability and restrictive language policies, studies illustrate how prevailing notions of parental involvement help to foster individualistic approaches to parent-school relationships, helping to keep parents isolated from one another and preventing them from building the types of relationships necessary that would allow them to challenge existing school policies and practices (Gold, Simon & Brown, 2002). And there are powerful cases that suggest parents can and do take collective action demonstrating the *logic of numbers* and *bearing witness*, as acts of protest (Della Porta & Diani, 1999) to improve school conditions rather than engage in “individual acts aimed at motivating recalcitrant educators” (Rogers, 2006: 625).

Education organizing, however with its power-building model and base outside the schools, can help to shift current perceptions held by education officials toward embracing parents’ direct participation in governance and accountability (Gold, Simon & Brown, 2002) and help transform what Shirley (1997) identifies as existing “accommodationists” forms of parental involvement into “transformational” forms of parental engagement (73). Delgado-Gaitan (2001) illustrates this point in her work in

Carpinteria. She documents how the parent organization that developed in that community served as a catalyst in changing the power relations and dynamics between home and school and argues that when “parents are perceived as being powerless, reforms initiated in the school system will keep them out of the picture forcing parents to become recipients of proposed policies—as passive actors” (Delgado-Gaitan, 1996; 2001).

In addition, recent scholarship has shown the powerful connection between community capacity building efforts and school improvement within the current accountability and standards-based reform context. Gold, Simon, Mundell & Brown (2004) have introduced this notion of “public accountability” as a mechanism through which organizing groups create the “political will necessary to improve schools and bring about change in low income neighborhoods by moving public officials and others in powerful positions to take action in the interests of these communities,” thus broadening current conceptions of accountability away from bureaucratic perspectives.

“Bureaucratic accountability” refers to the accountability of schools to various levels of administration for student performance in which educational mandates are top-down, schools are held to account to district, state or federal government agencies based on results from standardized achievement tests, and a system of rewards and sanctions serve as external motivators for improving academic achievement (Gold, Simon, Mundell & Brown, 2004). “Public accountability,” on the other hand, rests on the assumption that school systems and the professionals that run them do not exist in isolation from the complex social and political contexts in which they function (Gold, Simon, Mundell & Brown, 2004). Therefore, efforts aimed at building and maintaining pressure for

advancing positive school outcomes directly connect schools and their communities, broaden the depth and scope of change agents who take responsibility for school improvement and accountability, and use an open, public, dialogic and deliberative process to engage stakeholders around the process of change (Gold, Simon, Mundell & Brown, 2004). In short, this process builds community capacity.

Community capacity is “the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community” (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001). Thus, community organizations apply their power building strategies to public school reforms, many achieving notable successes in school improvement efforts (Shirley, 1997; Warren, 2001) and, in some cases realizing transformative change in schools and communities (Olivos, 2006).

Finally, community organizations usually incorporate advocacy efforts into their equity agendas as public policy making can, sometimes have a greater impact on a larger part of the community and be more sustainable and cost effective over time. Community organizing has yielded a wide range of policy and system changes (Lopez, 2003). Organizing for education reform is increasingly operating at different levels. While the work can, and usually does, begin locally, in order to achieve systemic results, groups often leverage local organizing efforts to influence state level policy (Lopez, 2003).

However, in some cases, policy gains can be short-lived, as they become susceptible to changes in leadership and fall prey to limiting state and local education budgets (Lopez, 2003), therefore many organizations are beginning to combine community organizing techniques such as leadership development with advocacy, lobbying or legal

strategies in an effort to build robust local structures and processes linked to coordinated statewide organizing (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002). All four groups in this study, to varying degrees, engage education officials and policy-makers at the local, state and/or national level.

### *Conclusion*

All of these studies on organizing for education reform point to an “engagement gap” in which middle and upper-class parents use their relative power to ensure that their children have the same absolute and relative social and economic privileges as reflected in society (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). In addition, they suggest that organizing in education “can and should reassert a primary principle of equality in educational policy” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006), namely that an “inclusive” accountability system detects and reports, whether parents of our most vulnerable groups are using the information reported by local, state and federal systems to make informed decisions about the educational welfare of their children and act as “an informed, learning and empowered public” (Rogers, 2006) prepared to take action against gaps in educational opportunities and outcomes. In other words, “increased accountability measures should be aimed at creating the impetus for closing the engagement gap between communities where schools benefit from high levels of citizen involvement, and those where schools struggle in isolation for resources and support” (Public Education Network, 2003: 1).

In addition, all the studies reviewed, organized and highlighted in this chapter illustrate how educational inequality is multi-dimensional and appears in different forms and, therefore efforts aimed at remedying inequality require a variety of multi-dimensional reforms. Since this study addresses how activist groups are defining

educational problems and their sources this issue of framing becomes particularly important.

One of the essential tasks for activist groups is to “struggle over how to frame social problems and injustices in a way that convinces a wide and diverse audience of the necessity for and utility of collective attempts to redress them” (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006: 291). These frames typically embody two important components: the “diagnostic element,” or definition of the problem and its source; and the “prognostic element,” or the identification of an appropriate strategy for redressing the problem (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006).

Since activist organizations usually lack the political and/or material resources necessary to access those people and/or agencies with real power, such as political decision-makers, they must rely primarily on “outsider” strategies to draw the attention of publics and policymakers to the problems they wish to have resolved (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006). Some of these “outsider” strategies involve building relationships with the public, media, elected officials and the research and legal community. How activist groups frame and define educational issues will largely determine the types of strategies they will employ to help remedy the issues identified.

I now turn to key concepts found in the social movement literature that are used in this comparative case study and address each component found in the blended theoretical framework separately.

## Chapter Three

### Theoretical Framework

The previous chapter highlighted the growing body of scholarship regarding community organizing for education equity reform. This chapter addresses more fully key concepts found in both the social movement literature, as embodied in political opportunity and resource mobilization approaches, and the equity-focused education reform literature. It describes the usefulness of these concepts and literature in helping to clarify the relationship between education organizing and equity-minded school reform, as it explicates how they both are used in this investigation.

Blending findings from the aforementioned academic disciplines and fields, I have constructed a theoretical framework that allows me to probe deeply into the phenomenon of education organizing. Using this framework, I examine three important elements of the groups' efforts to build power for reform:

- *Research Question #1A:* How does a coalition focused on equity education policy for English learners, and three of its constituent groups each employing very different institutional models, define problems (inequality) and their sources? By documenting empirically how these groups frame or come to understand existing issues the study sheds some light on multiple conceptions of inequality held by different activist groups, and the organizers that run them, that influence the construction of equity-agendas, solutions and actions. In addition, the study illuminates how varied interpretations of education issues may either hinder or strengthen the capacity to build alliances and advance coalitional work.

- *Research Question #1B:* What types of strategies, or action repertoires, do these activist organizations employ aimed at remedying problems identified? By empirically documenting how groups act and/or react to issues or problems recognized within the schooling context, the study gains a better understanding of the different kinds of strategies or tactics that organizations use in the redressing aspects of collective action, all in the service of activism.
- *Research Question #1C:* Finally, how do organizational factors, if any, influence how activist groups define and act on problems and their sources? By recording and analyzing the different kinds of organizing models, or institutional factors, that influence how these groups think and act, the study brings to the forefront a greater understanding of the relationship between organizational structures, the equity agenda setting process and action repertoires, and group arrangements and behaviors that enable and/or constrain organizing efforts.

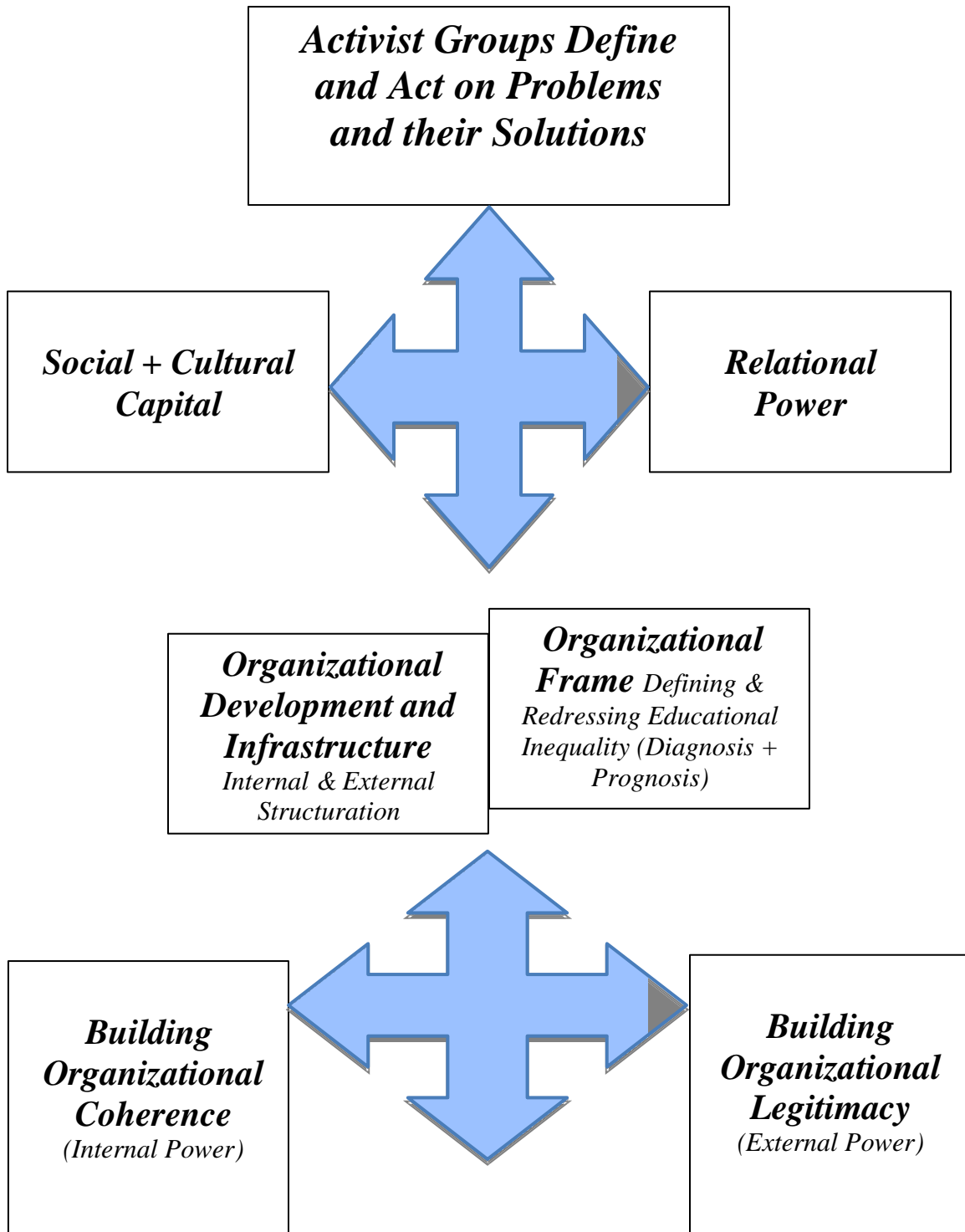
The answers to these questions require the identification and articulation of key theoretical concepts found in the literature that are relevant to political opportunity and resource mobilization approaches used by equity-focused education organizations. Accordingly, I present a framework for equity-focused education reform and describe its intellectual roots in parts.

I begin with three fundamental principles regarding educational inequality and two propositions that this study explores invoking key concepts from the equity-focused education reform literature and introduce a working definition of an equity-focused education policy. Next, I describe the concept of “organizational structuration” taken



primarily from Hanspeter Kriesi's model of the organizational structure of social movements in Europe as it helps to establish a connection, if any, between organizational characteristics and group behavior as it relates to how these groups define and act on issues. Finally, I end this chapter with a concise description of existing notions of social and cultural capital including relational power, found in the community organizing literature and explain their implications to education organizing and equity-minded school reform. What results is a conceptual framework that informs this comparative case study, and one that guides the direction of this investigation.

Figure 3.1: A Blended Theoretical Framework



*What is an Equity-Focused Education Policy and Why is it Important?*  
*Engaging the Equity-Focused Education Reform Literature*

The study rests on three fundamental principles regarding educational inequality: (1) The nature of educational inequality is fundamentally social and political; (2) systemic oppression is the root cause of inequalities in educational opportunity and outcomes; (3) educational inequality is multi-dimensional and appears in different forms and, therefore efforts aimed at remedying inequality require a variety of multi-dimensional reforms.

Given these principles, the study explores two propositions. The first is that, to be effective, reform driven by community organizing will require different specializations within and across activist organizations; different ways of making sense of the problem around English learner issues; and multiple solutions that account for vertical and horizontal structures, or different entry points, across varied social and political systems. The second is that, activist organizations, to varying degrees, accept the principles above regarding educational inequality and, consequently, rely on multi-dimensional strategies as they pursue their goal of improving the learning conditions and outcomes of English learners. Thus, efforts aimed at disrupting inequality occur on multiple levels and are implemented in a systematic fashion.

Based on the principles and propositions above, an equity-focused education policy, therefore has the following three fundamental characteristics: the policy needs to (a) acknowledge that educational inequality exists across social and political systems and, therefore inequality and its sources need to be addressed across those systems; (b) identify systemic oppression as the root cause of inequalities in educational opportunity

and outcomes; (c) and take a proactive multi-dimensional approach since educational inequality appears in different forms aimed at remedying these inequalities.

*Acknowledge that educational inequality exists across social and political systems and, therefore inequality and its sources need to be addressed across those systems.* An equity-focused education policy questions the assumptions that have driven and continue to drive current reform efforts. Despite decades of reforms aimed at realizing the promises of Brown, segregated schools and racial inequalities in educational opportunities and outcomes remain (Rogers & Oakes, 2005; Oakes & Rogers, 2006).

Many education debates over how to reform schools minimize the existence of educational inequality by focusing on the efficiency of education systems (Oakes, 2004). These current efforts are premised on the faulty fundamental assumption that “equality can be achieved by focusing exclusively within the educational system itself and that in order to initiate and sustain change through re-distributive means technical knowledge is what is needed” (Rogers & Oakes, 2005; Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Technical solutions are often professed by education professionals who themselves are largely trained and socialized in a professional setting, whether through existing certification programs or in-service activities, using traditional research and development approaches to “school improvement” based on business models (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Thus, when education professionals, attempt at introducing reforms aimed at achieving parity in opportunity among different groups of students using a purely “technical perspective,” the result is “often and inevitably more inequality” (Rogers & Oakes, 2005; Oakes & Rogers, 2006).

Insights from research into efforts on de-tracking initiatives illustrate how struggles to achieve equality are largely based on political struggles for comparative advantage

(Oakes, Welner, Yonezawa & Allen, 1998). When school reform efforts focus their energies on the technical dimensions of schooling, by creating rules, structures, practices and programs, away from pervasive beliefs and cultural norms about race, merit and schooling and the political arrangements that sustain them, what often follows is a “mind-set that places the blame of educational failure on those who do not fit the prevailing ideologies of intelligence and merit” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006: 29). They reinforce prevailing beliefs about low-income communities of color—“that they do not value education, that they are less educable; and that because these kids are so different, when compared to White and wealthier children, they need different, and often under-resourced and water-downed, educational interventions and programs” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006: 16).

An equity-focused education policy therefore acknowledges that inequality is pervasive, across these social and political systems, and “deliberately aims to counter the ideologies that are endemic to the logic of these systems that help to explain why traditional reform strategies fail to achieve education „on equal terms”” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006: 14).

*Identify systemic oppression as the root cause of inequalities in educational opportunity and outcomes.* Equity-focused education policies embed a critical perspective identifying inequality as being non-neutral and embracing education systems as non-neutral systems. These inequalities in educational opportunities and outcomes are historical, predictable and prolific across social institutions such as education (Kozol, 1991). According to Peral (2002) “systemic refers to established processes whereby values, traditions, hierarchies, styles, and attitudes are deeply embedded in the political, economic, and cultural structure of any society.” Thus, all social institutions, including

education, are constantly being formulated and influenced by our collective and individual values, traditions, and so on. Oakes" (1992) definition of normative beliefs provides a perfect example of some of the oppressive forces that are embedded in this social structure operating at various levels of the education system. She argues that school reform endeavors are primarily driven by deeply held normative values and assumptions that are based on oppressive constructs of race, class, intelligence, and educability (Oakes, 1992). These oppressive normative beliefs have influenced the creation and implementation of education policies that continue to sustain privilege and exclusion (Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Oakes, 1992).

Based on this perspective, equity-focused education policies deliberately and consciously confront systemic oppression. That is, instead of placing the primary responsibility for educational inequality in the students, teachers, and communities themselves, equity-focused education policies locate the blame for inequality in historical, social structures, and cultural patterns that pervade existing systems (Peral, 2002). In doing so, equity-focused education policies critique those policies and practices that support and encourage deficit-thinking models where blame for educational failure is placed on low-income students of color and English learners (Valencia, 1997).

*Take a proactive multi-dimensional approach since educational inequality appears in different forms aimed at remedying these inequalities.* Finally, equity-focused education policies not only acknowledge that inequality exists but also aims to counter them by attempting to increase the power and resources of the communities that are most oppressed by elements of inequality. There is a growing body of scholarship that demonstrates how low-income students of color, including English learners, do not have

access to the same educational opportunities enjoyed by their more affluent, White classmates (Anyon, 1997; Kozol 1991; Oakes, 2002; Valencia, 2002).

According to Welner (2001) a powerful measure of equity is the “treatment of less powerful people and groups in ways that confer benefits equal to those obtained by more powerful people and groups.” Blasi (2002) offers an equally powerful definition that involves the inability to predict racial and economic composition of a school’s student body based solely on school data on educational resources or academic achievement.

Since educational inequality appears in different forms and is multi-dimensional, equity-focused education policies account for these varied forms of inequality and rely on multi-dimensional reforms, or strategies, aimed at remedying them.

*Technical, Political and Normative Considerations: A Framework for Understanding Educational Inequality and Equity-Focused Education Reform.* Oakes (1992) develops a framework for understanding school reform by categorizing the aspects of reform into three broad conceptual dimensions: technical, political and normative. The *technical* dimension of reform involves the structures, rules, practices and programs that guide the day-to-day operation of schools and school systems. These are typically the most common elements of change that education professionals and officials are asked to design and implement. The *political* dimension focuses on the redistribution of decision making power, illustrating how, when and which individuals participate in the reform efforts. These are the power relationships that exist between the numerous people involved in the learning process of students. In addition, this political landscape is impacted by the political distribution of power and resources across education systems. The *normative* dimension exposes the values, ethos and attitudes that

drive institutional policy and practice. Moreover, this perspective gives insight into the ideological barriers that school systems encounter in the reform process and that individuals encounter when asked to alter attitudes, behaviors and practices (Cooper, 1998).

Oakes (1992) finds that normative beliefs play a significant role in determining the depth and scope of school reforms. While these reforms can be posited in technical terms, their “construction, initiation and implementation and the values they reflect are all decisions that are based on core normative beliefs about race, class, intelligence, and educability, held by educators and others involved in our schools” (Oakes, Welner, Yonezawa & Allen: 953). Oakes (1998) and her colleagues and Wells and Serna (1996) find that many of the challenges faced by equity-minded reforms derive their power from areas of resistance in altering and disrupting normative beliefs or political distributions of power and resources.

This framework for understanding educational inequality and the findings found in studies of equity reform have major implications for this study since they seem to suggest that altering the cultural and political asymmetries that sustain the very schooling inequalities that equity-reforms seek to disrupt may be found in building local community power (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). And building the power of less powerful and silenced communities is what the activist groups in this study are seeking to accomplish. Oakes and Rogers (2006) argue: “educational equity is entangled with cultural and political dynamics that extend beyond the school; therefore, equity reforms must engage issues of power by extending beyond the school” (31). Employing this framework within the context of contemporary social movements and community organizing strategies

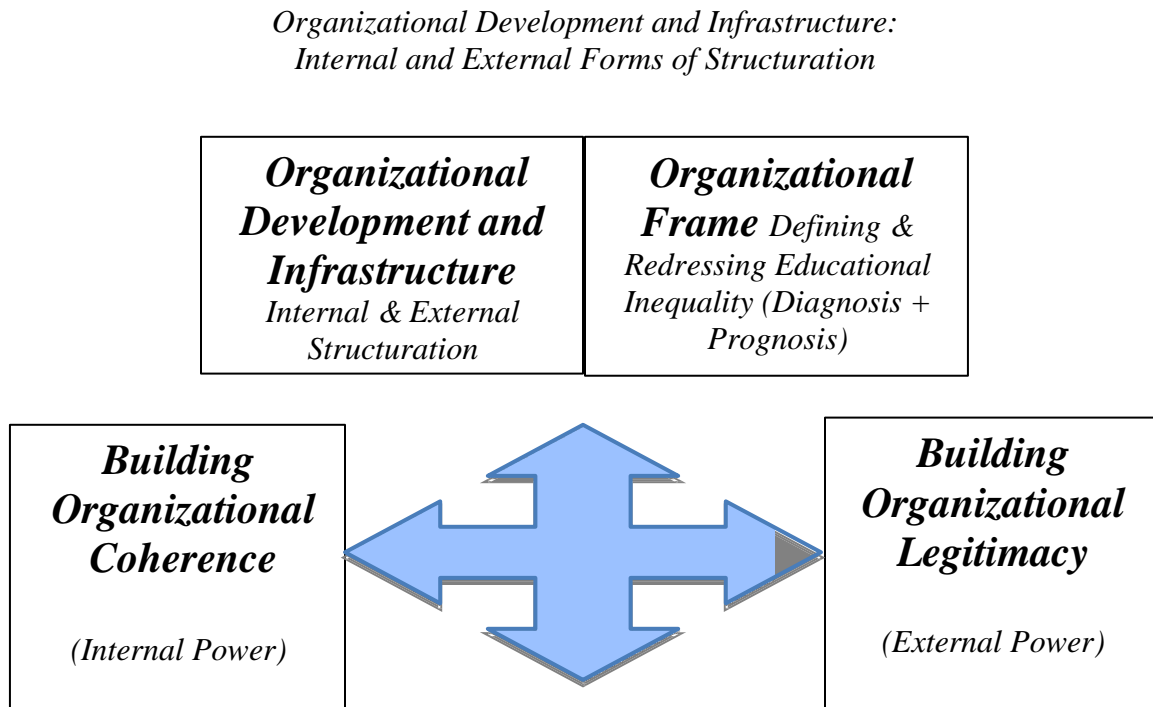


“provide[s] today”’s best hope for achieving the promise of *Brown*” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006: 18).

Finally, it is important to note that all four activist groups deal with issues or problems of inequality in some way or another and therefore base efforts aimed at remedying it accordingly. Lack of equality could signify differences in opportunity, treatment or status. Whether these efforts are placed on addressing shortcomings in the schools themselves or state academic assessments, they nevertheless attempt to rectify or improve an existing condition of inequality. For this reason, the term inequality, issue or problem are used interchangeably to signify what these groups are talking or thinking about, or simply what they consider consequential. This will become important when reading and interpreting the findings in the chapters to come.

I now turn to describing the intellectual roots of each of the processes open for examination in this study, all based on the visual representation of the theoretical framework provided at the beginning of this chapter. In my analysis I utilize key concepts from the scholarship on community organizing and the social movement literature.

**Figure 3.2: The Organizational Structure of Activist Organizations**



*Organizational Development and Infrastructure: The Internal and External Elements of Structuration.*

The choice of organizational models has been an important strategic decision for social movements in the last few decades (Tilly, 2004). In many western democracies, such as in Europe and the United States, the student movement of the late 1960s led scholars to embrace organizational form as an important analytic lens in examining various forms of protest and mobilization efforts (Tilly, 2004). A central question to activists and social movement scholars has been the relevance of organizational structure itself (Della Porta & Diani, 1999). Resource mobilization approaches have recently focused attention on social movement organizations defining them as “rational entities capable of gathering resources from their surrounding environment and allocating them with the aim of bringing about political transformation” (Kriesi, 2006: 153). Since all four activist organizations in this study operate within

complex institutional settings, or recognizable organizational forms, the study examines the degree to which organizational development (focus and factors) and distribution of power, enable and/or constrain advocacy efforts for equity-minded school reform.

Kriesi (2006) offers a framework through which internal and external organizational dynamics can potentially play a powerful role in helping activist groups advance goals and objectives. However, before outlining this model I define what a social movement is as embodied in current dominant perspectives in the analysis of collective movements and provide a working definition of an “activist organization” which is the terminology I use in this study.

*What is a Social Movement?* Definitions of social movements vary depending on the particular theoretical approach used by scholars of social movements. Before the student movements of the late 1960s that placed more of an emphasis on organizational form, movement organizations were largely conceived of as “spontaneous, informal assemblies such as crowds and panics reacting to crisis situations through the development of shared beliefs on which to forge new foundations for collective solidarity” (Della Porta & Diani, 1999: 4). Thus, *the collective behavior perspective* is more concerned with “meaning and individual’s responses based on feelings, for example, of deprivation and aggression to times of rapid, large-scale transformations” (Della Porta & Diani, 1999: 5).

*Resource mobilization approaches*, however, focus more on the processes by which the resources necessary for collective action are mobilized. From this perspective, social movements are extensions of political action where rational actors, or “movement entrepreneurs,” follow their interests and organizations mobilize a variety of resources, or

“movement industries,” such as people, money, knowledge, skills, frames, and technical tools to distribute information and to influence people (Rucht, 2006). Evaluation of costs and benefits to participation as determined by a set of external resources or limitations are considered including the availability of material or symbolic resources (Della Porta & Diani, 1999).

*Political process or political opportunity approaches* pay more systematic attention to the political and institutional environment in which social movements operate (Della Porta & Diani, 1999). They aim to examine how social movements engage with the other parts of the political system, such as government structures, media outlets, elite agencies and decision-makers (Della Porta & Diani, 1999).

*Blending political opportunity and resource mobilization approaches:* However, this study bridges two strands of the social movement literature that are generally considered and treated separately. Traditionally, political opportunity approaches to research on social movements have neglected the structural need for activist groups to mobilize resources required for change (Rucht, 2006). At the same time, resource mobilization approaches to social movement research have largely ignored the broader political environments in which social movements are embedded (Rucht, 2006). Incorporating both research strands, this study achieves a greater understanding of the varied elements that directly or indirectly influence the kinds of mobilization efforts required to enact social, policy and educational change for English learners.

Taking both research strands into consideration, one can conceive organizational form as an element of strategic framing. Clemens (2006) argues how the role attributed to organization in movements has been conceived in rudimentary terms, such as degree of

organization and its possible limits on movement protests. However, organizational form may appear as a movement frame which both “informs collective identity and action at the same time orients groups toward other actors and institutions” (Clemens, 2006: 206). Since this study theoretically blends both approaches, I consider both approaches as unifying elements.

*What is an activist organization?* The unit of analysis in this study is the activist group, or organization, not a social movement or social movement organization. I use this terminology partly because it is unclear whether the four activist groups in this study that are fighting educational inequality around English learner issues in California are operating within a social movement. This study is limited to activist organizations that have a collective identity and pursue goals and objectives that actively challenge dominant education reform paradigms based on the three principles outlined at the beginning of this chapter regarding equity-focused education policies: (1) acknowledge that educational inequality exists across social and political systems and, therefore inequality and its sources need to be addressed across those systems; (2) identify systemic oppression as the root cause of inequalities in educational opportunity and outcomes; (3) and take a proactive multi-dimensional approach since educational inequality appears in different forms aimed at remedying these inequalities.

In addition, it is important to note that the four activist groups, or organizations at the center of this study engage their work within an identifiable and recognizable organizational model that may reflect grassroots and/or advocacy-based interests; and work on equity-focused education policies at the local, state and/or federal level with an

emphasis on the effects of these education policies for English learners on the state of California.

I now address Kriesi's (2006) conceptual model through which internal and external organizational dynamics play a powerful role in helping activist groups advance goals and objectives. He asserts that "development" takes place in internal and external political contexts.

*Internal Structuration* refers to processes deriving from: (1) "*Formalization* as the development of formal membership criteria, written rules, the introduction of formal statutes and established procedures, and the creation of a formal leadership and office structure;" (2) "*Professionalization* as understood by the presence of paid staff who make careers out of movement work;" (3) "*Internal Differentiation* which involves the functional division of labor and the creation of territorial units;" (4) and "*Integration* which includes mechanisms of horizontal and/or vertical coordination such as the centralization of decisions through a Board of Directors, for example, and the integration of differentiated functional and territorial subunits" (Kriesi, 2006: 154).

According to Kriesi (2006) as movement organizations grow, through greater resource flows, their internal structuration will become more elaborate with respect to all the dimensions outlined above. In addition, he argues that the process of internal structuration produces stability, over informal models, increases the likelihood of survival during cycles of organizational decline and demobilization (when movement issues are less pressing), and better prepares groups to take advantage of new political opportunities which may arise at any given point in time (Kriesi, 2006).

*External Structuration* refers to the integration of the movement organization to its organizational environment, which includes the group's relationships with its constituency, its allies and authorities (Krisi, 2006). Since movement organizations are highly dependent on its constituency for collective action and require the mobilization of material and symbolic resources to help access political decision-makers, they must rely on "outsider" strategies to draw the attention of publics and policymakers to the problems they wish to have resolved (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006).

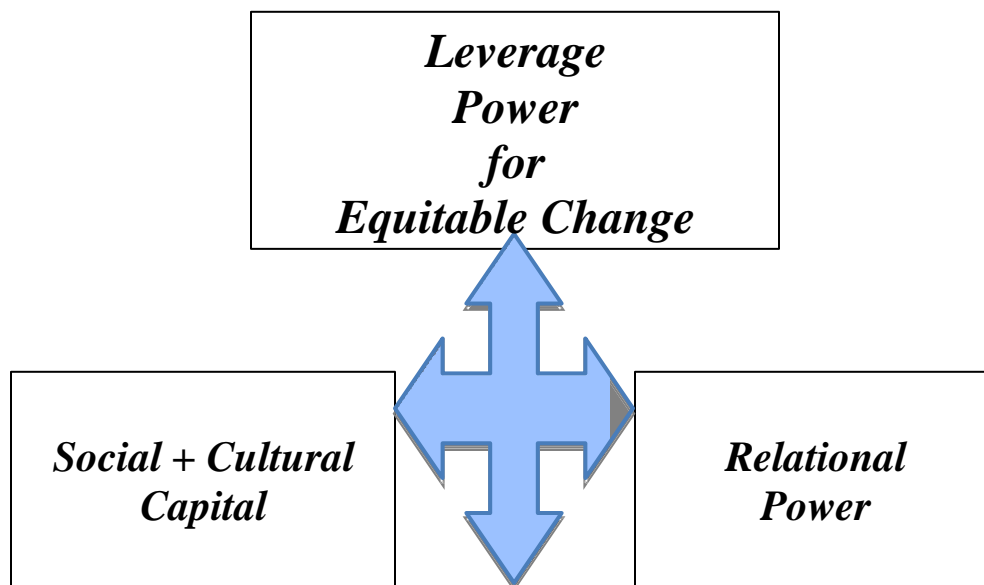
Finally, one of the essential tasks for activist groups is to "struggle over how to frame social problems and injustices in a way that convinces a wide and diverse audience of the necessity for and utility of collective attempts to redress them" (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006: 291). These frames typically embody two important components: the "diagnostic element," or definition of the problem and its source; and the "prognostic element," or the identification of an appropriate strategy for redressing the problem (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006).

Since activist organizations usually lack the political and/or material resources necessary to access those people and/or agencies with real power, such as political decision-makers, they must rely primarily on "outsider" strategies to draw the attention of publics and policymakers to the problems they wish to have resolved (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006). Some of these "outsider" strategies involve building relationships with the public, media, elected officials and the research and legal community. How activist groups frame or define educational issues will largely determine the types of strategies they will employ to help remedy the issues identified.

This conceptual tool of organizational development with internal and external political considerations is useful for this comparative case study since the study examines the extent to which organizational factors influence how groups define and act on problems and their sources.

*Social and Cultural Capital and Relational Power:  
The Building Blocks in Leveraging Power for Equitable Change*

**Figure 3.3: Social and Cultural Capital and Relational Power**



*Social and Cultural Capital and the Notion of Relational Power:* Robert Putnam (2000) has shown how social capital in America's communities since the fifties, "the features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit," has suffered a dramatic decline in the United States having major implications for democracy (67). Community-based institutions that once structured the "engagement of people in political action around a range of issues helping to forge relationships and engendering a sense of common



purpose and action have frayed with political transformations and the introduction of new technologies” (Warren, 2001: 15).

Warren (2001) provides a compelling framework for analysis that aims to expand prevailing conceptions of social capital, criticism of the fundamental premises of Coleman’s work (Shirley, 2002), that fail to connect it directly to politics. For Warren (2001) revitalization of democracy requires ways to build social capital at the level of local community organizations that are prepared to engage political arenas. Warren writes: “What has been largely overlooked in the debates about social capital is the growing disconnection between politics and what remains of American community life, a still significant resource” (Warren, 2001: 19).

*Bonding forms of social capital* refer to the ties that serve as the basis for solidarity and collective action. It provides the foundation for members of local communities to “engage in cooperative relationships that bear traditions and values in which people express their commitment to community” (Warren, 2001: 18). While bonding social capital strengthens connections among people much like each other, because local communities can be isolated and inward looking, strategies that aim to connect people across communities become important (Warren, 2001).

*Bridging forms of social capital* refer to the connections that link poor people to institutions and individuals that have access to money and power (Noguera, 2004) and that aim to build cooperative ties across racial and class lines that separate communities (Warren, 2001). This is one of the obstacles that school reform efforts aimed at building local power must contend with, the fact that low-income communities of color that live in concentrated poverty are often segregated by race and class.

In addition, housing markets also serve as powerful segregationist forces and usually isolate students along the dimensions of ethnicity and income (Anyon, 1997; Orfield, 1993; 1996). Orfield (1996) finds that two thirds of all African American and almost three fourths of all Latino students in the public schools attend predominantly minority schools. More than a third of these students are in schools where more than 90% of students are from minority ethnic groups. Housing also segregates students by income, and income and ethnic segregation are highly related. A student in an intensely segregated minority school is fourteen times as likely to be in a high-poverty school as a student in a school with less than 10% Black or Latino students (Orfield, 1993). Orfield writes: “If poverty is systematically linked to educational inequalities as it consistently is, the very powerful link between race and poverty segregation is a central element in perpetuating the educational inequality of minority students” (Orfield, 1993: 22).

Nevertheless, Shirley’s (2002) work in examining how community organizing and activism in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas in support of public schools has produced positive academic results for low-income youth. In addition, Warren’s (2001) study of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) network in Texas illustrates how participation and leadership of individuals and groups that were once isolated from elite decision-makers have been cultivated that managed to secure social policies addressing community needs. Both are notable examples that speak to the power of education organizing as a reform strategy.

*Cultural capital* is a term that was first introduced by Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu (1977) “cultural capital acts as a social relation with a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status.” The

different forms of values, skills, knowledge and education that people have, that may give them a higher status in society can be thought of as cultural capital (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Parents give their children various forms of cultural capital by transmitting the values, attitudes and knowledge needed to navigate and succeed in the current educational enterprise (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Olivos (2006) mentions the notion of the “maleta” in his work around bicultural parent involvement in public schools in San Diego to illustrate how the U.S. system of education devalues the native culture of Latino children. This “maleta” is the “general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, skills, values, customs, traditions and worldview that are passed on from one generation to another” (Olivos, 2006). These cultural perspectives help parents and students from low-income communities mediate and make sense of their social and economic surroundings, including the school system, and typically involve complex issues of power, social status, legitimate knowledge and privilege (Olivos, 2006).

Cummins (2001) argues that acceptance of the various form of cultural, linguistic and intellectual capital that children bring from their communities to our schools can be enhanced only when existing views of culturally and linguistically diverse children are no longer perceived as “a problem to be solved.” Cultural capital, from these perspectives, are useful concepts in this study since a majority of the individuals participating in these groups are or were, themselves, recipients of this discrimination and oppression. It also helps to explain how notions of inequality are defined, in relation to existing social, political and economic forces that enable or constrain construction of equity agendas.

One final concept found in community organizing that is used in this study is this notion of *relational power*. Relational organizing refers to the “act of conversation and relationship building that lead to the identification of issues around which participants are prepared to act together as opposed to mobilizing around a set of predetermined issues” (Warren, 2001: 21). Rather than starting from the top with a list of “important” issues that need to be addressed by the group, and that are often constructed by professional organizers, activist groups “build their political capacity over time, through patient base building rooted in the issues as they have meaning in the lives of participants and their families.” (Warren, 2001: 31). In other words, equity agendas are constructed using a bottom-up approach.

My blended theoretical framework uses key concepts from both the academic literature on social movements, studies of equity reform and the scholarship on community organizing. This blended conceptual model captures the dynamic and sophisticated processes of political opportunity and resource mobilization efforts among activist groups working to advance equity-focused education policies in California for English learners. In the following chapter I operationalize my theoretical model into a research design and protocol.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Research Design and Methods**

Following from the principles outlined in Chapter three that educational inequality: has many forms; operates at different levels in a social and political system; and, therefore, requires a variety of multi-dimensional solutions; the study examines how activist groups across different organizational types define and act on issues. Specifically, it documents the multiple ways in which a diverse set of California organizations grapple with, make sense of, and take action to improve the educational conditions and outcomes of students learning English.

Examining a diverse set of groups working on this issue makes for a richer and more relevant study, since it allows me to document their different specializations, different ways of making sense of the problem around English learner issues, and the ways in which their various solutions address existing forms of inequality.

Focusing on California is particularly instructive, since the English-only environment in the state adds a whole new level of complexity to equity for English learners and is intertwined with the state's testing policies. Therefore, the study deliberately includes groups that are either California-based or involved in a significant way in California politics around English learner issues.

Using a comparative case study design, including interviews, direct and participant-observations, and document analysis, this study documents the complex processes through which activist groups frame multi-dimensional solutions and use a variety of tools, some of which are grounded in political and legal interaction to advocate for English learners and hold the system accountable for their learning opportunities and outcomes. Collecting multiple sources of information, using a formal assembly of evidence in the form of a matrix that I have developed for other research projects, and

establishing explicit links between the research questions asked, the data collected and the conclusions drawn substantially increases the quality of this case study investigation (Yin, 1994). The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the interpretations made from data sources collected make this overall study more robust (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994).

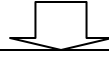
Since I use a multiple case design, specifically for the purpose of collecting evidence across multiple sites, the model is interactive and non sequential. Using a conception of research design that is interactive allows for flexibility and interconnection among the different design components. Maxwell (1996) writes: “Whatever advantages a traditional, sequential model may have for quantitative research, it doesn’t adequately represent the logic and process of qualitative research in which each component of the design may need to be reconsidered or modified in response to new developments or to changes in some other component”(2).

What follows is a visual representation that captures the fundamental components of this case study investigation. The unit of analysis is the organization and the population includes activist groups that are currently working on equity-focused education reform in California. I describe each aspect of this interactive model and procedure below.

**Figure 4.1: Interactive, Descriptive, Multi-Case Study Design**

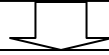
**Research Agenda:**

This topic resulted from personal experiences as an organizer in the Community of Coachella; work conducted around areas of activism in Williams v. State of California with UCLA law professor Gary Blasi and his law students and my interactions with key professors at UCLA’s Institute for Democracy, Education & Access, such as Dr. Jeannie Oakes and Dr. John Rogers; and through opportunity as a researcher for the plaintiffs in Coachella Valley Unified SD v. State of California.



**Research Question:**

How does a coalition committed to educational equity for English learners define and act on educational problems and their sources?



**Blended Theoretical Framework:**

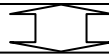
Conceptual Context: Development of a set of theoretical propositions, disciplinary orientations and conceptual intuitions

Social Movement Theory	Studies of Equity Reform	Community Organizing
(a) Resource mobilization and political opportunity approaches found in the social movement scholarship. (b) Kriesi's (2006) model on internal and external structuration.	(a) Oakes' (1992) framework for understanding educational inequality: technical, political and normative aspects of reform.	(a) Warren's (2001) notion of social capital, relational power and political leadership.



**Qualitative Multi-Case Study Design:**

1. Select four activist organizations and conduct background information on each of the four sites.
2. Meet with Executive Director, President or Program Manager to discuss the data collection process and identify 3-5 subjects to be interviewed for each site.
3. Prepare "matrix" or data collection instrument/protocol (questions, field procedures) to account for the multiple sources of evidence that are collected from interviews, direct and participant observations and document analysis.
4. Conduct site visits and collect data from each of the four sites.
5. Re-configure "matrix" or data collection instrument/protocol to account for concrete behavioral and setting descriptions and continue collecting evidence from site visits.
6. Transcribe interviews onto the "matrix" and begin to identify themes, patterns and frequency of events.



**Data Integration, Issues of Validity and the Production of Compelling Arguments and Conclusions:**

1. Evaluation, interpretation, triangulation and analysis of data collected (*analytic techniques* used include: relying on theoretical propositions; organizing the information into categories; creating displays such as flowcharts and visual representations; and tabulating the frequency of important events with the purpose of identifying patterns and themes).
2. Produce compelling arguments/conclusions and write the dissertation or "case study" report.

*Interactive, Descriptive, Multi-Case Study Design*

*Research Agenda and Biography:* In the early 1970s Mexican-American farm worker, labor activist and co-founder of the United Farm Workers, Cesar E. Chavez, led rallies in the migrant and agricultural community of Coachella, California to address issues of economic discrimination and attract attention to the plight of low-income farm workers suffering from poor working conditions and low wages. My mother, a single parent of three, attended several of these events before moving to Echo Park near downtown Los Angeles and then eventually settling in La Puente, California to lend her support to local engagement efforts aimed at improving the lives of those most isolated from mainstream society. My journey in a new country (United States) began in this farmland community of the Coachella Valley, rich in cultural heritage and the site of Latino political activism, near the U.S.-Mexico border.

Following my undergraduate years at the University of California, Berkeley where I took an interest in studying the dynamics of political change of Latin America as a Political Science major, I returned to the Coachella Valley and entered the teaching profession as an elementary school teacher with Coachella Valley Unified School District. As a bilingual educator in a low-income, Latino-serving school district I undertook the responsibility of educating students whose difficult economic circumstances were similar to my own childhood experiences.

I volunteered to lead several initiatives with the goal of improving educational conditions and practices in the school district. As chair of the English Learner Department and Language Appraisal Team at our middle school, I was responsible for enhancing the skills and knowledge of teachers working with English learners. And while I realized a certain level of success, earning the respect of my colleagues and



honored with the “2000 Teacher of the Year” award for my school and district. In these capacities, I struggled with complicated bureaucracies, confronted lack of equality in educational opportunities and outcomes and saw the limitations on quality and equality of education brought about by policy, institutional politics and concentrated poverty. I decided, after teaching for seven years, to pursue an advanced degree in the hopes that I could acquire a broader perspective and a level of understanding that are difficult to attain while working inside the school system, and return to my community with additional skills and insights to address and reform complicated educational problems.

At Harvard University I completed a principal-licensure program where we were immersed in the fundamentals of education law in order to prepare us to mediate legal disputes, which educational leaders must often do when school systems are required to redress injustices. My training at Harvard was followed by several internships with the California and U.S. Departments of Education, where I observed the implementation of law driven school reforms designed to remedy statutory and civil rights violations against English learners at the state and local level. These experiences generated a deep interest in continuing my formal studies investigating issues of inequality in education. My efforts to satisfy intellectual curiosities and my firm commitment to realize more equitable conditions for children and youth, led me to the Urban Schooling division of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles.

I was privileged, early in the doctoral program, to work closely on research projects with distinguished professors (Jeannie Oakes, John Rogers and Gary Blasi) examining matters of social justice in education through legal frameworks. Such was the case in the settlement of Williams v. State of California, a class action lawsuit where

plaintiffs asserted that the state of California and its agencies were denying thousands of California students their fundamental rights to an education under the California constitution by failing to give them the basic tools necessary for that education. As a result of this major litigation effort new opportunities were created for students in low-income neighborhoods in the form of greater access to qualified teachers and responsive curricula for English learners.

My participation in this lawsuit was instrumental in deepening my understanding of the relationship between educational activism and civil rights litigation. I was able to join a team of dedicated professionals in advocacy efforts, sponsored by UCLA's Education Justice Collaborative, a network of community organizations, researchers, educators, and policy and legal advocates working toward a more equitable and fully resourced system of public education in California. Under the guidance of senior faculty, and in collaboration with two UCLA law students, I published a report summarizing a tripartite investigation into the feasibility of the School Accountability Report Card as a tool for informing parents and community members of the condition of local schools. Our findings had major implications for the work of activist groups participating in the Collaborative by facilitating the use of strategic research to help better inform advocacy efforts.

Meanwhile, my own community of Coachella was undergoing a transformation of its own. The schools were being driven by changes in policy due to the adoption of the No Child Left Behind Act and, as a consequence, growing local public discontent with California's decision to limit the opportunities for English learner students to receive instruction in their home language. In June of 2005, nine school districts, three statewide

non-profit organizations, parents and students, banded together under the lead district, Coachella, to sue the state for failing to adopt an accountability system with accommodations for English learners that could lead to valid and reliable test results. I was hired by the lead attorney representing the plaintiffs in the suit and worked very closely with the legal team including prominent scholars specializing in language rights to strengthen the legal-based claims that made their way to the court. My work on this project led directly to my dissertation topic. The plaintiff organizations in the lawsuit are cases in this comparative case study investigation.

In addition to writing my dissertation, I am currently leading a major initiative in the Coachella Valley that aims to advance our understanding of the causes that promote and perpetuate inequitable schooling conditions and outcomes. These efforts have led me to adopt a multi-dimensional and systemic view of inequality whose solutions extend beyond the schoolhouse to include other equally powerful associations to student achievement such as access to good health care, affordable housing, quality jobs and excellent schools based on personal experiences working in the grape fields in the community of Coachella as a farm worker.

Using research and personal narratives as instruments, we seek to create a public discourse that challenges pervasive forms of educational inequality and builds a broad-based social movement dedicated to developing and cultivating an empowered public prepared to advocate on behalf of our most vulnerable groups. We envision building partnerships with numerous change agents, to help mobilize political support around efforts to promote educational equity. Ultimately, we wish to empower individuals, help build relationships and foster knowledge-producing communities equipped with the tools

to help transform local schools and neighborhoods.

My direct involvement in these two legal cases, and the insights from my own research, have led me to the conclusion that I can most effectively promote the educational interests of Latino immigrant families by combining the tools of educational research with the skills of legal analysis and legal reasoning. For this reason, I'm pursuing a graduate degree in law at Arizona State University. I am looking for advanced exploration, and solid grounding, in the fundamentals of legal process and theory that will permit me to address real world issues of educational equity and access, create bridges between educational researchers and lawyers, and generate new knowledge as a scholar of education in areas where the law and education intersect.

The interdisciplinary approach to the study of law, and the remarkable diversity of cultural backgrounds and perspectives it supports, will create a unique environment from which to draw on disparate conceptual frameworks and lived experiences and develop a comprehensive tool for understanding inequality and the possibilities for social change. Moreover, the anti-immigrant and reactionary politics of Arizona that gives rise to both challenges that cry out for remedies and advocacy, will not only help to strengthen my understanding of the relationship between educational activism and civil rights litigation within the context of existing policy and legal disputes around immigration and restrictive language policies, but also compliment my doctoral work.

Thus, my own biography, personal research interests and opportunity have all led me to my research question and study.

*Research Question:* My research agenda, along with the theories discussed in the previous chapter are used to develop the research question guiding this study. The

central question of this investigation asks: How does a coalition committed to educational equity for English learners, and three of its constituent groups, define and act on problems and their sources? The core set of questions used in the interview process aimed at addressing the three important elements of the groups' efforts to build power for reform include:

- How many years have you been with the organization?
- Describe some of your responsibilities?
- Where and what responsibilities did you have prior to this position?
- What compels you to become involved in non-profit work?
- How does the organization sustain itself financially? How are monies spent?
- How is the economy affecting your ability to carry out your responsibilities?
- What is the organization currently doing to help expand its financial base?
- If the organization had an unlimited amount of financial resources how should the monies be spent?
- What is the one issue in education (site of inequality) that the organization considers important to its mission?
- What makes this issue important to look at? OR Why focus on this issue?
- Describe some of the resources and strategies the organization is currently undertaking to help combat this issue?

*Blended Theoretical Framework:* The conceptual context of this study, "the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform research efforts" (Maxwell, 1996: 25) plays a pivotal role in the construction of the case study protocol, field procedures and questions asked of informants or subjects. In

addition, through the development of a set of theoretical propositions, disciplinary orientations and conceptual intuitions stemming from a thorough investigation of existing literature, potential validity threats to conclusions drawn are mitigated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). As Merriam (1998) reminds us, “for qualitative studies, researchers can benefit from knowing how well certain data collection techniques used in previous related studies may or may not have yielded meaningful data”(51). For this reason, an interactive approach in research design is used to allow for flexibility among the various components of this study.

*Qualitative Multi-Case Study Design (Methods and Cases):* The details of the work of education organizations, both the local political work and the internal organizational processes, are better investigated with qualitative methods (Renee, 2006). Klandermans and Smith (2002) assert that comparative case studies are “useful in developing theoretical ideas about complex processes” (8). Certainly, case study designs predominate studies of social movements specific to education (See, for example, Warren, 2001; Shirley, 2002). Since this study examines the complex relationships and organizational dynamics around grassroots and advocacy efforts for equity-focused education reform, a comparative case study design is best suited.

The four organizations that comprise the cases investigated in this study include:

- *Organization Alpha:* A local, organic, parent-run organization that is involved in advocacy and community building work around issues of English learner policy and school reform.
- *Organization Beta:* This is an advocacy organization comprised primarily of professional educators that promotes equity and educational achievement for

students with diverse cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds and for whom language poses an additional barrier to schooling. Their key initiatives include:

- (1) A focus on student achievement;
  - (2) A focus on professional development for educators and parents who work with students learning English;
  - (3) A focus on working with legislators and policymakers to ensure educational equity and resources for English learners;
  - (4) A focus on building strong partnerships with educational, business and community entities;
  - (5) A focus on securing the financial resources needed to carry out all key objectives of the organization.
- *Organization Delta*: A nonprofit Latino litigation advocacy and educational outreach institution that is national in scope and whose central office is located in Southern California. Their primary goal is to secure the development of sound public policies, laws and programs that protect the civil rights of Latinos living in the U.S. They concentrate their efforts in the following areas:
    - (1) Employment
    - (2) Education
    - (3) Immigration
    - (4) Political Access
    - (5) Language
    - (6) Public Resource Equity Issues
  - *Organization Omega*: A statewide coalition of a wide range of groups focused on

educating immigrants that was founded in 1998 after the passage of Proposition 227. In response to the state mandated English-only educational environment, parents, teachers, education advocates and civil rights organizations banded together with the commitment to secure equal access to quality education for all children. Organizations Alpha, Beta and Delta are member or supporting organizations.

The diversity among these four activist groups permit me to highlight a wide range of specific equity issues and organizing strategies community groups are using as well as to identify beliefs and practices that they share.

Moreover, all four activist groups are concerned with many of the same issues, enjoy some degree of identity, recruit from the same participation base, and have a history of collaboration around English learner policy and practice through the statewide formalized network that is formed after successful passage of Proposition 227 (Organization Omega). As such it is important to include a configuration of organizations that meet periodically as a network or coalition, since these types of arrangements are becoming more common in education organizing and they are typically the driver of issues and strategies (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002).

These collective and sustainable approaches to problems, cutting across organizational boundaries (coalitional work) that help build capacity, interpretative results are based on a typology that reflect both organizational and group (change agents) considerations. Thus, I examine differences and similarities across organizations and movement participants. While the configuration of organizing efforts for educational



reform matched the amazing diversity of issues identified as requiring some form of remedy the principal organizational stakeholders actively involved in these efforts are fairly consistent and are thus categorized into three main groups.

In addition, since the purpose of the research is to explore the effects of organizational focus and factors on collective action for change, stakeholders most familiar with their respective organization, its direction and its history are interviewed. Therefore, the age of the subjects involved vary tremendously. Those in the best position to speak on behalf of the research questions asked, which range from Executive Board members and Program Managers to long time volunteers and grassroots participants are selected. The organizing model these groups employ, the composition of the leadership team that make most of the decisions, and the manner in which inequality is defined are critical determinants of the type of participants actively involved (See, for example, chapter five).

Thus, while organization Omega places most of its attention on issues relating to “bureaucratic accountability,” and rely heavily on the expertise and technical knowledge of seasoned educators to do so, most of whom are older and more experienced, organizations Beta and Delta that make more room for parent and student voice in leadership decisions tend to locate inequality closer to the community (public accountability) and therefore place much greater emphasis on actions that appeal to a younger support base and demographic. Moreover, the fact that these two organizations enjoy the largest operating budgets provides them with greater flexibility in terms of diversifying and expanding programs and services aimed at capturing a wider constituency.

The primary mobilizing agents include:

- *Attorneys:* Four of the five attorneys interviewed specialize in civil rights litigation, with one education attorney. Three work for the same organization, all graduates of Ivy-League institutions. Four have at least twenty years experience practicing law, with one recent Stanford graduate. Finally, two of the five attorneys are women, four are of Latino descent and one is Caucasian.
- *Parents:* All seven parents interviewed have school-aged children enrolled in public schools and live in low-income communities. Four volunteer with the same organization, identify themselves as immigrants, and prefer to speak Spanish. Of this small group of immigrants, one holds a US high school diploma while the other (Executive Director), has completed a high school education, or higher, in their respective country. Of the remaining three parents, two are US high school graduates and all three lead the parent resource centers for their respective organizations. Lastly, five of the seven parents are women and all are of Latino/Hispanic descent.
- *Educators:* In all, eleven are interviewed, one male and ten female. All of the respondents have classroom experience; work directly with, or on behalf of, English learners and their families as teachers, administrators or advocates; serve on the board of one of the four organizations involved in this study; have given testimony at least once in Sacramento; and possess a Master's degree or above. Two are university professors and five are former presidents of two of the four participating organizations. Finally, six are Latinos and five are Caucasian.

*Data Integration: Research Instruments and Analytic Techniques:* The “matrix” is a

case study database in the form of a template that allows multiple sources of evidence to be documented and organized; procedures and protocols to be established and tailored to the growing and changing needs of the study; and instruments to be created and used; all for the purposes of triangulation, evaluation, and analysis.

The *sources of evidence* that are collected for this study include:

- *Interviews:* Interviews consist of open-ended and structured formats allowing for flexibility in responses and for a variety of insights and facts. Respondents are identified in close collaboration with key organizational personnel in leadership roles such as the President, Executive Director and/or Project Manager. In all, twenty-three subjects are interviewed, including five civil rights or education attorneys; seven parents of school aged, low-income, children enrolled in public schools; and eleven educators working in some capacity in non-profit work.
- *Direct and Participant Observations:* The observations range from formal to casual data collection activities. Observational protocols are used and the matrix structured to allow for the documentation and incorporation of a variety of behaviors. Some of these observations include meetings, organizational activities, workshops/conferences, and field-related work in schools and communities. I use “participant observation techniques,” when ever possible, as a special mode of observation in order to build trust and gain access to events and/or groups that might be otherwise inaccessible to scientific investigation. Such is the case with existing legal suits where confidentiality agreements have been signed.

- *Document Analysis*: Finally, documentary information are used to help corroborate and augment evidence collected from other sources and to make inferences that may lead to worthy avenues of further investigation (Yin, 1994). Some of the documents investigated include letters, memorandums, agendas and minutes, administrative documents such as proposals, reports and other forms of internal documents, any formal studies or evaluations conducted by the group and any public sources of information such as newspaper clippings and/or media related publications.

During the data collection process, a number of *analytic techniques* are used to help triangulate, examine and analyze the sources of evidence collected from all groups. They include: organizing the information into categories; creating displays such as flowcharts and visual representations; and tabulating the frequency of important events with the purpose of identifying patterns and themes (Merriam, 1998). In addition, to ensure that the evidence gets treated fairly and enhance the production of compelling analytic conclusions, the sources of data are triangulated with the given set of theoretical propositions or orientations guiding the original objectives and design of the case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994).

*Validity*: Maxwell (1996) identifies validity threats to the following sources: valid description, valid interpretation and theoretical validity, including researcher bias and reactivity. In order to increase consistency in the types of descriptions being made, I audio record and transcribe all interviews. In addition, when taking observational notes it is important to be detailed, concrete and chronological as much as possible and immediately input the data onto the matrix. The main threat to valid interpretation is

“imposing one’s own framework or meaning, rather than understanding the perspective of the people studied and the meanings they attach to their words and actions” (Maxwell, 1996: 90). I enhance the validity of data interpretation by carefully and actively listening to interviewees, avoid asking leading or closed-ended questions and conduct “member checks” throughout the data collection process when possible.

I maximize the theoretical validity of my findings by continually examining alternative understandings and conclusions from the data. In addition, triangulation is incorporated to ensure that analytic conclusions are compared against alternate data sources. Shirley (2002) demonstrates how sharing his writing with those he’s observing builds social trust and enriches the documentation of the study as a whole. Incorporating a “deliberately dialogic method” is a great strategy for building relationships between the researcher and community members and for building reflexivity (Shirley, 2002: xxi). For this reason, researcher bias is mediated by continual “member checks,” including careful consideration for how positionality may impact the data collected. It is important to note that these “member checks” come in the form of informal verbal and email exchanges during data collection activities. Casual conversations during lunch breaks provide the opportunity to share progress with key actors, including interview subjects. In addition, the integrity of the conclusions being drawn are strengthened by strategically sharing transcribed responses with respondents and using them as a basis for dialogue.

Finally, “reactivity” refers to the influence a researcher may have on the setting or individuals being examined (Maxwell, 1996). I mitigate this through participant observations, whenever possible, and through reflexivity since enhancing social trust minimizes the extent to which my presence as a scholar affects their behavior.

During direct and participant observations I sit in during group activities and share any research or information that may be relevant for further investigation by the group. While, most of these observations are spent taking notes on a laptop, on occasion, I join in on the discussion when it is appropriate. Moreover, I attend social events such as dinners and banquets, whenever possible, to illustrate my commitment and respect to the work being done aimed at increasing the power and resources of the communities that are most impacted by elements of inequality and interact with organizational personnel in a social setting that minimizes social distance.

Most of these events, including observations, involve photographs. I do not use visual methods as an inquiry approach, such as photo elicitation, to try and ground the social, cultural or political world in which activist groups are embedded. Rather these images serve as snapshots of local phenomenon to be shared with audiences with the purpose of connecting activist groups and their work to human faces.

*Data Reduction, Data Analysis and Issues of Alignment:* Since the findings chapters revolve around three basic sub-questions, it may be useful at this time to provide a general explanation of how the data is reduced and analyzed for the chapters that are to follow in order to provide the reader with sufficient detail “to make any results that follow from the analytic method trustworthy” (Smagorinsky, 2008).

Blending findings from studies of equity reform in education, scholarship on education organizing and social movement theory, I use a theoretical framework that allows me to probe deeply into the phenomenon of education organizing. Throughout the entire data collection and reduction process, including analysis and the rendering of results, I turn to the blended theoretical framework to make sure that I stay on task. In

doing so, it gives me a roadmap for the kinds of evidence that I need to collect to help answer the questions posed and organize the data in a systematic fashion that facilitate explication of the story.

The three overarching research questions addressed in this study include: How does a coalition focused on equity education policy for English learners, and three of its constituent groups each employing very different institutional models, define problems (inequality) and their sources (*Research Question #1A*)?; What types of strategies, or action repertoires, do these activist organizations employ aimed at remedying problems identified (*Research Question #1B*)?; How do organizational factors, if any, influence how activist groups define and act on problems and their sources (*Research Question #1C*). The answers to these questions are addressed in chapters five and six.

The answers to the research questions rely strongly on interview data. I ask respondents to identify an important issue affecting English learner policy or practice. Based on their responses, it becomes clear that all four activist groups, collectively, take a very in depth look at a variety of issues around this area of educational reform. All of the interview data is stored in a matrix, a document that helps me to organize multiple sources of evidence and make sense of what is being collected for purposes of analysis and triangulation.

I begin to canvass the interview data and highlight, using various colors, issues that respondents consider important. Next, I construct a list of all of the priority issues identified solely from the interview data. Since I wanted to illustrate the patterns with which certain issues emerge and show that in visual form I could not simply rely on the

interview data itself since only twenty-three subjects are interviewed across the four groups, and not all reflecting comparable number of respondents by mobilizing type.

Thus, I begin to look through my notes and documents collected either during participant observations or during a thorough analysis of their website in order to continue to build on this list. Some of these documents include: reports; editorials in newspapers; internal publications such as magazines, evaluation studies conducted or in progress; themes emphasized during a particular conference sponsored by the group; flyers depicting a particular event; and any legislative and legal victories that are highlighted on their website and thus made public. Since three of the four activist groups have sophisticated websites with professionally-based web designs and multiple navigation sites with which to gain a closer look at what these organizations are doing and consider important, this kind of analysis seemed very intuitive.

What quickly emerges are an expansive list of priority issues and strategies aimed at rectifying a multitude of problems and interesting patterns suggesting that differences exist among the four groups. This becomes the basis of the first two findings in chapter five. The first (Finding #1) simply outlines all the problem-identification areas organized in a table and I arrange them around eight major categories. Since illustrating a random list of priority issues is not useful, nor interesting, I decided to use the different patterns that appear in the data, and some of the literature that utilizes a similar analysis such as reports coming from the National Center for Schools and Communities at Fordham University to assist with the creation of broad categories through which different priority issues can be placed.



Next, I begin to tabulate the frequency with which certain issues become apparent across different mobilizing agents. In the process of doing so clear distinctions are evident in the manner parents, educators and attorneys conceptualize inequality—the basis for my second finding (Finding #2). As such the eight broad categories are then placed under three larger constructs that are used to help articulate an emerging conceptual framework that may explain how education groups, collectively, make sense of the problem around English learner issues.

However, these first two findings only answer the “what,” or the different ways in which these groups view problems requiring some form of remedy. In an effort to help answer the “why,” I ask respondents to describe why they are involved in non-profit work and I draw from the social movement literature emphasized in my conceptual framework to examine the extent to which organizational characteristics, such as institutional life cycle and financial viability, play an important role in organizational behavior (Finding #3). After all, “codes need to be developed in a dialectic relation among the data, the theoretical framework, and whatever else a researcher brings to the analytic process” (Smagorinsky, 2008: 406). Referencing the analytic method while reporting results best maintains the integrity of the claims being drawn and strengthens alignment between the various elements that comprise the data collection process (Smagorinsky, 2008).

The work of social movement scholars specializing in political opportunity and resource mobilization approaches become very influential in my analysis and in the explication of the story to help answer why organizers prioritize issues the way they do. In addition, I weave some of this explanation and scholarship throughout the rendering of

the results in the second and third findings in this chapter, using mostly interview data as the major source of evidence to substantiate my claims since a lot of the documents collected from their websites not only filter their way into the classification of priority issues but are also used more thoroughly to reflect the different organizational elements that govern behavior that are highlighted in finding #4.

Since similarities and comparisons are made across four education groups and since there are an unequal number of respondents by organization, only the most compelling and salient interview data are used and therefore several respondents appear in the telling of the story more than once. At the conclusion of chapter five, I outline an emerging framework, which can be used as a conceptual tool to help explain how education groups make sense of the problem around English learner issues.

In chapter six I address the remaining two research questions. I rely heavily on interview data, participant observations and documents collected to illustrate the social, and political systems breached in ways that support and leverage resources and partnerships, including strengthening capacity building efforts. Visuals are used strategically to help explain important concepts and/or illustrate social phenomenon reflected in organizing strategies. The table below outlines the names (pseudonyms), titles and interview dates of each of the participants involved, and delineates the major sources of data, including documents, used for each of the subsequent chapters that follow that comprise my findings.

**Table 4.1: Participant Information and Sources of Data Used in Findings Chapters**

	<b>Organization Alpha</b> (Parent-led)	<b>Organization Beta</b> (Educator-led)	<b>Organization Delta</b> (Attorney-led)	<b>Organization Omega</b> (Educator-led)
<b>Primary</b>	Volunteers	Members	Clients	Members

<p><b>Constituency</b></p> <p>Respondents, their titles and Interview Dates</p> <p>EDU: Educator ATT: Attorney PAR: Parent</p>	<p><b>Mr. Hernandez</b>, Executive Director (3/19/09 + 6/5/09) <u>PAR</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Cortez</b>, Board Member (1/22/10) <u>PAR</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Sanchez</b>, Advisory Board Member + Coordinator (1/22/10) <u>PAR</u></p> <p><b>Mr. Perez</b>, Volunteer (1/22/10) <u>PAR</u></p>	<p><b>Dr. Garcia</b>, CEO and Executive Director (1/15/09 + 5/8/09) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Mr. Lopez</b>, President (5/11/09) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Gutierrez</b>, Vice President (10/24/09) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Dr. Martinez</b>, Director of Secondary &amp; Higher Education Affairs (12/29/09) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Ms. Miller</b>, Regional II Representative + Board member (1/8/10) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Fischer</b>, Director of State &amp; Legislative Affairs (10/24/09) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Ponce</b>, Coordinator of PIRC (12/8/09) <u>PAR</u></p> <p><b>Mr. Ruiz</b>, Legal Counsel (12/18/09) <u>ATT</u></p>	<p><b>Mr. Villa</b>, President &amp; General Counsel (3/26/10) <u>ATT</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Saragoza</b>, Western Regional Counsel (5/4/09) <u>ATT</u></p> <p><b>Ms. Vargas</b>, Staff Attorney (2/21/10) <u>ATT</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Torres</b>, Director of Parent School Partnership Program (11/13/09) <u>PAR</u></p> <p><b>**Mr. Brewster</b>, Civil Rights Attorney (11/24/09) <u>ATT</u></p> <p><b>** Not with the Organization</b></p>	<p><b>Mrs. Smith</b>, Executive Director (1/16/09 + 4/9/09) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Gonzalez</b>, President (5/11/09) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Rossi</b>, Vice President (12/3/09) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Baker</b>, Treasurer (4/9/10) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Salinas</b>, Lobbyist (4/9/10) <u>EDU</u></p> <p><b>Mrs. Contreras</b>, President of member organization (5/11/09) <u>PAR</u></p>
<p><b>Chapter Five:</b></p> <p>How does a coalition focused on equity education policy for English learners, and three of its constituent groups each employing very different institutional models, define problems (inequality) and their sources?</p> <p>(Multiple Sources of Evidence Used)</p>	<p>A. Interviews</p> <p>B. Literature (citations)</p> <p>C. Documents collected during participant observations.</p> <p>- Parent Professional Development Sessions</p> <p>- Parent &amp; Community Forums</p>	<p>A. Interviews</p> <p>B. Literature (citations)</p> <p>C. Website, 2009-10</p> <p>- Newsletters</p> <p>- Legislative Updates</p> <p>- Media Pieces (Op-Ed, Letters to the Editor, Press Releases)</p> <p>- Policy Reports</p> <p>- Workshops &amp; Conferences</p> <p>D. Carry the Torch Campaign, 2010</p>	<p>A. Interviews</p> <p>B. Literature (citations)</p> <p>C. Website, 2009-10</p> <p>- Policy Reports</p> <p>- Briefing Books</p> <p>- Legislative Analysis &amp; Legal Updates</p> <p>- Fact Sheets</p> <p>- Letters to Legislative Offices</p> <p>- Newsletters</p> <p>D. Strengthening Communities through English and Integration Act, 2008</p>	<p>A. Interviews</p> <p>B. Literature (citations)</p> <p>C. Website, 2009-10</p> <p>- Workshops</p> <p>- Policy Reports</p> <p>- Letters to Legislative Offices</p> <p>- Media Pieces (Op-Ed, Press Releases)</p> <p>- Immersion Film (Panel &amp; Discussion)</p> <p>- Legal Statements &amp; Briefs</p> <p>- Newsletters</p>
<p><b>Chapter Six:</b></p> <p>What types of strategies, or action repertoires, do these activist organizations employ aimed at remedying problems identified?</p>	<p>A. Interviews</p> <p>B. Literature (citations)</p> <p>C. Parent Professional Development Initiative Informational Sheet, June 2010</p>	<p>A. Interviews</p> <p>B. Literature (citations)</p> <p>C. Website, 2009-10</p> <p>D. Project INSPIRE, Parent Information &amp; Resource Center Brochure, December 8, 2009</p>	<p>A. Interviews</p> <p>B. Literature (citations)</p> <p>C. Website, 2009-10</p> <p>- Policy Reports</p> <p>- Briefing Books</p> <p>- Legislative Analysis &amp; Legal Updates</p>	<p>A. Interviews</p> <p>B. Literature (citations)</p> <p>C. Website, 2009-10</p> <p>- Workshops</p> <p>- Policy Reports</p> <p>- Letters to Legislative Offices</p> <p>- Media Pieces (Op-</p>

(Multiple Sources of Evidence Used)	<p>D. Parents' Dialogue Program Flyer, Burbank Middle School, 2010</p> <p>E. Parent &amp; Community Forum, with Montebello USD, December 5, 2009</p> <p>F. Parent Organization Network, RESPECT for Parents Campaign, Petition Form, December 5, 2009</p>	<p>E. Project INSPIRE Informational Sheet, December 8, 2009</p> <p>F. Leadership Handbook, 2009 Edition</p> <p>G. Fiscal Year Budget &amp; Actual Variance Summary Report, Board Meeting, October 24, 2009</p> <p>H. Board Meetings: 6/27/09; 10/24/09; 1/9/10</p>	<p>- Fact Sheets</p> <p>- Letters to Legislative Offices</p> <p>- Newsletters</p> <p>D. Language Rights Briefing Book, June 2008</p> <p>E. The Multicultural Education Initiative, 2010.</p> <p>F. Truth in Immigration Educational Campaign, 2010</p> <p>G. Civil Rights Education Program, 2010</p>	<p>Ed, Press Releases)</p> <p>- Immersion Film</p> <p>- Legal Statements &amp; Briefs</p> <p>- Newsletters</p> <p>D. Retreat Meetings: 9/22/08; 12/8/08; 3/9/09; 6/25/09; 9/30/09; 10/1/09; 1/5/10; 4/9/10</p> <p>E. Profit &amp; Loss Financial Statement, April 19, 2010</p> <p>F. English Learner Policy Report, 2010</p>
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## Chapter Five

### Priority Issues for Education Organizing: How Activist Organizations and Mobilizing Agents Define Educational Inequality for English Learners

What I attempt to do in this chapter is briefly describe the major findings that speak to the set of questions and inquiries that this study has set out to explore and address. And I attempt to do so organizing the scholarship in such a way that reflects a new set of intuitions through which activist groups are grappling with, making sense of, and ultimately taking action around English learner issues.

I begin this chapter with a brief description of the limitations involved in the study, introduce the major mobilizing agents and outline how they define educational issues, and end with the introduction of a framework that may be used as a conceptual tool to help explain how activist groups make sense of the problems around English learner policy and practice. It is here where I address the first of three research questions proposed in the study: How does a coalition focused on equity education policy for English learners, and three of its constituent groups each employing very different institutional models, define problems (inequality) and their sources?

In chapter six I outline the redressing aspects of collective action, the different kinds of strategies that these groups use in the service of activism, which involve internal and external organizational elements. I describe how these four organizations use collective approaches to create an organizational infrastructure that maximizes capacity development and describe the role that constituencies play in these efforts, as they help to determine equity agendas. The chapter addresses the remaining two research questions: What types of strategies, or action repertoires, do these activist organizations employ aimed at remedying problems identified?; How do organizational factors, if any, influence how activist organizations define and act on problems and their sources? Finally, I offer a new blended theoretical framework in light of existing strategies aimed

at bringing about change by placing the primary focus on coalitional pursuits and provide some recommendations for advancing coalitional work around efforts designed at improving the educational opportunities and outcomes of English learners.

### *Limitations of the Study*

All empirical studies have limitations that constrain them. This is no different in qualitative research where design elements can help to introduce vulnerabilities, or multiple sources of bias, that can potentially compromise interpretative results. There are three noteworthy limitations in this study. One, the *sample size* is small, making it difficult to generalize across a representative group of people involved in activist efforts aimed at improving the learning conditions and outcomes of students learning English. In total, only twenty-three subjects are interviewed. However, small sample sizes do confer some benefits, primarily affording the researcher the ability to establish relationships with respondents and have their responses undergo a rigorous analysis (triangulation).

In addition, since descriptive and inferential conclusions are drawn across a broad range of stakeholders it is worth noting that not only is there a slight unequal number of respondents representative by type—five civil rights or education attorneys; seven low-income parents of school-aged children enrolled in public schools; and eleven educators; but there is also a disparate number by sex—six males and seventeen females respectively. Since this study does not try to establish cause-effect or causal relationships, which is typically associated with those studies aimed at assessing the

effects of a particular intervention and thus must account for internal validity issues, these disparities should have no relevance in this examination.

However, the fact that an overwhelming majority of the respondents are Latinos and Spanish speakers can be problematic. English learners are not a monolithic group. There are over fifty languages spoken by English learners in California's public schools, 85% of which speak Spanish as their first language. As such, the interview pool tries to reflect similar numbers. While it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the unmatched number of respondents by language spoken or ethnicity, threaten external validity, it is clear that the relatively small sample size make the results obtained difficult to transfer.

Second, there is an *unequal collection of data due to lack of access*. I have a great deal of access to two of the four organizations. Gaining entry into these two groups is facilitated by my involvement in the Coachella case since both are plaintiffs in the suit. For this reason, the executive directors of both groups are familiar with my work and know many of the same people in my professional circles, including members of the community that I hail from. As such, I attend every single retreat and board meeting, and have done so for a period of eighteen months. In addition, I interview a variety of key organizational personnel, and collect an assortment of documents, which include minutes, state and federal legislative and budget updates, policy reports, and action plans connected to campaign related work.

Now, despite the fact that both of these groups grant me access to retreat and board meetings the data collected is still confined to notes and comments taken on my laptop as opposed to audio recordings. In other words, I do not audio record conversations that are happening live during group meetings. Several members of both groups have expressed

concerns about my presence. The coalition is heavily involved in conversations around several political campaigns, including numerous members of the State Board of Education. And there is fear that I will disclose important pieces of information discussed and, more generally, share strategic activities that the Coalition is pursuing. To appease these individuals I opt not to audio record meetings.

A much more fragmented executive board in Organization Beta, and the polarizing affects that come with a divided leadership body, leads me to make the conscious decision not to audio record their deliberations. In both cases, I fear that by audio recording group meetings, entry into those observations will be completely closed. It is the executive directors of both organizations, and their power within the group, that allow me to gain entry to begin with and stay there for a relatively long period of time. For this reason, I rely heavily on my listening and note taking skills to record participation observations and turn to other sources of data available to me that can corroborate information shared in group interactions before translating them into evidence for claims.

With the final two groups, I am restricted to only interviews, public documents, and four participant observations, three of which involve coalition meetings with the statewide group involved in this examination. The non-profit, Latino litigation, advocacy and educational outreach organization limited my involvement due to sensitivity issues associated with the attorney-client privilege, which protects confidential communication when legal counsel is sought. Thus, I have no access to staff and board meetings where existing litigation concerns are often discussed and where participant observations can, potentially, reveal interesting clues and corroborate other sources of data.



The local, parent-run organization that is involved in advocacy and community building work around issues of English learner policy and school reform is undergoing a difficult transition due, in large part, to the economic meltdown. As a result of the recession, this organization has no central office in which to carry out goals and objectives. For this reason, activities have been scaled down, although the organization is making concerted efforts to revitalize institutional aims. While all four organizations face smaller resource flows and are undergoing periods of retrenchment and demobilization, to varying degrees, the parent-led group is the one most adversely affected. All of these issues help to limit the scope of analysis.

Finally, there are slight *inconsistencies in the measures used to collect the data, and time constraints*, both associated with the interview process. The interview protocol underwent a variety of changes to reflect a new set of intuitions and realities. Thus, respondents early in the data collection process are given a much more expanded set of questions with the purpose of providing some clarity and direction. By the time a core set of questions is solidified, and several specific, and missing, questions are identified as being critical to a thorough analysis of the results, a few of the early respondents either have moved or are no longer working for the organization, rendering a follow-up impossible.

In addition, in several of the interviews we are limited in terms of time and amount of data collected. This is true for many of the respondents that have to travel across the state to attend any organizational function, including meetings. Since all of the interviews are conducted in person, for purposes of audio recording and accuracy, several interviews are limited in terms of the space and opportunity for engagement. Because the

research design is meant to be interactive and allow for flexibility to adequately deal with new developments or changes, these inconsistencies are bound to surface.

What the aforementioned limitations suggest is that more research in this area is needed with particular attention given to a slight revision of the methods used for gathering data to better account for such issues. Nevertheless, considering the limitations outlined above, enough evidence is collected from multiple cases in order to make compelling interpretations across a variety of data sources, and make the overall study robust. I invite readers to consider the results that are to follow in the context of these limitations. What follows is an overview of the major findings that will be discussed in the chapters to come.

**Table 5.1: Organizational Focus and Factors Contributing to Issue Selection & their Solutions**

	<b>Organization Alpha (Parent-led)</b>	<b>Organization Beta (Educator-led)</b>	<b>Organization Delta (Attorney-led)</b>	<b>Organization Omega (Educator-led)</b>
<b>Primary Constituency</b>	Volunteers	Members (Individuals)	Clients	Members (Organizations)
<b>Organizational Focus</b> - Advocacy - Program Operation - Lobbying - Grassroots Efforts - Research Activities - Legal Strategies	- Advocacy - Program Operation - Grassroots Efforts	- Advocacy - Program Operation - Lobbying - Research Activities	- Advocacy - Program Operation - Lobbying - Research Activities - Legal Strategies (directly)	- Advocacy - Program Operation - Lobbying - Research Activities - Legal Strategies (indirectly)
<b>Organizational Factors</b> (structure, history, age, practice, capacity) - Issue Focus - Life Cycle - Network Participation - Membership or Constituency Driven - Formal Structure	- Education-Based - 1996 (15 yrs.) - Yes - High - Informal - High (Parents) - Grassroots Model - \$10,000 (FY 2010)	- Education-Based - 1974 (37 yrs.) - Yes - High - Formal - Moderate (Parents) - Interest Group Model - \$2.6M (FY 2010)	- Multi-Issue (Education, Housing, Employment, Voting Rights, etc.) - 1968 (43 yrs.) - Yes - Low - Formal - Moderate (Parents + Students) - Interest Group Model	- Education-Based - 1998 (13 yrs.) - Yes - Low - Informal - Low (Parents + Students) - Interest Group Model - \$180,000 (FY 2010)

- Role of Parents & Students - Organizing Model - Budget			- \$5.2M (FY 2010)	
<b>Problem Identification</b> + <b>Agency Construction</b>	Engagement Gap	Test/Policy Gap	Opportunities to Learn Gap	Test/Policy Gap
<b>Organizational Coherence</b> (Formal Structure + Governance)	Informal Structures + Decentralized Governance (Activities)	Formal Structures + Decentralized Governance (Activities)	Formal Structures + Centralized Governance (Activities)	Informal Structures + Centralized Governance (Activities)

*Priority Issues for Education Organizing: How Activist Organizations and Mobilizing Agents Define Educational Inequality for English Learners*

One of the three important elements that this study seeks to illuminate in the group’s efforts to build power for reform is how they define educational issues. Issue selection is one of the most consequential ingredients of organizing for education reform and the expansive field of education provides an extraordinary opportunity for the creative development of diverse equity agendas.

Drawing from the work of political opportunity and resource mobilization approaches in the social movement scholarship and inspired by a body of work centered on examining the dynamics of schools and communities coming from the Harvard Family Research Project, the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, and the National Center for Schools and Communities this chapter profiles “what” these groups consider important and attempts to answer “why” they consider it important. Collectively, these important pieces of work filter their way into the analysis, including the rendering of results, and facilitate the identification of organizational elements that help to explain their influence on institutional priorities and organizational behavior.

In addition, it is important to note that interview data and documents collected and organized for the purpose of recording issue selection form the primary sources of evidence used in addressing how these groups define educational problems (research question #1A: findings #1-3). Participant observations and document analysis filter their way more strongly in examining the kinds of tactics these groups employ in helping to carry out equity agendas (research question #1B: finding #4). Since there are limitations in this study, as outlined above, that limit the scope of analysis, existing bodies of work are used to help fill some of the gaps (research question #1C: discussion). Key findings in the social movement literature, including important concepts found in the education organizing scholarship, are employed and sprinkled throughout some of the explanations used to describe the differences in terms of how activist organizations define problems—what these groups consider important. In short, scholarship is used where empirical scrutiny in this study either fails or is not possible.

Finally, my experiences as an organizer in the community that I hail from are not completely separated from the sense-making and analytic process guiding the explication of this story. These personal, and practical observations are useful tools aimed at identifying areas of further examination and employed to help reduce data to a form that is coherent and easily translated into evidence for claims.

*Finding #1: Activist Organizations focus on a Remarkable Variety of Issues within the Field of English Learner Policy and Practice*

Respondents identify nearly sixty priority issues for English learners. While concerns like equal access to the curriculum, qualified teachers and parental engagement are important for the four organizations, others that are more focused on concrete resource concerns such as class size, overcrowding, and school safety receive less attention. Nevertheless, organizers construct campaigns, coordinate efforts and develop specific strategies aimed at rectifying a multitude of problems. And these problems are viewed in a sophisticated, integrated and systematic process that involves critical analysis and selection of criteria for improvement with the purpose of translating personal experiences, insight, and collective expertise into demands and actions.

This multi-dimensional notion of inequality and its source, and the broad range of tools available to these groups, is evident in many of the responses given by respondents. For example, when asked to identify the single most important issue facing English learners Dr. Garcia, Executive Director of Organization Beta, a large educator led group dedicated to issues of bi-literacy states: “Having parents involved, the assessment piece, quality teachers and many administrators that understand because we’ll have a very good program and the administrator that doesn’t believe it or have a different ideology, they destroy programs coming in. These are the challenges” (Interview with Dr. Garcia, Executive Director of Organization Beta, January 15, 2009).

Similarly, Dr. Martinez, Director of Secondary and Higher Education Affairs with the same organization, former President of a major national English learner advocacy organization and a longtime advocate of language rights states: “I thought about this a lot and right now we have an industrial model, a factory model, in our schools and it has to shift, it doesn’t work anymore. We have to shift the whole metaphor it’s not just one

thing. Assessment, professional development and parental involvement are just cogs in the wheel. We should be shifting how we organize teaching and learning and curriculum to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Interview with Dr. Martinez, Director of Secondary & Higher Education Affairs of Organization Beta, December 29, 2009).

Nearly all respondents, however address to some degree the nexus of California’s assessment & accountability system with Proposition 227 usually by pressing for more open language policies, testing in multiple languages, quality bilingual programs and services and the overall need to challenge and remedy the insidious effects of ideology on minority languages, cultures and communities.

The new President of one of the two educator led organizations captures this sentiment succinctly. When asked to identify a top priority of his first term Mr. Lopez replies: “My primary wish would be to have the money re-directed toward getting rid of Proposition 227 or changing the language so that it would do the opposite. We would do this pretty much in the same way that Proposition 227 was forced down people’s throats but actually being open and honest about it” (Interview with Mr. Lopez, President of Organization Beta, May 11, 2009).

Mrs. Gutierrez, Vice President of the advocacy organization that promotes equity and educational achievement of students for whom language poses a barrier to schooling agrees with this sentiment. She explains: “I love our vision statement, „bi-literacy and educational equity for all.” Everybody should be bilingual and more than just bilingualism for all it’s the equity issue. It’s the right of children and families to have their language and culture be an important part of their education” (Interview with Mrs. Gutierrez, Vice President of Organization Beta, October 24, 2009).

Finally, in similar fashion, Mrs. Baker, Executive Board member and Co-Founder of the coalition led organization strategically linked to statewide organizing with heavy emphasis on leveraging resources to affect political campaign outcomes and state legislative policy upholds this view of inequality as one reflecting a strong connection between market based school accountability and language ideology. When asked to identify a priority for English learner policy she replies: “I think its become a numbers game in a kind of mechanistic way about how to raise English learner achievement and that has become the focus and the context of what is an overall devastating paradigm of pushing kids out, pushing families out, destroying culture and destroying language” (Interview with Mrs. Baker, Treasurer and Co-Founder of Organization Omega, April 9, 2010).

The table below lists the most important priority issues identified, grouping them into eight broad categories based on differences in conceptions of inequality that emerged in the interview process among mobilizing agents. Since many respondents ground their understanding of educational problems and discuss outreach within the context of the achievement gap across multiple fronts, the eight categories are themselves classified into three main constructs that reflect similar political considerations. These constructs will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

**Table 5.2: Priority Issues for Education Organizing for English Learners**

<b>OTL Gap</b> (Attorneys) <i>Legal Strategies</i>	<b>Test/Policy Gap</b> (Educators) <i>Cultural Strategies</i>	<b>Engagement Gap</b> (Parents) <i>Political Strategies</i>
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<p><u>Quality of Instruction:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PD of Teachers</li> <li>• PD of Administrators</li> <li>• New Teachers (Recruitment, Induction, Retention, Mentoring)</li> <li>• Qualified Teachers (ELD, SDAIE, Subject Matter, etc..)</li> <li>• Data Systems</li> </ul> <p><u>School Environment/Materials:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Culture &amp; Climate</li> <li>• Materials/Textbooks</li> <li>• Computers/Technology</li> <li>• Student/Teacher Expectations</li> <li>• Safety, Gangs, Drugs</li> <li>• Crowding/Overcrowding</li> <li>• Physical Plant Conditions</li> <li>• Class Size</li> <li>• Suspensions/Truancy/Juvenile Justice System, etc...</li> </ul> <p><u>Equity/Special Programs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracking</li> <li>• GATE, Special Education</li> <li>• Migrant Education</li> <li>• Dual Language Programs</li> <li>• ELD Programs/Critical Pedagogy</li> <li>• Access to A-G Courses</li> <li>• Access to Higher Education (AB 540, etc..)</li> <li>• Access to Counselors</li> <li>• Funding/Financing (Budget Allocation)</li> <li>• Desegregation</li> <li>• At-Risk Programs</li> <li>• Pre-school/Early Childhood/After School Programs</li> </ul>	<p><u>Accountability:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance &amp; Monitoring</li> <li>• State/Federal Governance (CDE, State Board, Appointments, etc..)</li> <li>• Credentialing/Certification (CLAD, BCLAD, etc..)</li> <li>• Low Performing Schools (API, AYP, PI, etc..)</li> <li>• Intervention &amp; Reconstitution (SAIT, DAIT, State take-over)</li> <li>• Categorical Programs (Title I &amp; Title III)</li> <li>• Privatization/Charters</li> <li>• Merit Pay</li> </ul> <p><u>Standards/Benchmarks/Assessments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing Instruments (Validity &amp; Reliability)</li> <li>• Assessments (State Tests, CELDT, Exit Exam, etc..)</li> <li>• Testing Accommodations</li> <li>• Alignment (ELD, Spanish/English Standards, Assessments)</li> <li>• Reclassification of ELLs</li> <li>• ELD Standards</li> </ul> <p><u>Language Policy/Ideology:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposition 227</li> <li>• Bilingual &amp; Multilingual Programs</li> <li>• Quality Research</li> <li>• State Adopted ELD Materials/Framework</li> </ul>	<p><u>School/Home Connection:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Involvement/Engagement (Rights, classroom participation, etc..)</li> <li>• School Governance (ELAC, DELAC, SSC, PI, Hiring of school staff, etc...)</li> <li>• Racial/Linguistic Discrimination</li> <li>• Access to Quality Information</li> <li>• Adult/Civic Education</li> </ul> <p><u>Community:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Role Models</li> <li>• Access to Computers</li> <li>• Access to Social Services (Health care, Housing, Justice, Substance abuse centers, etc..)</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Immigration Status</li> <li>• Cultural Factors (Machismo, etc..)</li> <li>• Libraries &amp; Learning Centers</li> <li>• Hunger</li> <li>• Voting Rights</li> <li>• Employment/Workplace</li> <li>• Language Skills (Barriers)</li> <li>• Economic Development</li> </ul>
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Moreover, the breadth and scope of concerns underscores the significance of education organizing for students not yet fluent in English on multiple levels, but also highlights strategic challenges for these organizations in terms of setting and carrying out institutional priorities. Although all four activist groups work with multi-issue education campaigns that mobilize resources to build broad-based support across racial, class,



linguistic and geographic boundaries to achieve goals and objectives, the intended beneficiaries of these organizing efforts are primarily English learners and immigrant students and families. Because a large percentage of the English learner and immigrant population in California are Spanish speakers, problems, and the tactics developed aimed at remedying it, are defined with this important constituency in mind.

For example, when asked to identify reasons why the sites of inequality chosen need further examination, Ms. Vargas, a Stanford graduate and staff attorney with a major public interest law firm in southern California replies: “One in ten will be Latinos in twenty years nationally and California is one of the largest economies in the world. If we have such a large population that is failing and being tracked into the blue collar workforce without quality work skills then not only is the individual being deprived of his or her rights but the Latino community as a whole will remain stagnant and this will have serious repercussions for the nation as a whole (Interview with Ms. Vargas, staff attorney of Organization Delta, February 21, 2010).

Executive Director of the parent-led organization involved in school reform in Los Angeles agrees with the need to place the focus on the Latino community. When asked to describe the major goals of their group Mr. Hernandez narrates: “We started focusing on minority students especially in Los Angeles, we couldn’t avoid the reality that there are a lot of Latinos and English learners throughout the Los Angeles area that are failing their classes. Latinos are so visible, so we decided to look at that population” (Interview with Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director of and immigrant parent with Organization Alpha, March 19, 2009).

Regardless of context, however, issues relating to accountability, standards & assessment, language policy & ideology, quality of instruction and equity/special programs are the most frequently cited issue categories. And there's a strong reason why these activist groups place a lot of the attention on shaping educational policy.

First, an overwhelming majority of respondents are educators and it is difficult to ignore the visible damaging effects of state and federal policies on educational opportunities and outcomes for English learners. Mrs. Fischer, Director of State & Legislative Affairs of Organization Beta, the major advocacy organization comprised primarily of professional educators that target programs and services to children and youth not yet proficient in English reminds us of this need for robust efforts linked to statewide organizing. She explains: "The issue of the whole state assessment and accountability system is such a problem. I think it's unfair to children in alternative bilingual programs because it makes them look like failures and makes their schools look like failures because it doesn't respect what they may be learning through another language. It's been hurting bilingual programs and English learners because from my vantage point bilingualism is such an advantage" (Interview with Mrs. Fischer, Director of State & Legislative Affairs of Organization Beta, October 24, 2009).

Similarly, Ms. Miller, Board Member and Regional Representative with the same organization, expresses similar views. When asked to share the single most pressing issue facing English learners and its solution(s) she replies: "I think in keeping with the mission of the organization it would be to promote bilingual education, or promote multiple languages because in California, there's a real English-only mentality. It would be the opposite of that, to promote and try and overturn some of those unjust laws and

policies and structures that prohibit and discourage the development of multilingualism” (Interview with Ms. Miller, Regional Representative and Board Member of Organization Beta, January 8, 2010).

Second, all four activist groups are affiliated with a regional, state or national organizing network and this arrangement is a consequential influence on issue selection and approaches (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002). Organizers from these four groups meet four times a year sponsored by the umbrella, statewide organization involved in this study and their focus is heavily on issues relating to assessment and accountability. It is the driver of conversation, framing of issues, and organizing strategies. Mrs. Smith, Executive Director in charge of coordinating this statewide campaign declares this fact: “The assessment and accountability system in the state of California in the area of English learners is one issue that has been on our action plans for the last 5-6 years” (Interview with Mrs. Smith, Executive Director of Organization Omega, January 16, 2009).

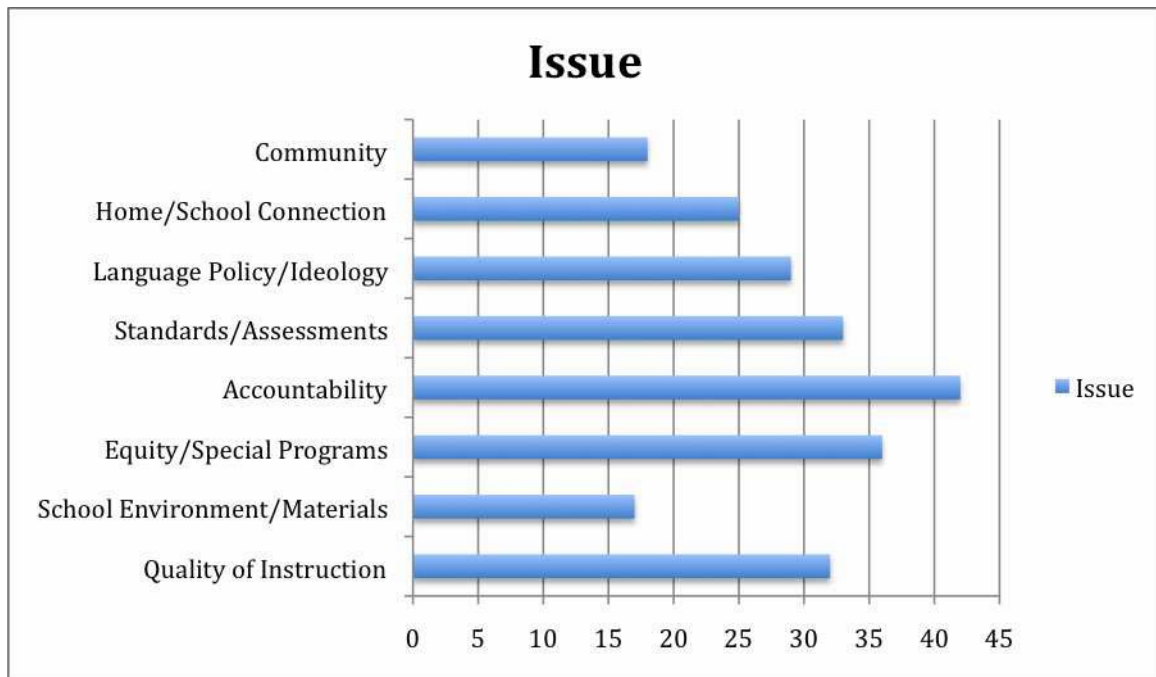
Finally, all three frequently cited issue categories under the construct “Test/Policy Gap” provide these organizations with the opportunity to become part of the discussion of educational reform around English learner policy and practice on a larger scale, issues that are most visible in the media and through which greater resources can be leveraged to access decision-makers. In addition, it confers these groups a certain level of legitimacy for their role in shaping state educational policy.

The figures below show a breakdown of issues by theme and construct, with each bar representing the total number of “actions,” or incidents, taken by these groups within each category and reflected in equity agendas. Because all four organizations employ

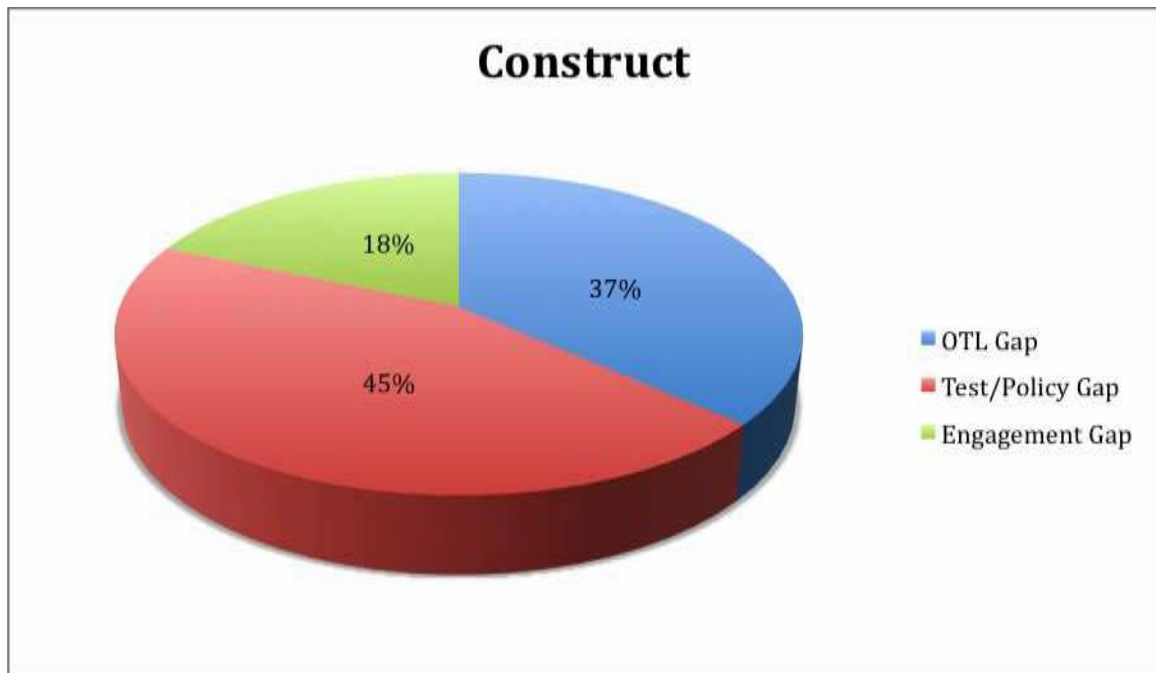
multi-issue education campaigns this is possible. In other words, if the Executive Director of an organization identifies assessment as a priority issue in an interview while at the same time the organization is a plaintiff in a lawsuit on problems of compliance/monitoring and publishes a report on parental engagement on their website then all three issues are counted in their respective categories. A complete list of all the documents used to record the frequency with which organizations prioritize issues is found in chapter four. The following illustrates a sample of the types of actions, or incidents, used to examine and record issue selection:

- Publications (magazine, internal reports, joint publications);
- Legislative actions and alerts;
- Formal studies and evaluations;
- Legal approaches (lawsuit, file amicus briefs, etc...);
- Interview Responses;
- Programs and services offered (workshops, conferences, etc..);
- Action items in Board/staff meetings (organizational activities, letters, memos);
- Press releases and media publications (op-ed pieces, letters to the editor, etc..).

**Figure 5.1: Issue Selection Summary**



**Figure 5.2: Issue Selection Summary by Construct**



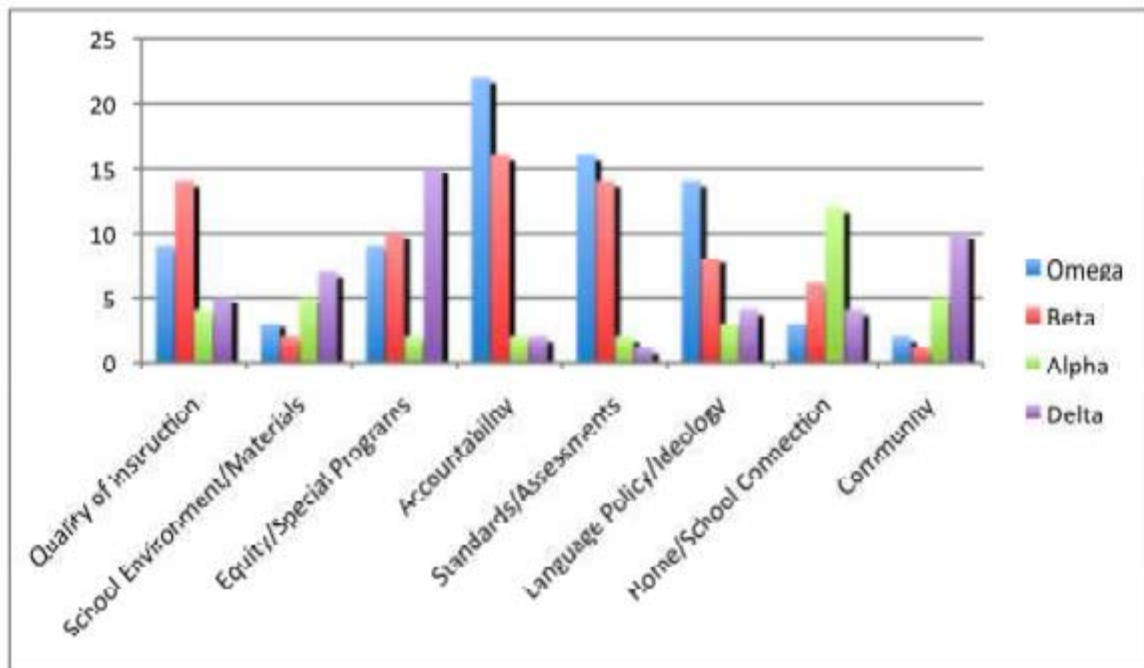
The identification of problems is obviously an important part of organizing efforts and the multi-dimensional nature of inequality, how issues are framed, lends itself to a remarkable variety of strategies through which problems may be remedied. Despite the fact that these four groups work very closely with one another, a closer examination of the research suggest differences do exist in how education issues and their sources are defined among the organizers themselves.

*Finding #2: Mobilizing Agents Identify Problems and their Sources in Contrasting Ways and Organizational Factors including Positionality Play an Important Role in that Selection Process*

As mentioned earlier, one of the essential tasks for activist groups is to struggle over how to frame social problems and injustices in a way that builds consensus among a diverse audience of the necessity for and utility of collective attempts to redress inequality (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006). Many of the organizers in this study define problems and their sources in divergent forms, and organizational factors such as structure, history, practice, age and organizational capacity, including individual positionality play a major role in that identification process. After all, equity agendas are not constructed in a vacuum; they are the products of the people in, and institutional elements and focus of, the organizations themselves.

The figure below lists all the issue-based categories by organization and mobilizing agent.

**Figure 5.3: Issue Selection Summary by Organization and Mobilizing Agent**



The statewide organizing network (Organization Omega) consisting primarily of educators and education advocates overwhelmingly cite issues relating to accountability, standards & assessment, and language policy (test/policy gap) as having the most adverse impact on English learners and their families and thus requiring redressing efforts in those specified areas. This coalition was formed after successful passage of Proposition 227 in 1998. Mrs. Smith, Executive Director of this alliance-based approach describes the necessity for a statewide focus:

*Ron Unz with all his money got the initiative qualified very quickly and none of us had ever run a state wide political campaign, we were just educators and we were all full-time educators. So about seven organizations got together and we formed the No on Committee, we started raising money, we hired a consultant, we were the Executive Board. What we did learn from that campaign was that many other grassroots organizations including some of the big mainstream organizations CTA, California Federation of Teachers, were interested in working together and we realized the potential for that kind of coalition for moving an agenda. We needed each other more than we did before to monitor what was*

*going to happen with the implementation of 227. We learned that we can all be in the room, parents can be in the room, with the teacher's associations, with the EL specialists and we could have a good conversation about what needed to happen and, I have to say, with very little friction for hostility about what the direction ought to be and what the issues are. That was a great lesson for us.* (Interview with Mrs. Smith, Executive Director of Organization Omega, January 16, 2009).

Proposition 227 was a major influence in the development of this relatively young alliance-based model whose goals are rooted in cultivating and sustaining capacity building efforts aimed at affecting state education policy. And in twelve short years this organization has managed to create an infrastructure that supports an array of programs and services. These organizational elements allow the group to address a variety of education-related concerns across multiple political arenas. However, the organization's historical trajectory (why it was formed), the small role parents and students play in organizing efforts, their relatively small operating budget, and the composition of the executive board that make all the leadership decisions (seasoned educators) heavily influences the framing of issues and construction of equity agendas centered solely on language barriers.

For example, the fact that parents and students play a minimal role in the decision-making process of these organizing efforts limits the discussion and confines the space through which issues are defined away from more resource centered concerns such as school environment/materials (access to textbooks) and home/school connection since parents and students typically focus more of their attention on these issue related categories and the data supports this claim. Restricted operating budgets further complicate the matter as capacity building endeavors are confined to activities that are not resource intensive or financially hungry.



As such, problems and their sources are inevitably defined within the purview of restrictive language policies which themselves, are intricately linked to state and accountability forces. For example, the executive directors of both educator led organizations agree that testing, accountability and ideology are together the principal contributing factors to disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes of students learning English. When asked to identify the most important issue affecting English learners Mrs. Smith, Executive Director of this statewide organizing effort describes:

*When we look at the state's accountability system that they use for state accountability as well as for federal accountability we feel that the measures as well as the protocols that they use are not sensitive nor valid and reliable for accurately telling us how English learners are doing and what they are learning. And so we have been working with, and trying to influence the, State Board, the CDE, school districts, other mainstream organizations, we even filed a lawsuit, about how better to construct an accountability system that would be sensitive and be able to show progress that English learners are making. So that's a big issue. (Interview with Mrs. Smith, Executive Director of Organization Omega, January 16, 2009).*

In similar fashion, Dr. Garcia, Executive Director and CEO of this coalition's sister organization which promotes itself as being a premier source of professional development for educators and parents who work with students not yet proficient in English offers the following testimony in her conception of the major sources contributing to educational problems:

*There are really three or four areas. The first is the whole assessment of students. One of our main goals is to promote equity and quality education, and how can you have that if its built, you know assessment is such an important part of the whole educational, instructional program, so how could you have quality programs when the assessment piece provides you the data to form your instructional programs is faulty. It really misrepresents what our kids are learning and not learning. That to us is a no-brainer, our kids are getting the short end of the stick not only because its not giving us the information that we need but also because the assessments are being used to dismantle our bilingual*

*programs. When you can't show that these kids are doing well because it's not in the language of instruction then they blame the program not the assessment. So it was very natural for us to be petitioners of this suit. It's that whole English-only mentality which is ideology* (Interview with Dr. Garcia, Executive Director and CEO of Organization Beta, January 15, 2009).

While all three issue-based categories under the construct “Test/Policy Gap” figure prominently for both educator led organizations, quality of instruction and equity/special programs are also a high priority for Organization Beta, the sister organization whose key initiatives include professional development, with a special emphasis on campaigns aimed at expanding quality bilingual, dual and English Language Development programs and increasing the effectiveness and skills of educators working with these groups of students. And this comes as no surprise as this non-profit has been promoting quality educational experiences in the form of professional development since it was incorporated in 1974 (Organization Beta website, 2010).

Currently, their professional development program consists of nine regional workshops and an annual statewide conference, mostly directed to educators and parents and all major sources of funding for the organization (Organization Beta website, 2010). In addition, they are spearheading a major initiative (Dollars for Scholars) as part of their “Carry the Torch Campaign” to provide financial support to new and future bilingual educators (Carry the Torch Campaign, Organization Beta website, 2010).

Thus, for most educators, low-test scores, state and federal accountability provisions and diminishing bilingual programs are conceived as overlapping factors contributing most to the achievement gap. Notably, the least popular issues among educators are school environment/materials, home/school connection and community. While issues relating to parental engagement receive less attention, these organizations

are making concerted efforts to expand the role and function of parents in organizing endeavors for educational reform.

To conclude, organizational factors such as structure, history, practice, age and capacity all help to contribute in shaping the character and personality of these two organizations. An overwhelming majority of the organizers have been involved in English learner issues for many years. As a matter of fact this is one of the challenges these two groups face, the lack of mentoring programs specifically aimed at preparing the next generation of leaders to carry out advocacy efforts, particularly at the local and state level. For example, when asked if they provide any mentoring programs to help establish any generational leaders to assume the responsibility of moving the organization forward in the near future, Mrs. Gonzalez, President of the coalition-based organization, of which Organization Beta is an active participant replies: “No, this is definitely an area that we need to address.... I think we will need to address this down the road” (Interview with Mrs. Gonzalez, President of Organization Omega, May 11, 2009).

Most community organizations suffer from maintaining continuity among the leadership (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002), however for these two groups leadership positions are usually held in a revolving manner involving many of the same people, which explains why many of the educators participating in these efforts are serving, or have served, on the executive boards of both groups. Nevertheless, the uniformity through which leaders are selected and organizational strategies and priorities are carried out provides a certain level of consistency in terms of how problems, and its sources are continually being defined.

While the statewide organizing group and its sister companion share a similar organizational focus that include a variety of programs and services and function with much of the same organizational characteristics that include stable leadership structures, network participation, relatively limited role of parents and students in the decision-making process, education focused issues and heterogeneous racial/ethnic membership the fact that the sister group has a longer institutional life cycle (age) and much larger operating budget that is used to carry out capacity building activities gives them stronger name recognition and legitimacy.

With respect to parents and attorneys as the primary mobilizing agents the focus of education issues are placed elsewhere. For parents, the heavy concentration of attention to the issue-based categories of home/school connection, community, quality of instruction and school environment/materials is apparent from the graph, with accountability and standards & assessments figuring comparatively low on the agenda. It is the complete opposite of what is most important for educators. Issues specifically relating to parental engagement, school governance, qualified teachers, and the availability of basic resources for schools such as textbooks, materials and safety are a “natural place for parents to focus attention since there is little dispute over their legitimacy as concerns for improving schools” (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002: 15). As such, many of the issues are defined beyond a language lens to include other, equally important, explanations to the sources of problems.

For example, Mr. Perez, long time advocate of parental rights and volunteer with the parent-centered organization involved in school reform in Los Angeles upholds this view

of inequality extending beyond the obvious language barrier. When asked to identify the single most pressing issue affecting English learners he replies:

*Yes, I believe there is a lot of inequality in our public schools. One of the biggest injustices I see is when parents become more aware of how the system works, schools, administrators and the School Board begin to oppress them. Another huge injustice is how, consistently, schools in low-income neighborhoods tend to have less access to the kinds of tools that they need to educate children when compared to schools in more affluent communities. These schools have lower AYP scores and the teachers are typically less prepared to teach their subjects (Interview with Mr. Perez, volunteer with Organization Alpha, January 22, 2010).*

Mrs. Sanchez, Advisory Board Member and Coordinator with the same parent-led organization agrees with this evaluation, although she takes it a step further to specifically identify qualified teachers as the primary issue affecting the educational opportunities and outcomes of students learning English. She explains:

*For me the biggest issue is the lack of qualified and good teachers. Teachers that do not educate our children and produce productive, educated members of society. These teachers think that because they have their unions to back them up, they do not need to teach our kids. And for several of these bad teachers we are talking about up to 270 students that are not being educated, all they do is ask for the students to open up their books look at the examples and answer the questions in the textbook and the teachers do not care about the students. The little effort they put into their classrooms is just to get paid and unions are there to support them. There is no policy at the district level nor does the Board of education do a good job in monitoring the quality of teachers that exist. This is an injustice for me. They move the money back and forth with the goal of protecting their jobs or with the purpose of showing the state that something is being done, when in reality nothing is being done. It is all an illusion. And many of these teachers that are not qualified nor care are Latinos themselves. This is very unfortunate (Interview with Mrs. Sanchez, Advisory Board Member and Coordinator of Organization Alpha, January 22, 2010).*

Many of the demands made by parents fall into the school environment/materials and quality of instruction categories which is not only a “basic deficiency in itself, but is

also a symptom of systematic discrimination applied against poor people and communities of color to the extent that some communities have access to books and instructional materials and others do not” (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002: 15). Several parents emphasize that the students who need access to the most resources are exactly the students who have access to the fewest (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002).

Finally, Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director and Co-Founder of the parent-led group defines inequality, and its sources, around issues relating to parental engagement and argues the need to fundamentally alter prevailing notions of parental involvement and expand the role of parents in educational reform efforts beyond existing conventions. He states:

*When we look at the academic achievement of students we see gaps, it's getting bigger and bigger and we know who is failing and we understand now why they are failing. Everybody agrees that parent engagement is so important but at the end of the day very few practice that. We need to raise their understanding of the roles in the educational picture. It is not enough and it's no good to tell parents that they need to be engaged, that they have to read with their child, that they have to monitor their child, parents don't know how. Parents don't know what to do. They don't know how to read to their children when a lot of the material is in English. Parents need to understand the dynamics of the child, so that they could make the connections of what they are doing to the learning process. It's not enough to just give children homework it has to make sense for them how it is connected to the big picture, to the curriculum. This requires a whole different conversation about parental engagement (Interview with Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Organization Alpha, March 19, 2009).*

Parents are the most important constituency for this organization and many organizing campaigns begin with a core group of dedicated parents concerned about a particular issue at the local school level. This has been the case since its birth in 1996. Because fledgling organizations with small geographic bases and no affiliation to larger,

outside networks tend to focus primarily on concrete resource concerns such as textbooks and school safety (National Center for School and Communities, 2002), this organization is gradually involving itself in campaigns sponsored by more established organizing networks or non-profits, such as the Parent Education Network, UCLA's Education Justice Collaborative and the Cross-City Campaign for Urban School Reform, thus allowing them to frame problems in a much more multi-dimensional fashion and tackle issues such as curriculum, instructional methods and system-wide reform.

This process is gradual and unstable. Currently the organization is struggling as the economy has affected its ability to expand capacity building efforts. The organization was only able to send one representative to two of the coalition meetings sponsored by the statewide organizing group involved in this study during the 2009-10 action plan cycle and this has an effect on problem identification as the group struggles with what it can and cannot do.

In addition, the organization must contend with the fact that it lacks the institutional infrastructure that can "grapple effectively with a bureaucracy and decision-making apparatus deeply entrenched" in supporting organizing efforts at the local or state level (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002: 10). Since most of the organizers are low-income parents and volunteers, as there is no paid staff, they become the most vulnerable of all groups to external forces such as declines in the economy. Moreover, cultural capital, knowing how the system works and what it values and, social capital, access to important social networks typically acquired in the process of gaining a diploma or a college degree are important aspects of social mobility and maintenance of class position (Gandara & Contreras, 2008) and parents of low-income Latino students,

including English learners typically lack both. This limits their ability to translate goals and objectives into actions.

While the two educator led organizations are able to carry out initiatives that involve a variety of activities, the parent led group is limited to mostly grassroots efforts. A long time volunteer and immigrant parent captures the frustration that is often associated with organizers in non-profits suffering from very small or non-existent operating budgets.

Mr. Perez narrates: “It’s very difficult to recruit new members, we do experience a lot of barriers in that respect. But some of those barriers we erect ourselves because either were very busy with other matters of life or simply attending to our own families. Acquiring the weapons necessary to build a movement requires a lot of time and money and many of us have very little extra time to give and our group has very little money. In addition, it’s also difficult when you do not have a central office in which to operate” (Interview with Mr. Perez, volunteer with Organization Alpha, January 22, 2009).

Similarly, Mrs. Cortez, long time advocate of parental rights and Executive Board member with organization Alpha describes how the lack of a stable and critical mass of committed change agents makes the group vulnerable to attack by opponents. She explicates: “One of the issues we are wrestling with is that parents join our group temporarily to fulfill an individual interest or necessity and once that necessity has been fulfilled they leave our group. We’re struggling with that, to sustain a critical group of members. The system doesn’t make an effort to help parents organize. When a group of parents begins to form and push back, the system quickly tries to dismantle the group and creates conflict within the group” (Interview with Executive Board member of



Organization Alpha, January 22, 2010). These factors, including organizational elements inevitably play an important role in the framing of issues.

For attorneys, the frequently cited issue categories include community, quality of instruction, school environment/materials and equity/special programs. The most popular issues among the attorneys surveyed are funding/financing, desegregation, higher education, materials/textbooks, and non-education issues such as health care, voting rights and employment and housing.

An approach favored by attorneys made lack of access to justice a fundamental component of the process in issue selection. In this view, “ongoing disparities in the distribution of power are at the root of unequal outcomes in many spheres of community life, including not only education but also employment, community services, housing and crime” (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002: 15). Consequently, one of the most important goals is to “change the relationships of power that exist in a community or society such that previously marginalized constituencies wield real influence over important decisions” (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002: 15).

Mrs. Saragoza, Western Regional Counsel and staff attorney with the major public interest law firm in southern California confirms this notion of inequality. When asked to identify the most pressing issue affecting English learners and their families she narrates:

*One is English language learners and ensuring that ELs have equal educational opportunities. Most recently there's been a case that was argued in the U.S. Supreme Court, the Flores case out of Arizona, and we filed an amicus brief, I wasn't involved in it but our Texas office filed an amicus brief in that case and I know that Arizona in particular has a really egregious history of discrimination against Latinos and that's a prime example of how they've been unwilling to fund educational programs for English language learners for decades. That's why that*

*case has been going on for a long time. Also, another area that is a priority for us is dealing with desegregation and although people think of desegregation as something from the 1950s and 1960s we're now seeing plans that had been under a desegregation order. The order is now, it had to be in place for over 30 years and now its time to review that again and see if we are going to continue this order or end it (Interview with Mrs. Saragoza, Western Regional Counsel and staff attorney with Organization Delta, May 4, 2009).*

Altering and disrupting the relationships of power that create inequality is not an easy task. Despite the fact that this public interest law firm has secured important legal and legislative victories in the areas of voting rights, economic development and housing, workplace discrimination, and desegregation all have fallen short of producing fundamental change. Ms. Vargas, staff attorney with this same law firm vividly describes the barriers that change agents face when attempting to find more equitable ways to redistribute resources and educational opportunities. When confronted with a scenario involving a school's decision to eliminate their bilingual programs without parent notification this attorney narrates her involvement and what happens next:

*A couple of the mothers made copies of the Waiver forms under Proposition 227 and began to distribute them to have parents sign them and insist that the school offer a bilingual program. There was no response by the school. The parents continued to protest and the school responded by calling law enforcement and there was a heavy presence of law enforcement at the school. So the parents sought legal counsel through UTLA and the matter came to us. We began to meet with the parents and they were very energized and knew what their rights were. The school was very hostile to this group of parents. Our advocacy involved representing the parents during Task Force meetings, writing a series of letters, drafting and entering into negotiations with school officials, and continuing to write letters to the Superintendant and the School Board. Next, we waited to see if the school had complied with our agreement, to see if the school had created clear procedures, whether they would respond to the waivers correctly because the school is required to notify parents, in writing, of their decision and also notify them of their rights, so if they did not have enough waivers they need to notify the parent of their rights to enroll their children at a different school and also to be on the waiting list. They didn't do any of those things. They were laying things out that were misleading, factually incorrect and contrary to law. We wrote a letter to the*

*Superintendent and we were told that our letter would be treated as an administrative complaint under Title V. The Superintendent's office transferred our letter over to the Educational Equity Office and they investigated the matter. Their findings found the school out of compliance and ordered them to establish clear procedures and respond by a certain date so now we're just monitoring to see what happens. It was interesting to see how parents were being treated even with advocates like myself at their side (Interview with Ms. Vargas, staff attorney of Organization Delta, February 21, 2010).*

Finally, Mr. Ruiz, long time civil rights attorney and a strong advocate of language rights since the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's attributes inequality and its sources, to an existing nativist mentality aimed at preserving core culture in direct violation with pluralism and core principles of American liberty (Perea, 1998) and used in expressions in equality of opportunity in education. He explains:

*The unique thing about language in the United States is that we tie it to patriotism. If you speak English, you're an American. If you speak another language you're considered un-patriotic. We connect it to patriotism as opposed to recognizing that language is a skill. No body is born with the native tongue, they are taught to speak and depending on where they are at, that's the language they will speak. Americans have connected language to the American flag and as long as we do that we are going to continue to be a monolingual country, distrustful of everyone that lives in our country that doesn't speak that language. And if they speak the language we are suspicious of them if they happen to know another language. How do you change that when you have teachers in the classroom that can't speak or won't learn another language and believe their role is to make sure their students learn to speak English and speak like them? (Interview with Mr. Ruiz, Legal Counsel and Civil Rights attorney with Organization Beta, December 18, 2009).*

And this feeling of distrust and fear are very real as more and more states are enacting laws or constitutional amendments declaring English to be the official language within their borders (Perea, 1998). This nativism has also triggered restrictive laws in other areas such as immigration (Arizona, Georgia). These laws have usually been enacted by direct popular votes on referenda by overwhelming margins (Perea, 1998). There have

also been efforts to enact federal statutes making English the official language of the federal government (Perea, 1998). These macro-forces help shape the struggles these organizers face when attempting to frame issues in ways that draw the attention of publics and policymakers to the problems they wish to have resolved.

The unique approach of combining advocacy, educational outreach and litigation strategies to achieve desired change and the significant legal and legislative victories they have achieved over the years since its birth in 1968 such as the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case of Plyler v. Doe and the introduction of the “Strengthening Communities through English and Integration Act of 2008” which invests resources in the education of English learners of all ages and empowers communities to integrate newcomers (Strengthening Communities through English and Integration Act, 2008) has given this group a certain level of respect within the Latino community. The fact that the organization has different territorial units and an organizational infrastructure to support such an overall model that combines a variety of priorities allows them to more successfully accomplish the following than its inexperienced counterparts:

- Engage in a process of active construction and reflection in order to build local capacity and to adopt and adapt existing and/or new policies or legal mandates to multiple contexts;
- Help examine and mediate salient scale-up and sustainability issues which include the dimensions of costs, conformity and complexity;
- Identify and conceptualize the major processes and barriers to inequality in multi-dimensional ways beyond just education issues in order to best identify entry points and develop plans of attack;

- Create the necessary inter-organizational networks and information sharing systems with the aim of advancing organizational plasticity and maximize the means and organizational mechanisms to mobilize resources with the purpose of promoting political and community mobilization with, for and on behalf of those most affected by inequality; and
- Recruit and retain qualified Ivy League graduates enabling the organizers with more facility to use their social and cultural capital in ways that confer the largest benefits.

These organizational factors inevitably affect how issues are defined, solutions constructed and the extent to which they meet their intended effects.

Organizational characteristics, however aren't the only contributing factor to issue selection. The one thing these groups, and the mobilizing agents in them, have in common is the powerful influence of positionality on the identification of problems, their sources and the development of solutions. And this leads to the third and final finding in this chapter—the role of personal experiences and individual knowledge in the desire for action to remedy various forms of educational issues.

*Finding #3: Organizers Locate Agency and their Understanding of Inequality and its Sources Within the Context of Lived Experiences and the Social, Cultural Economic and Political World that Surround Them*

Positionality is a useful concept for exploring organizing efforts. Positionality is a term that comes from feminist scholarship, which “refers to how one is socially located or positioned in relation to others given background factors such as race, class and gender” (Wilson, 2005). A person’s positionality “relates to the extent to which one is

privileged, resourceful, powerful and thus able to navigate and succeed within dominant society” (Wilson, 2005). Moreover, a person’s knowledge of their backgrounds is central to how they construct their awareness of the problems that surround them and ultimately the solutions they seek to issues and the professional career choices they make (Collins, 1998).

In order to gain insight into how organizers ground their understanding of educational problems and their sources respondents are asked why they are involved in non-profit work and encouraged to talk about their personal encounters stemming from their own lives that contributed to their desire to participate in organizing activities aimed at acquiring more equitable schooling for students learning English in under-resourced communities. Their remarkable stories show the powerful influence of lived experience on the willingness and commitment of respondents to undertake efforts on behalf of students and their families whose difficult economic circumstances are similar to many of the their own childhood experiences. And these testimonies are fairly consistent among the three major groups of organizers—educators, parents and attorneys—with some important differences. The data suggests that while all three groups seek collective action because of some form of discrimination they experienced or observed in their lives, the exact form of that discrimination or observation and how they define issues and its sources in campaign related work may be interrelated.

For many educators, particularly those who have been involved in school reform efforts for more than three decades, personal discrimination and the Civil Rights movement are driving forces to address and remedy inequality in the school system. The civil unrest of the 1960s, which sought to rectify various forms of injustices that included

voter suppression, denial of economic opportunity or resources and racial segregation, played a significant role in the life trajectory of many educators who choose to join the struggle for language rights. Mrs. Salinas, state lobbyist with considerable knowledge of California's legislative process recounts her experiences navigating the cultural, social and political world that dictated her own schooling and the reasons for the importance of corrective action centered on equality:

*Social Justice. I was born and raised in Chicago, you know that Chicago is very segregated with regards to its neighborhoods. At that time we lived in a Polish-American community and experienced a lot of discrimination because we were Mexicans, even though we were born there they didn't know that, they just saw us as a bunch of Mexicans. I spoke Spanish initially but the school district sent letters to my parents saying „don't speak Spanish to them only speak English because it gets in the way with them acquiring English." So at a young age we understood Spanish but couldn't speak Spanish. But then I saw the injustices that my dad had to face because my dad was „moreno" and my mom is not, my mom is „guera." So I saw the discrimination with regards to skin color. Then we moved to Los Angeles, which was a little better but there was still that, within the Hispanic community, that distinction between whether you were Mexican-American or whether you were „fresh off the boat." Within my junior and high schools there was a distinction even within the Hispanic community about whether you were Chicano or Mexican. We weren't raised that way because we had relatives, we still had our „abuelitos" in Mexico and „tios" and „tias" and „primos" and so our parents didn't raise us making that distinction and I think it's a class issue. You want to feel better about yourself so you say „I'm not like them, I'm better because I was born here and I speak English." In the high school that I went to in Los Angeles, it was Manual Arts High School, at that time it was predominately African-American and it was during the riots. So I saw a lot of discrimination not just against Mexicans or Chicanos but also against African-Americans and that whole struggle, so I grew up during the whole Civil Rights Movement and it influenced who I am today (Interview with Mrs. Salinas, State Lobbyist with Organization Omega, April 9, 2010).*

In an effort to overcome the effects of discrimination across racial, class, linguistic and geographic boundaries many organizers with extensive knowledge of the public school system are determined to seek agency to eradicate the very elements of inequality

that had oppressed them at one point in their lives. And this is true of many immigrants that are often placed in classrooms with teachers unprepared nor qualified to meet their academic and social needs who eventually become educators themselves. Mrs. Gutierrez, Vice President of one of the two educator-led organizations describes the devastating emotional and psychological effects that English-only policies and practices can have on English learners and immigrant youth. Her testimony vividly illustrates the powerful role that larger cultural, social and political forces have in the adjustment process of many newcomers and the extent to which these new groups of students are able to successfully maneuver the school system:

*Well, I'm an immigrant and I came to this country when I was getting ready to start first grade and I figuratively and literally lost my voice. I went into school as a very vocal, I'm the first child of the family and on one side of the family I was the first grandchild, and I use to sing and recite poetry and then I came to this country. I went into school and I could not understand anything that was going on, there was no bilingual education. So I actually stopped speaking in school even through college, it was really, really hard for me to speak. And I only went to a couple years of junior college and then I dropped out and had a child in San Francisco and I got into the women's movement and that's when I actually started to find my voice again, in the Chicano movement, in the anti-war movement. But until then I was actually not able to even speak in a group and it really took me a long time to find my voice and so then I developed this political understanding of what happens in this country. So to me [Organization Beta] is the organization that most directly deals with that particular issue that is so much a part of who I am and what I relate to as the injustice that I feel I need to try and change (Interview with Mrs. Gutierrez, Vice President of Organization Beta, October 24, 2009).*

These testimonies highlight the real and often visible patterns of discrimination that exist in U.S. society and best exemplify the reasons for organizational membership to advocate for practices that aim to break down inequitable opportunities and outcomes and combat restrictive language policies. Most of the educators interviewed cite either intimate involvement as educators in school systems with lack of bilingual programs for



their own students, and the devastating effects that come with it, or personal schooling experiences as adolescents leading to language loss as the motivating cause of action in adulthood. Of the eleven educators interviewed, ten relate such stories.

For example, Mrs. Gonzalez, cites personal involvement with the lack of bilingual programs in San Diego twenty years ago that led her to begin to organize like-minded educators in support of them (Interview with Mrs. Gonzalez, President of Organization Omega, May 11, 2009); Mrs. Fischer chronicles the suppression of bilingual programs in her own community of Baldwin Park, California that eventually led her to join the pro-bilingual movement and help create a scholarship in that community for students wishing to pursue a career as a bilingual teacher (Interview with Mrs. Fischer, Director of State & Legislative Affairs of Organization Beta, October 24, 2009); Dr. Martinez, reveals the punishment she endured as a young student in Texas for speaking the Spanish language and how that helped to shape the path she chose in life (Interview with Dr. Martinez, Director of Secondary & Higher Education Affairs of Organization Beta, December 29, 2009); and Dr. Garcia who gives an account of the socio-political climate of the mid nineteen seventies and their effects on her career goals. She explains: “I happen to come into bilingual education in 1974 during the Lau v. Nichols case and that was a motivating factor. And coming from my own background it sort of answered questions of the frustrations I felt when I was in primary school” (Interview with Dr. Garcia, Executive Director and CEO of Organization Beta, January 15, 2009).

Finally, it is worth noting the testimony given by Ms. Miller, Regional Representative and Executive Board member with Organization Beta since it captures the interconnection between language and family and illustrates how language loss can lead

to family separation, regardless of the language being spoken. When asked why she became involved in non-profit work around language issues she explains:

*I've dedicated my professional life for the last 25 years to working in bilingual education and I guess I became involved in bilingual education by a series of circumstances and I became bilingual myself as an adult and it was very obvious to me how much it enriched my life. My mother's family actually spoke another language, they were Croatian, and their whole family life was conducted in Croatian but they never taught my generation their language but they were all bilingual. Well, my grandparents were the immigrants and my mom's generation was raised bilingually and then my generation was raised mono-lingually in English. In my grandparent's household or when my mother was with her family members they would always be speaking in Croatian but when they wanted to turn around and say something to the kids they would just tell us in English. What I realized in retrospect as an adult is that my grandfather never learned English and I never had communication with him and I remember as a child thinking that my cousins and I and my brothers and sisters use to think that my grandpa didn't like kids and so we stayed away from him. In retrospect I thought what a terrible loss. Of course, by the time I realized what happened, it was actually a language barrier, he had already died. So I never got to look for or find that relationship with him. That's something I think that has moved me to understand how important it is for people to retain, nurture and cultivate their heritage language and being a bilingual person myself has enriched my life by making me more conscious or aware of the diversity that exists in the world and I think it really has made me a better person in that respect. I think it's a positive goal of education to nurture diversity, its not just language, but nurture cultural diversity like in our diverse society instead of pushing people to be more homogeneous they should embrace their diversity to really nurture that diversity and that richness and I see that as part of my work with [Organization Beta] (Interview with Ms. Miller, Regional Representative and Executive Board Member of Organization Beta, January 8, 2010).*

These experiences inevitably influence how issues and their sources are defined in campaign-related work. While an overwhelming majority of educators attribute factors in the issue-based category of language policy and ideology, as a major contributing force to agency, parents situate their advocacy in their own personal struggles dealing with an unwelcoming public school system and in personal obligation and responsibility to community and their own families.

For example, Mrs. Sanchez, Advisory Board Member and Coordinator with the parent-led group relates her story of why she became involved in organizing efforts in East Los Angeles:

*Because we see the necessities from our students and schools, we see how gangs influence our kids, our young women getting pregnant at such a young age, we see our kids going down the wrong path not being educated correctly. We as parents with school aged children wish the best for our kids and for all the kids in the neighborhood. What I have been able to analyze in the past 12 years is the many vulnerabilities of our communities and the unwillingness or perhaps fear of our parents to go and advocate for their children to the School Board. Many of the parents that I have been communicating with are recent immigrants coming from areas of Mexico where they have no formal education and are responsible for 3-4 children and being witness to how the system takes advantage of the ignorance of parents and how they perceive education as a business that only involves educators and not parents. It is the job of educators to educate and the parents are seen as part of the problem. So I volunteer with this organization to try and make a difference (Interview with Mrs. Sanchez, Advisory Board Member and Coordinator of Organization Alpha, January 22, 2010).*

Narrowly defined notions of the role and function of parents and communities in school-based efforts and deficit perspectives suggesting that fault and responsibility for educational failure lie with the families themselves and not the schools is a common theme among low-income, parent respondents. The inability for schools to bridge the culture or class gap or begin to address different cultural values and beliefs in curricula or instruction including the lack of qualified or culturally sensitive teachers is a driving force for community opposition and resistance.

Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director and Co-Founder of this same parent-led group shares his views of the reasons he sought collective action in efforts to redistribute resources and opportunities in a more equitable fashion:

*Many of us do this out of necessity, out of responsibility and obligation to our families and the community. We want our children to succeed and not have to*

*struggle the way we do. So I started to think what had happened since we were in America, the most powerful country in the world. This is why we came to this country because we thought our children would have plenty of opportunities that they wouldn't back home. Then I began to look more closely at the low-income communities and I applied for a job as a teacher's assistant so I could get an insider's view of the education system. I started to learn what happened and saw the many things that were wrong, which included not getting the community involved. Well-educated people that are supposed to be mentoring and educating kids and facilitate the involvement of the community were not doing that. And I realized that parents needed to get involved and doing it through the system would not be the best approach. So I started organizing from outside (Interview with Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Organization Alpha, March 19, 2009).*

While issues relating to quality of instruction and school environment/materials are evident in many of the responses given by parents as reasons for seeking collective justice, it is natural for parents to place most of the attention more directly deal on the relationship between schools and the families they serve. As such, the most frequently cited issue category is home/school connection, the same issue category that is largely responsible for the identification of problems and their sources for parents. Of the seven parents interviewed all relate stories, in some form or another, to an existing disconnect between schools and their communities even across organizational types.

For example, Mrs. Contreras, President of one of the member organizations involved with the statewide coalition that primarily works with parents in San Diego county shares the difficulties she experienced as an immigrant parent navigating a foreign school system and boasts the successes her family has had as a result of her persistence and involvement in her children's education. Her son is a law graduate from UCLA and now works as an attorney with Public Advocates Inc. (Interview with Mrs. Contreras, President of one of the member groups of Organization Omega, May 11, 2009). In addition, Mrs. Torres, Director of the Parent School Partnership Program with the public

interest law firm involved in this study, discloses her personal experiences as an immigrant and the limiting educational opportunities she had by virtue of her immigration status (Interview with Mrs. Torres, Director of Parent School Partnership Program with Organization Delta, November 13, 2009). Again, what the data seems to suggest is that lived experience and positionalities play important roles in the construction of agency and understanding of issues.

And this is no different for attorneys. Ms. Vargas, staff attorney and recent Stanford graduate with the major public interest and educational outreach law firm speaks of the role that public opinion and anti-immigrant initiatives in California had on her decision to pursue the law as a means to rectify a multitude of problems affecting the Latino community:

*I always wanted to go to law school. I'm the first in my generation to go to law school so I didn't have someone in my family or immediate area or surrounding to help guide me or plant the idea in my head, it was more a sense of social justice. I was very young interested in the way the curriculum was structured and how the experience empowered power holders and I had a rough idea that lawyers understood the language and understood the roles and you had to negotiate that role and you had to challenge existing laws. I think I was just influenced by learning about history and historical figures such as Ghandi and Nelson Mandela and their experiences really resonated with me. So I knew I wanted to pursue areas of the law that dealt with human and civil rights and the law was a means to do it and I never changed my mind so I decided to go to law school and [Delta], because [Delta] has always been the leading civil rights organization and they had done a lot of work around civil rights. When I was in high school Proposition 187 was being challenged and [Delta] was leading the effort against the proposition in the courts and I think my interest in [Delta] had more to do with timing of events, so 187 was a big issue when I was in high school, then 209 and 227 and [Delta] was involved in those campaigns and they dealt with issues very important to me and so working for [Delta] seemed like a very natural path for me (Interview with Ms. Vargas, staff attorney with Organization Delta, February 21, 2010).*

The series of ballot measures that surfaced in California that were subsidized by nativist and racist organizations beginning with Proposition 187 which denied undocumented immigrants and their families access to social services such as health care, welfare and public education was a big motivating factor for many Latino youth to become involved in efforts aimed at defeating them. Because civil rights attorneys often must contend with concepts relating to fairness, justice and the provision, promotion and protection of basic human rights it is instinctive for them to gravitate toward issues that require changing systems of oppression in low-income communities such as the introduction of court-ordered desegregation decrees.

Mrs. Saragoza, Western Regional Counsel and staff attorney with the same public interest law firm describes how cultural heritage, family values and legal issues plaguing her own family led her down the path of acquiring a law degree:

*I would have to say it stems from my upbringing. I was brought up to always be very proud of my cultural heritage, I'm Mexican-American, and also I would see the example of my parents. My mother was a naturalized U.S. citizen, she was born in Mexico and spoke English and she knew more or less how to navigate the system so growing up she was always helping family members either become citizens or helping them through something they got defrauded or they were going to be evicted, there was always something and she was always helping them. I went to Catholic school for twelve years and regardless of my feelings about Catholicism and the Catholic church now I do feel it sort of reinforced the message from my family of always looking out for others and this issue of social justice was also a good part of my education. The combination of my cultural pride and the example of my parents and this need for social justice I think really played a large part in the path I have taken. I knew I wanted to do something with my education that would benefit others and then as I matured I realized that I have a special obligation to my community, but the Latino community in particular. I am fortunate to have a position at a place like [Delta] which has really, as big of a reputation as we have, throughout the time that I have worked here there's only been less than 20 attorneys nationwide working on these issues. If you think about it coming out of law school and being an attorney to work on behalf of Latinos in legal work is really a privilege, there's only about 15 positions available that focus specifically on Latinos. I have been fortunate to have this opportunity twice, once in the nineties and again now (Interview with Mrs. Saragoza, Western Regional Counsel with*

Organization Delta, May 4, 2009).

What's unique about this particular testimony when making comparisons across groups of organizers but representative of most attorneys in this study is acknowledging the privileged position that attorneys have in society, particularly if you are Latino working on behalf of Latinos in legal work. Professional status, utility of professional knowledge, and the vast number of social networks accumulated in the course of conducting legal work that is often used to leverage resources and reduce transactions costs in legal cases places them in a significant position to recognize, name and combat multiple forms of inequality.

Finally, Mr. Brewster, Civil Rights attorney not affiliated with the Latino, civil rights and educational outreach organization describes some of the reasons he became an advocate for justice for low-income children and their families:

*Well I think that law is the great equalizer, that people that have been wronged and don't necessarily have any resources, not money, not skill, not power, if they have the right lawyer they are able to obtain justice which you can't say for many other arenas. Most arenas, people who have money, power and authority usually will prevail. But in a courtroom, when you hopefully have a jury of their peers you often can get justice for people that need it. Most of my life I have been representing people who didn't have power or money or authority and who were wronged in one way or another and so I've enjoyed representing them and fighting for their rights. There are enough of us out there to do that so it certainly is something that is needed and I get a lot of benefit out of that (Interview with Mr. Brewster, Civil Rights attorney with his own law firm, November 24, 2009).*

It is worth noting that Mr. Brewster worked with Cesar Chavez in the Coachella Valley during the 1970s as a mechanic and it was these experiences that led him to pursue a degree in law in the area of civil rights. In his office there is a picture of him and Cesar Chavez, a valuable and prized possession.

What the data suggest is that organizers become involved in organizing efforts as a result of experiencing or being witness to some form of discrimination. For educators, many of whom are the victims of English-only policies and practices themselves in public schools, issues relating to language policy and ideology resonate the strongest and explain, to some extent, their desire for agency, and inevitably how they define inequality. For parents, the disconnect between the home and school environment and the unwillingness of many educators working in the school system to consider them as potential partners in the schooling process is a large contributing factor for the necessity of collective action and explains why they ground issues mostly in those terms. Finally, for attorneys the most frequently cited issue-based categories of community and equity/special programs in the identification of problems filter their way into organizational or professional membership and their demands for change.

Common themes among all three groups of organizers are the role of positionality and lived experience in the need for agency and the naming of problems. And these lived experiences are themselves the products of local, state or national cultural, social and political forces that help shape the struggles and experiences these organizers face. As Oakes and her colleagues remind us: “Schools [and communities] are situated in particular enactments of larger cultural norms, rules, values and power relations and these cultural forces promote either stability or change. Accordingly, they set the parameters of policy, behavior, beliefs, and actions in schools [and communities]” (Oakes, Welner, Yonezawa & Allen, 1998: 958).



*Conclusion: A New Conceptual Tool for Understanding how  
Activist Groups Define Inequality and their Sources for English Learners*

I have developed the framework below as a conceptual tool to do two things: (1) help explain how activist groups make sense of problems around English learner issues; (2) highlight concepts relating to education organizing that can guide an examination of the relationship between grassroots movements and equity-minded school reform for English learners in a policy context dominated by market-based accountability and restrictive language policies.

Taken together, the data collected in this study allow for the introduction of a framework through which educational inequality can be examined and understood. This framework, from which public education is defined and education policy is advanced, is embedded within an existing policy context around educational accountability since it is the educational reform strategy of choice with policymakers in the states and federal government. As such, this new framework also appropriates its language.

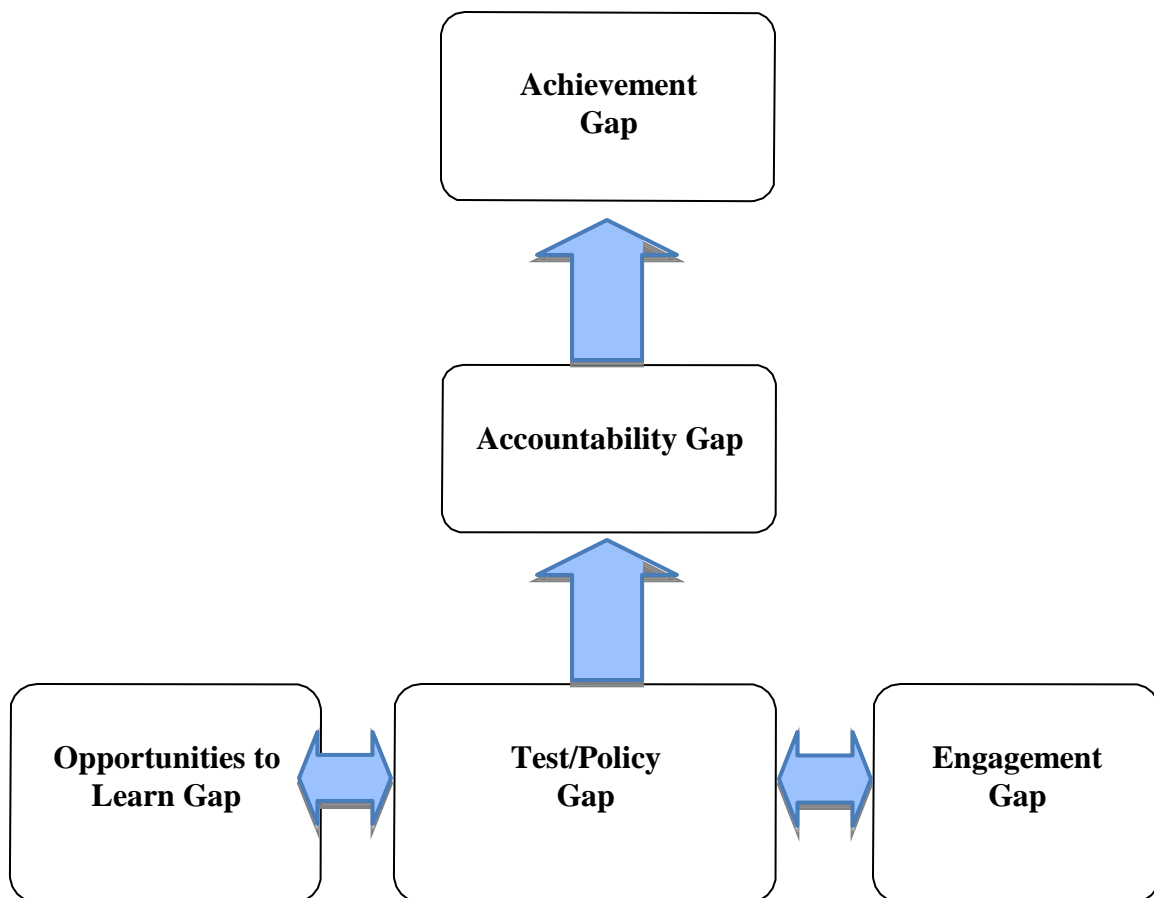
Attempts to narrow the achievement gap will need to consider the various elements of educational inequality, that jointly lead to the development of what I identify as an "accountability gap."

An **Accountability Gap** is meant to describe an accountability system that fails to provide meaningful, responsible and inclusive mechanisms to address fundamental disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes between Latinos, including English learners in low-income communities that are struggling for resources and support and their more affluent, non-Latino White suburban counterparts. This framework also addresses three equally powerful sets of gaps that together create and preserve this gap in

accountability. They include:

- ***Opportunities to Learn Gap:*** This refers to the lack of responsible systems that neither, detect or report, whether Latinos and English learners have adequate and equitable opportunities to learn, such as qualified teachers, instructional materials, culturally-relevant curricula and plenty of support services that disproportionately affect them (Oakes, Blasi & Rogers, 2004).
- ***Test/Policy Gap:*** This refers to the lack of meaningful data on what Latinos, especially English learners, know and can do to make better decisions about how best to educate them because the information coming from state academic assessments are often not valid and reliable and because assessments created and used for accountability purposes do not account for local school variability and complexity.
- ***Engagement Gap:*** This refers to the lack of inclusive systems that neither, detect nor report whether parents of Latino students and English learners can and do access important pieces of information in order to participate in school reform efforts.

**Figure 5.4: Conceptual Dimensions Governing Identification of Problems and their Sources**



## **Chapter Six**

## **Avenues for Change: The Kinds of Strategies and Tactics used by Activist Organizations to Help Carry out Equity Agendas for English Learners**

The previous chapter illustrates how activist groups focus not only on a wide variety of issues around English learner policy and practice situating agency and the problem identification process within the context of lived experience but they also differ in the way organizers conceptualize the primary sources of inequality and thus offer distinct approaches in where to locate valuable time and resources aimed at remedying it. The chapter addresses the first of three research questions proposed in this study: How does a coalition focused on equity education policy for English learners, and three of its constituent groups each employing very different institutional models, define problems (inequality) and their sources?

As mentioned earlier, interview data and documents collected and organized for the purpose of recording issue selection form the primary sources of evidence used in addressing the aforementioned question. Since there are limitations in this study, as outlined at the beginning of the previous chapter, that help to limit the scope of analysis, existing bodies of work are used to help fill some of the gaps. Key findings in the social movement literature, including important concepts found in the education organizing scholarship, are employed and sprinkled throughout some of the explanations used to describe the differences in terms of how activist organizations define problems—what these groups consider important. Those key findings are further defined in this final chapter.

I will now address the remaining two research questions: What types of strategies, or action repertoires, do these activist organizations employ aimed at remedying problems identified? How do organizational factors, if any, influence how activist organizations define and act on problems and their sources? In the discussion section of this chapter I offer a new blended theoretical framework in light of existing strategies aimed at bringing about change by placing the primary focus on coalitional pursuits and provide some recommendations for advancing coalitional work around efforts designed at improving the educational opportunities and outcomes of English learners.

It is important to note that descriptions of the organizational structures, the level of structuration in each group (formalization, internal structuration, professionalization—key concepts outlined in chapter three), are included in this chapter and necessary as they help to address the extent to which organizational factors, contribute or influence how these groups define and act on problems and their sources (research question #1C). The table below summarizes many of the important considerations that are to follow related to organizational factors.

**Table 6.1: Organizational Factors Contributing to Goal Orientations and Action Repertoires**

	<b>Organization Alpha (Parent-led)</b>	<b>Organization Beta (Educator-led)</b>	<b>Organization Delta (Attorney-led)</b>	<b>Organization Omega (Educator-led)</b>
<b>Primary Constituency</b>	Volunteers	Members (Individuals)	Clients	Members (Organizations)
<b>Organizational Focus</b> - Advocacy - Program Operation - Lobbying - Grassroots Efforts - Research Activities - Legal Strategies	- Advocacy - Program Operation - Grassroots Efforts	- Advocacy - Program Operation - Lobbying - Research Activities	- Advocacy - Program Operation - Lobbying - Research Activities - Legal Strategies (directly)	- Advocacy - Program Operation - Lobbying - Research Activities - Legal Strategies (indirectly)
<b>Organizational</b>				

<b>Factors</b> (structure, history, age, practice, capacity)  - Issue Focus - Life Cycle - Network Participation - Membership or Constituency Driven - Formal Structure - Role of Parents & Students - Organizing Model - Budget	- Education-Based - 1996 (15 yrs.) - Yes - High - Informal - High (Parents) - Grassroots Model - \$10,000 (FY 2010)	- Education-Based - 1974 (37 yrs.) - Yes - High - Formal - Moderate (Parents) - Interest Group Model - \$2.6M (FY 2010)	- Multi-Issue (Education, Housing, Employment, Voting Rights, etc..) - 1968 (43 yrs.) - Yes - Low - Formal - Moderate (Parents + Students) - Interest Group Model - \$5.2M (FY 2010)	- Education-Based - 1998 (13 yrs.) - Yes - Low - Informal - Low (Parents + Students) - Interest Group Model - \$180,000 (FY 2010)
<b>Problem Identification + Agency Construction</b>	Engagement Gap	Test/Policy Gap	Opportunities to Learn Gap	Test/Policy Gap
<b>Organizational Coherence</b> (Formal Structure + Governance)	Informal Structures + Decentralized Governance (Activities)	Formal Structures + Decentralized Governance (Activities)	Formal Structures + Centralized Governance (Activities)	Informal Structures + Centralized Governance (Activities)

## I. Organizing for Change: Strategies and Tactics (Findings Continued: Research Question #1B)

### Finding #4: Activist Groups Employ a Variety of Strategies in their Equity Agendas that Combine Organizing, Advocacy, Lobbying, Program Operation, Research and Information Dissemination and Legal Activities

Activist groups focus on a variety of strategies, some devoting a great deal of resources to executing powerful community organizing plans, while others combine more grassroots efforts with advocacy, lobbying, program operation, research and legal activities embedded in collaborative approaches. As mentioned in chapter five, all four activist groups are affiliated with a regional, state or national network deeply involved in efforts focused on education. This arrangement is a strong influence in determining issues, strategies and the construction of organizational structures and facilities allowing

work to be coordinated with local or statewide initiatives and used as a means to connect these groups to broader struggles (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002). As such, staffing patterns and institutional arrangements vary widely, depending on the organization's life cycle, size, organizing model (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002) and financial viability.

*The Educator Led Organization Omega:* The statewide coalition, of which the other three groups involved in this study are member organizations, support *advocacy, program operation, lobbying, research activities* and some *legal strategies*. Mrs. Smith, Executive Director of this statewide group narrates her major responsibilities:

*One of the things I do is to maintain the relationship with the member organizations. Another is to recruit new organizations, to expand the coalition. And the third is to implement the action plan that we delivered, so I work with all the members that are on the subcommittees for the action plan to try and push what we say we were going to do for the year. That takes up a lot of it. Then, we have two teacher/administrator workshops a year that provide high quality training, but that are also used to financially support the organization. I'm responsible for making sure that the organization is financially solvent, so part of that is going after grants, working with foundations. We have a two-year foundation grant, so working with the foundation and writing reports. And then a lot of my time is communicating with our lobbyist in Sacramento and providing her with the support she needs in the field so she can do the work she does with the policy people in Sacramento (Interview with Mrs. Smith, Executive Director of Organization Omega, January 16, 2009).*

This organization employs a very small number of office staff, usually only one part-time employee, to assist the Executive Director with much of the administrative responsibilities. Since this group normally does not depend on the direct participation, or mobilization, of their constituency for accomplishing goals, coupled with the fact that many of its members already possess full time jobs, means that the organization must contract with them for specialized services. As such, stipends are given to those that

provide some professional service such as legal advice or grant writing assistance. Their only lobbyist is employed by their sister organization, which places most of its focus on professional development and thus leaves a lot of the advocacy and lobbying to the coalition, particularly at the state level. While organizing efforts are strategically linked to a statewide focus, the group does involve itself in conversations on educational reform at the national level through its member organizations that are national in scope such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), and the National Association of Mexican American Educators (AMAE).

The group has an Executive Board consisting of a President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary, all of which are seasoned educators and led by an Executive Director, the only paid Executive Board member, which has over thirty years of experience as a former classroom teacher and professional development provider for the largest regional educational agency in the nation—the Los Angeles County Office of Education. Officers are nominated by representatives of the member organizations and elected to two-year terms. They provide valuable insight and direction by assisting with agenda-setting, running the four coalition meetings held a year, representing the organization at hearings and other functions in Sacramento, and helping to recruit new organizations (Interview with Mrs. Smith, Executive Director of Organization Omega, January 16, 2009).

The Executive Board, and most of the members in the coalition, consists of experienced educators with extensive expertise across the various dimensions of the schooling process, which include classroom teachers, principals, site administrators, professional development providers, and university professors. Although, the group also



enjoys participation from grassroots organizers, unions, and civil rights and legal advocates, which provide access to attorneys when legal counsel is needed. Having access to a diversified group of professionals and experts provides the group with a powerful base that can be leveraged to obtain a variety of material and symbolic rewards.

All members are allowed to vote and participate in the various subcommittees that help to carry out the four or five action items selected by all members during their first retreat meeting held at the beginning of the academic year. These action items provide the direction for active campaigns in all elements of the group's organizational focus including legal, advocacy and research activities for the duration of the action plan cycle and the group overwhelmingly favors issues relating to accountability and assessment (See chapter five).

At the beginning of each retreat, members are given the opportunity to provide updates from their respective organizations. It is a time to meet new members, share important victories and accomplishments and validate the remarkable work centered on collective approaches to correcting injustices. Financial reports are given, with a complete breakdown of all expenses, transactions and income earned. It is the organization's attempt to make itself transparent and accountable.

Welcoming comments and financial statements are followed by a variety of topics that include legislative updates such as the status of sponsored bills and campaigns around legislative efforts including the state budget (Organization Omega Retreat, April 9, 2010); federal initiatives such as the Race to the Top program and ESEA reauthorization (Organization Omega Retreat, January 5, 2010); State Board of Education updates including Board appointments and categorical program monitoring lawsuits

(Organization Omega Retreat, June 25, 2009); and the presentation of data survey results used for policy and program recommendations (Organization Omega Retreat, April 9, 2010).

The majority of the time spent at these retreats is on their action plans. During each action plan cycle members are asked to identify broad categories representing major issues for English learners. A list is put together and members are asked to identify their top three choices. Each member has an equal vote and usually time and space is allocated to discuss some of these major concerns before the voting process begins in order to ensure consistency in problem identification and negotiate consensus among the categories chosen. Once everyone has had the opportunity to identify their top three choices, the four most popular priority issues are selected and members are asked to choose to participate in one of the four committees largely responsible for creating proactive campaigns with strategic tactical actions that move those agendas forward. Because a large majority of the participants are seasoned educators, priorities heavily favor issues relating to assessment and accountability (See chapter five).

During these committee meetings strategic development tools for advocacy are used as a planned process utilizing a similar approach to annual or strategic plans. The plans include a variety of elements such as: Identifying goals and *objectives*; selecting action items or *activities*; designating *targets* such as policymakers, school officials and media related people and strategizing how best to access them and win their support; incorporating *indicators* and outcomes to assess progress; including *timeframes* with the people responsible for completing activities; and *monitoring and evaluation* (Organization Omega Work Plans for 2009-10 Action Plan Cycle). The following four

action items were selected by the coalition to represent advocacy efforts for the 2009-2010, action plan cycle during which data for this study was collected:

- *Turning Around Low Performing Schools (Goal #1: “transforming priority schools into effective, quality schools that address the language and educational needs of English learners,”—Activity #1: “Develop an information/policy briefing on what is happening with English learners (Els) in charters, which Els are ending up in charters, and what do parents of English learners really want and expect from charters” (Organization Omega Action Plan for 2009-2010, Action Item #1).*
- *Ensuring Professional Preparation and Development around English Learner Needs (Goal #1: “Develop a framework on highly effective teachers and principals from an English learner perspective,”—Activity #2: “Create a framework and position paper that exemplifies the best practices for teachers and principals of English learners using multiple measures” (Organization Omega Action Plan for 2009-2010, Action Item #2).*
- *Creating a State and Federal Accountability System Sensitive to English Learners (Goal #1: “Create a state and federal accountability system that is appropriate, fair, and responsive to English learners and ensures equal access to an effective curriculum”—Activity # 3: “Create a campaign around the inclusion of a variety of data elements in the accountability system such as ELD proficiency growth; school site parent engagement; best practices linked to academic achievement, academic proficiency growth in the first and second language, type of program, length of time in program, and ELD instruction; and disaggregate the data for Els by drop out rate, absentee rate, numbers possessing GEDs, college degrees,*

college retention rates and mobility rates” (Organization Omega Action Plan for 2009-2010, Action Item #3).

- *Focusing Attention on English Learners at the Secondary School Level (Goal #1:*  
“Focus on the development of long term English learners and the type of programs, services and policies that meet their needs”—*Activity #1:* “Assign members to make direct phone calls with major districts throughout the state to get the data needed to complete a briefing paper on the topic” (Organization Omega Action Plan for 2009-2010, Action Item #1).

Finally, coalition organizers do identify elected officials as an important target and ally in strategic framing efforts aimed at conveying a variety of messages to larger audiences and arenas. Their full time lobbyist helps to identify key players, adversaries, and key decision makers. She spends a great deal of time analyzing legislative drafts and urges members to write legislators in support or opposition to legislative efforts. For example, during several of their conference calls participants discuss draft recommendations targeted to English learner committees and subcommittees within the State of Education urging inclusion of Spanish test results (Spanish standards test) in state proficiency ratings (Organization Omega Retreats: June 25, 2009; September 30, 2009; October 1, 2009). In addition, they sponsor panel discussions in Sacramento such as the screening of the immersion Film on state testing issues in which key members of the Latino Caucus, Education Senate Committee, and legislative staff, were present (Screening and Panel Discussion of “Immersion,” flyer and agenda, August 19, 2009). These relationships bring significant attention to the struggles and actions for change.

Despite the fact that the coalition enjoys strong partnerships with a number of policymakers including the Latino Caucus, barriers remain. For example, Mrs. Salinas, state lobbyist with the coalition, describes the difficulties often associated with generating the support of elected officials in the area of bilingual education:

*We meet with them through our advocates or meet with them directly. We go and testify on bills, and I think that's one of our biggest pushes is to try and impact legislation, and it has also been a disappointment many times. I do a lot of background checking to ensure where policymakers stand on the issues. The Latino Caucus group tends to be very interested in English learner issues. We try and work with people that have some interest and care about the issues, but then we also try and work with some that are not as open-minded. The issue in building relationships with them is that they have to be elected and every time you say bilingual it's something that may not be the most popular thing. I think people like Gloria Romero would love to have our support and yet they don't want to be looked at as being supported by a group that fights for bilingualism and that they feel may cost them an election (Interview with Mrs. Salinas, State Lobbyist of Organization Omega, April 9, 2010).*

While social movement organizing can create political opportunities for policymakers allowing them to “seize the opportunity by challengers to proclaim themselves tribunes of the people” (Tarrow, 1998: 88). Policymakers are also more likely to be most concerned with issues or “challenges from outside the polity,” which is in their own interest, enhance their re-election prospects, and provide the political incentives to “advance their own policies and careers” (Tarrow, 1998: 88). And, such issues are typically provisional, simplified issues, which require “low-cost or constituent-gratifying policy responses” (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006: 300). These are some of the challenges.

*The Educator Led Organization Beta:* The staffing patterns and institutional arrangements of the coalition’s sister organization support *advocacy, program operation,*

*lobbying, and research activities* and makes more room for parent voice. The President serves a four-year term, one year as “President Elect,” two as President, and one as “Immediate Past President.” All other thirteen Board of Directors, including the Vice-President are elected to two-year terms for a maximum of two terms and are responsible for making board policy decisions and establishing the vision, mission and strategic plan for the organization (Organization Beta Leadership Handbook, 2009). The Executive Director is a non-voting member including their legal counsel who provides legal opinions regarding all new policies and procedures and swears in all new Board members (Organization Beta Leadership Handbook, 2009). Moreover, each board member has several specific duties, which pertain to their particular position such as the Director of Parent Relations, Director of Financial Affairs, Director of Legislative Affairs and Director of Secondary & Higher Education Affairs.

Since the state is divided into five distinct regions for purposes of governance and representation, each of which contain a number of local chapters five Regional Representatives also serve on the Board. They speak on behalf of their region and work to disseminate information about new initiatives, discuss current educational issues, refine and work on regional plans, and train regional leadership to become better advocates for bilingual education (Organization Beta Leadership Handbook, 2009).

All 70 local chapters form the most immediate level of interaction between the organization, the Executive Board and its membership and it’s through these chapters that the group is able to carry out local activities and coordinate advocacy efforts more systematically. Only members are able to nominate and vote during each election cycle and it is this system of governance that has produced some level of concern as politics

becomes a part of the day to day operations of the organization sometimes causing division and disharmony. Not to mention that the electoral system favors those members with clout and voice, most of who are educators and professionals (constituency).

Standing committees are responsible for aligning all services to the organization's strategic plan, formulating specific annual goals, budgeting various programs and providing recommendations to the Board (Organization Beta Leadership Handbook, 2009). Moreover, the organization works closely with four statewide affiliates to assist in the group's efforts to advocate on behalf of English learners and their families by influencing policy and legislation aimed at reversing Proposition 227; providing quality professional development; disseminating information and research; strengthening its network of leaders; and providing community services (Organization Beta Website, 2010). Each of these affiliates target a specific constituency and, thus are led by members of that constituency whether it be bilingual educators, university professors, or parents of bilingual or multilingual children.

While the coalition-based organization has little room for parents in its leadership apparatus, parents play a slightly larger role with its sister organization through Project INSPIRE and the three main Parent Information & Resource Centers and twelve satellite centers it supports located throughout the state (Project INSPIRE Informational Sheet, December 8, 2009); its parent affiliate; and the two parent Directors represented on the Executive Board. Thus, parents have two functions: they are the recipients of services in the form of professional development activities giving the organization an opportunity to continually recruit new members from this growing parent base and allowing the group to diversify its portfolio; and they serve a small role in tactical-decision making.

Project INSPIRE is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and is a result of a partnership between the organization, a southern California County Superintendent of Schools and County Office of Education, ten school districts throughout the state and three institutions of Higher Education (Project INSPIRE Informational Sheet, December 8, 2009). Project activities and materials are available at least in two languages, English and Spanish, with many activities, workshops and informational handouts also available in a variety of other high priority languages in California such as Hmong, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Cantonese, and Arabic (Project INSPIRE Informational Sheet, December 8, 2009).

The goals of this collaboration include: identifying the needs of underserved families and helping them understand their rights and responsibilities in the education system; developing parent leadership skills to support their children's education; building partnerships between community organizations, schools and families; training parent leaders to work with other parents to effectively participate in local school reform efforts; and informing parents about the provisions of state and federal legislation regarding parental involvement (Project INSPIRE California State Parent Information & Resource Center Brochure, December 8, 2009). In addition, an evaluation study is being conducted to assess the quality of implementation and effectiveness of project activities (Project INSPIRE Informational Sheet, December 8, 2009).

Since organization Beta mixes a strategy blending elements of research dissemination with specific activities that are more service based, it relies heavily in leveraging strategic relationships with scholars and academics. Ms. Miller, Regional Representative and Executive Board member of organization Beta best captures the



essence of this dynamic synergy: “I think there’s a community of scholars that have common vision and goals with [Organization B] and we work together. In fact, we have an affiliate that [Organization B] supports. The scholars who have the same vision, people who are professors or just writers and researchers they are like our „compadres” that are working for the same cause. The interaction between research and practice in education is really important. It moves the field forward” (Interview with Ms. Miller, Regional Representative and Executive Board Member of Organization Beta, January 8, 2010).

Moreover, the organization’s annual conference features a diversity of workshops, authors, institutes and prominent scholars in the areas of language policy, curriculum and instruction, school leadership, parental engagement and systematic wide reform. The organization publishes its own magazine, “The Multilingual Educator” in its continued effort to promote equity and effective practices for students not yet proficient in English. This year’s edition features pieces from scholars reflecting salient issues or topics in the debates around educational reform from building family support for student achievement and high stakes exit exams to dual language immersion programs and effective professional development models for teachers of English learners (The Multilingual Educator, Organization Beta, 2010 Edition).

The group also enjoys strategic relationships with policymakers that help facilitate the implementation of campaign related work. For example, Mr. Lopez, President of organization Beta which is heavily involved in professional development efforts aimed at enhancing the skills and knowledge of educators working with English learners narrates their group’s connections with elected officials: “We have great relationships with the

Latino Caucus. They are very much involved in education and the issues for English learners. We have a great many members of the Latino Caucus that are supportive and there are other issues we are able to reach out to other legislators for their support. We actually have been successful in the last several years in getting numerous bills to the governor's desk only to have them vetoed" (Interview with Mr. Lopez, President of Organization Beta, May 11, 2009).

While the organization also utilizes the media to help communicate a variety of messages, careful consideration is given to the importance of "reducing complex issues into evocative phrases, metaphors and slogans" that can open the space through which messages are communicated more efficiently and effectively (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006: 311). When asked how the organization tries and influence media coverage and generate publicity for language issues, Dr. Garcia, Executive Director, states:

*Yes, we use the media to help get our message across. If there's an issue I write letters to the editor especially when you read articles that have issues that need to be addressed. We do press releases, and hopefully they publish them. I've sent it op-ed pieces. We met with the Los Angeles Times and took them to task, the educators reporters, that really ignore English learners in California. I respond to requests from reporters for information. If I do not have the information I'll refer them to the proper people. We've always wanted to do training for the media, but you need to have the funds to do that, so that's one of the things I would like to do. Sometimes, the stories take our comments out of context, its really something because they'll call you and you give them all of the information and then refer them to somebody else, not that I always want to be quoted, but sometimes it's nice to see that they came to us but they'll quote the other person and not refer to any part of the conversation that we had. Sometimes we could read the reporters' words that he is using on the slant that he wants to take with the article. So you have to be careful and query the reporter as to the direction of the story. I think in the last couple of years there have been a little more positive kinds of stories. I know when we had the 227 campaign I would spend 45 minutes talking and the story would still come out wrong or they would take us out of context. You have to learn how to talk to them, you have to give them sound bytes otherwise, if you try and explain something, that's not good and they tell you not to do that (Inter-*

view with Dr. Garcia, Executive Director of Organization Beta, May 8, 2009).

These constraints impinging on the media agenda is a function of the organizational structure of the industry with a focus on ratings and ultimately what is considered “good” news. News routines, “the standard procedures that routinize and regularize tasks” (specific locations, reliance of sources, deadlines, corresponding lead times etc.); news pegs, the characteristics that make a story timely, relevant or interesting; “corporate hegemony,” or “the central role of ownership interests in media selection processes;” and media issue attention cycles (stories tied to dramatic policies or events) all help to expand or restrict opportunity in terms of accessing media agendas (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006: 297). While the media arena is more centralized than the public domain and less so than the governmental or electoral sectors, its gatekeepers, notably local, state and national reporters and editors are typically more accessible and therefore provide an opening for activists to gain entry through “deliberate media strategies” (McCarthy, Smith & Zald, 2006: 296). And organization Beta tries to capitalize on this opening, particularly with Spanish media outlets that tend to be friendlier to the issues at hand.

Both educator led organizations rarely use confrontational tactics associated with some of the more aggressive parent or student led organizations and campaigns and instead prefer to work collaboratively with local schools and elected officials.

For example, the statewide coalition (Omega) and its sister organization (Beta) leverages its connections with the educational establishment such as key members of the California Department of Education and bilingual coordinators and administrators (Bilingual Coordinators Network) throughout California through its statewide distribution system to garner the support of the Seal of Biliteracy program—a joint effort between

both groups. This program allows awards to be given by schools, districts or county offices of education to graduating seniors that have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages (Organization Omega Website, 2010). The Seal of Biliteracy appears on the transcript of the graduating senior symbolizing the accomplishment for future employers and for college admissions (Organization Omega Website, 2010).

The former State Superintendant of Public Instruction, Jack O'Connell congratulated the 33 school districts, and their partnership with both organizations, for implementing this statewide program and recognized them at the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Accountability Leadership Institute for English Learner and Immigrant Students hosted by the California Department of Education (Organization Omega Press Release, 2010). Among some of the participating school districts implementing the Seal of Biliteracy program include: Anaheim Union High School District, Baldwin Park Unified School District, Los Angeles Unified, Pasadena Unified, San Francisco Unified and San Jose Unified School District (Organization Omega Press Release, 2010).

During many of the scheduled retreats both organizations would often have guest speakers and many of them were school, district or county administrators and/or local or state officials such as a local board member or state senator (Organization Omega Retreats: September 22, 2008; December 8, 2008; June 25, 2009; April 9, 2010; Organization Beta Board Meetings: June 27, 2009; October 24, 2009; January 9, 2010).

Schools and districts are targeted where positive relationships have been established and maintained and entry gained through these cooperative relationships. These forms of action facilitate the use of *cultural strategies* aimed at changing value systems since they rely on having access to the system itself. This is the same for much of the work that

Organization Beta does, which favors a collaborative and institutional approach over an antagonistic method.

*The Parent Led Organization Alpha:* The parent led group, however does employ a much more conflict-oriented stance but makes attempts to establish positive working relationships with key local officials whenever possible. They place a high priority on recruiting parents and maintaining a base committed to organizing efforts at the local level. Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director of this parent-centered strategy explains the reasons for this antagonistic method:

*We use to have a lot more partnerships with schools but political convictions are tested when parents push back. We have been present at many Board meetings asking members what their commitment is to parents. Another issue is that new Board members are elected and new principals and superintendents come and go and so we sometimes find ourselves having to build new relationships that sometimes are difficult to cultivate and maintain. The goal is to make parents equal partners not to tell them what to do. We have parents in local school site councils that know what needs to be going on and where the money should be going. Parents are becoming leaders. In terms of recruitment we do not go to the principal and let them know who we are and ask if we could be of assistance. Never! The parents go to the trainings and school functions and share with us what is going on, and not going on and we have discussions about how we could play a role in the school in terms of parent engagement. We do not visit with the administrators because the people in the system are so afraid of change. Although, they have become more willing to get involved because we have an agreement with all of the organizations that are a part of Parent Organizing Network to work with schools. Our parents do not have a confrontational relationship with schools, schools have a confrontational relationship with parents. We feel confrontation can be good, because it's an opportunity to get things out on the table, to learn and do the right thing (Interview with Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director of Organization Alpha, June 5, 2009).*

Similarly, Mr. Perez, Advisory Board member, volunteer and parent of three in East Los Angeles agrees with the need to use an adversarial approach in organizing efforts for change. He states:

*The weapon we use is to educate parents and motivate them to get involved. We*

*want parents to feel confident that they can express their voice and not fear any form of retaliation. The best way to do that is to educate them about their rights and have them get involved in their children's education. Sometimes, parents are afraid to go to the schools and speak with the authorities there and so many of us have volunteered to accompany our parents to the schools and help speak on their behalf. We have developed a reputation of being aggressive and we are often singled out as the rebel group. It makes me feel uncomfortable, when all we are doing is advocating for our children* (Interview with Mr. Perez, Advisory Board Member of Organization Alpha, January 22, 2009).

The primary organizational focus of this group is some *advocacy, program operation* and *grassroots organizing*. The organization has an Executive Board of seven members, all of which are low-income parents, a President and an Executive Director (Interview with Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director of Organization Alpha, June 5, 2009). There is no formal nomination process, elections held, or any term limits for Board members or any other function in the organization and all are non-paid positions (Interview with Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director of Organization Alpha, June 5, 2009). When a member wishes to step down, a replacement is suggested and a vote is held.

They meet four times a year to discuss organizing efforts, possible fundraising activities, progress on goals and objectives, and future campaign endeavors (Interview with Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director of Organization Alpha, June 5, 2009).

The big dilemma that this organization and others like it wrestle with is providing the opportunities for community members most impacted by elements of inequality to serve on the Board and help guide its direction but that may not possess the social and cultural capital necessary to secure large amounts of monetary resources for the group.

The Board is consulted by an advisory group consisting of thirty-five members, all coordinators of local chapters scattered throughout the state (Interview with Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director of Organization Alpha, June 5, 2009). Coordinators are

responsible for building local capacity efforts for exerting pressure and constructing educational campaigns aimed at addressing local areas of concern (Interview with Mrs. Cortez, Board Member of Organization Alpha, January 22, 2010). The organization pays a small fee to the Asian Pacific American Legal Center for office and conference space in which organizing efforts and conferences can be coordinated and carried out (Interview with Mrs. Cortez, Board Member of Organization Alpha, January 22, 2010).

Although, big events such as their annual conference are also held allowing volunteers to communicate with each other across geographic boundaries and providing for a cross section of parents to determine what issues are important enough to mobilize them to action and determine how best to carry out goals and objectives as a whole group (Interview with Mrs. Cortez, Board Member of Organization Alpha, January 22, 2010).

This group has a membership base of 4,500, all low-income parents dedicated to bringing the voices of the disadvantaged to the table. This arrangement facilitates the use of *political strategies* that seek to change external realities, since parents control the movement enterprise ensuring that problems and their sources are continually being defined around more resource/community centered concerns (See chapter five), and knowledge constructed around these concerns, in ways that evoke the power of numbers, of material damage and of bearing witness more fully.

This attention is focused almost exclusively on the political arena at various levels. It is much easier to create uncertainty and disrupt daily routines targeting political systems with greater number of supporters, especially when participants are willing to sacrifice and run personal risks for the cause. And immigration status is certainly a risk for many of these parents. Mr. Hernandez, Executive Director and Co-Founder explains:

“We have political and cultural factors that can get in the way among Spanish speaking communities from South America, Central America and Mexico. Immigration is also an issue but during the first orientation meeting we have discussions about parental rights and letting parents know that their immigration status is irrelevant, they have the right to be advocates for their children and many do step up” (Interview with Executive Director and Co-Founder of Organization Alpha, June 5, 2009). Actions of this kind tend to “reinforce the moral message being conveyed by a movement because activists are willing to run personal risks to demonstrate their convictions” (Della Porta & Diani, 2004: 178).

Parents are trained in the workings of the school system including important factors in raising student achievement and mobilized into an effective force for change. The group sponsors a series of workshops through their recent “Parent Professional Development Initiative,” which is a collaboration between the organization and parents of the Los Angeles Unified School District aimed at preparing parents of intermediate school students to support their children’s transition to high school by ensuring successful completion of college prep courses (Parent Professional Development Initiative Informational Sheet, June, 2010).

During these weekly “parent dialogues” parents are given the opportunity to discuss some of the following issues: developing high expectations for student achievement; building trusting relationships with teachers; understanding how instruction is delivered; analyzing test results; constructing observational tools to be used in classrooms visits; participating in school governance and accountability forces; and investigating colleges and financial assistance options (Parents’ Dialogue Program Flyer, Burbank Middle



School, 2010; Parent and Community Forum, Organization Alpha and Montebello Unified School District, December 5, 2009).

In addition, the organization is involved with the Parent Organization Network, in which organizations Beta and Delta are also active participants. They are currently spearheading a campaign effort in the Los Angeles County aimed at bringing community and advocacy groups together with the goal of establishing parent engagement standards that help build an informed and participatory public (Parent Organization Network, RESPECT for Parents Campaign petition form, December, 2009). During one of their community forums, members of the community, including local school Board members, district officials, a state policymaker and representatives of local organizing groups convened to discuss issues affecting schools and parents alike such as the state education budget (Parent and Community Forum, Organization Alpha and Montebello Unified School District, December 5, 2009).

The fact that the group has no paid staff, due to lack of access to adequate funding, does limit their ability to access experts or resources that can nurture and sustain effective programs centered on organizing. As such, a lot of the work is placed on the Executive Director and a core base of dedicated parent volunteers to promote and maintain the group's momentum.

The insufficient amount of resources that limits their authority and expertise means that they not only continue to operate using a fairly informal and decentralized structure with heavy reliance on a committed base for purposes of mobilization (Kriesi, 2006) but also resort to more direct forms of action in order to be heard (Rucht, 2006). Shortage of staff and resources can lead to "less ambitious organizing, less time for leadership

training, fewer communications resources, and a longer time-line for many projects than is desirable from a tactical point of view” (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002: 27).

These challenges also extend themselves beyond internal organizational issues and help to explain why these smaller groups seek out the assistance of other larger, more established, and heavily connected organizations, especially when attempting to target elected officials and the media as allies in equity efforts. Mr. Perez, Advisory Board Member with organization Alpha, relates how informally organized and resource poor constituencies similar to their own face enormous challenges in acquiring the attention of elected officials: “We”ve also participated in conferences at universities and even conducted several protests in Sacramento. We had good relationships with several state legislators but now it seems like their more interested in speaking with larger organizations that represent the interests of the educational establishment” (Interview with Mr. Perez, Advisory Board Member of Organization Alpha, January 22, 2010).

This includes the mass media as well. Since, media outlets tend to be friendlier to highly organized, resource-rich and well-established groups with connections to money and power (McAdam, 2006), protest actions become a recourse for the powerless meant to attract the attention of uninvolved elites that can help speak on behalf of the issue at hand, and provide these groups with some media exposure in the process. This is certainly the case for many activist groups that use more disruptive, direct action tactics in communicating messages. Mrs. Cortez, Board Member of organization Alpha explains: “Yes, but we have not had any direct contact with the media, but the media does sometimes get involved in campaigns or events that we do as a larger organization.

For example, during the Williams case we attended a conference and the media was there to cover it. We have also attended protest events, for example with the CAHSEE when they were threatening not to graduate many of our children and that sparked a great deal of interest” (Interview with Mrs. Cortez, Executive Board Member of Organization Alpha, January 22, 2010). These are some of the challenges this group faces.

Considering some of the barriers above the aggressive approach used by this group has led to numerous victories helping public officials and school and district administrators to see the benefits of cooperating with parents involved in local organizing efforts. This group managed to successfully put together several community forums in collaboration with the Montebello Unified School District in which parents, local and state policymakers, school and district officials and students were present engaging a variety of issues from the California state budget to the role that parents play in raising academic achievement (Parent and Community Forum, Organization Alpha and Montebello Unified School District, December 5, 2009).

In addition, they are currently leading a major initiative in collaboration with parents throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District to provide a series of workshops using peer training to prepare parents of intermediate school students to later partner with the schools to support their children’s transition to high school and their successful completion of college prep courses (Parent Professional Development Initiative Informational Sheet, Organization Alpha, June 2010). These activities can make the most compelling cases for solving a variety of problems since they involve those most impacted by different elements of inequality (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). The spontaneous and organic nature of these efforts and the fact that activities are not orchestrated by

conventional power structures gives these mobilizing agents a certain level of credibility from the start as they “present themselves as legitimate constituents rather than greedy professionals, meddling outsiders, or fuzzy-headed academics” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006: 101).

*The Attorney Led Organization Delta:* Finally, the nonprofit Latino litigation, advocacy and educational outreach organization enjoys a mixed approach that consists of *advocacy, lobbying, program operation, research and legal activities*. This group is headed by a President and General Counsel and is governed by a thirty-seven member national Board of Directors. The overwhelming majority of Board members are either, attorneys and law professors at major universities or top executives with some notable corporations such as Wal-Mart, JP Morgan Chase and Webb Group International (Organization Delta Website, 2010). Leaders of respected Latino-based community institutions also serve on the Board.

Board members are elected. Each year in February the Personnel & Nominations Committee solicits nominations from all board members. There is a vetting process by the P&N Committee and a list of candidates is presented to the full board for a vote at the annual board meeting in April (Email communication with the Executive Assistant to the President and General Counsel, October 12, 2010). Nominations may also be made from the floor at the annual board meeting. Again, a vote by the full board is made. With a vote by the majority of the full board, an individual is elected to a 2-year term.

A board member may serve up to three consecutive 2-year terms upon approval by the full board at the end of each term (Email communication with the Executive Assistant to the President and General Counsel, October 12, 2010). This system of governance

heavily favors the nomination of individuals with relatively strong acquisition to social and cultural capital through which professional status and utility of knowledge is used to bridge the various arenas and audiences necessary to accomplish institutional goals and objectives.

The rich diversity and accomplished panel of Board members that represent this organization allows this group to raise the most money of the four groups and as the amount of resources increases, “internal structuration” becomes more elaborate thus providing for more stability, maintenance of the operation over a longer period of time than informal ones and be best prepared to take advantage of new political opportunities during periods of demobilization (Kriesi, 2006). Groups that have sufficient amount of resources in the form of institutionalized access, authority and expertise, typically do not have to have recourse to the mobilization of their constituency (Kriesi, 2006).

The two activist groups involved in this study with the longest institutional life cycles, the educator-led, professional development-based organization around bilingual education founded in 1974 (Beta) and this Latino public interest law firm which is primarily led by attorneys and incorporated in 1968 (Delta) have the largest operating budgets of the four participating groups and age along with financial viability contribute heavily to the level of formalization, professionalization and differentiation of internal structures (Kriesi, 2006). As such, both groups have the most complex internal statutes and procedures governing the day-to day operations of the organization along with the most elaborate leadership and office arrangements including the largest Executive Boards.

Since resources are a positive function of age that contributes intensely to the level of “internal structuration” of an organization, goal orientations inevitably take the direction of “greater conservatism” as organizational maintenance (stability of membership, funding, etc.) becomes more important and goals and objectives typically more accommodating and conventional to reflect the “dominant societal consensus” in which they operate (Kriesi, 2006: 156). In other words, as organizations age and develop they go through a variety of changes many transforming goals and modifying action repertoires into more moderate and institutionalized versions, thereby providing the group with more stability for long term impact (Kriesi, 2006). One of the major differences between these two groups, besides that they are led by different mobilizing agents (educators v. attorneys) is their relationship and dependency on their constituency.

For the educator-led group Beta its members and its constituency are the same group of people. Membership contributions and events catering to their needs and interests are the most important source of income for this group. This dependency is further strengthened by its open system of governance, which allows individuals from its constituency to play a role in the decision-making apparatus either by nominating and voting on officers or running for one of the several elected positions open each election cycle. This group has a membership base of approximately 4,000 professionals. While this system provides strength and resources in the form of access to experts and institutionalized channels (schools, districts, etc.) it also reduces their autonomy and provides for periods of instability when conflict becomes hyper-inflated during the introduction of new Board members and agendas sometimes making it difficult to reach a

consensus on issues, complicating interactions among certain individuals or offices, and alienating parts of its membership base for political or policy reasons.

The attorney-led group Delta has no membership base and is less dependent on its constituency than the other groups for purposes of mobilization. The Latino community is its constituency and as long as the group continues to represent them in powerful ways they will continue to enjoy the niche they already hold. Mobilizing their constituency is not an essential goal since they are not governed by it and since activities are typically carried out by an elite group of individuals within the organization itself with the skills, institutionalized access and authority necessary to best represent the interests of their clients. While the group is governed by a Board of Directors many of who are members of the Latino community, the process is closed and controlled. Thus *legal strategies*, the threat of filing a lawsuit and following through, becomes the primary instrument of change, sometimes eliciting the power of *numbers*, of *material damage*, and of *bearing witness* when class action lawsuits are filed threatening to obstruct the normal course of events and using sources of evidence in the courtroom that reflect the terrible conditions under which students are expected to learn, such as in Williams, of which this group was an active plaintiff.

In addition, since the organization has a more distant relationship with its constituency it must find ways to communicate with it and here is where its own media and web-based strategies play a stronger role. Some of this communication is informational. This group often publishes policy and research reports on their website. For example, they recently collaborated with The Asian American Justice Center (AAJC) to produce a briefing book in which they provide demographics of the Limited English

Proficient community; outline areas of the law that support the rights of this minority group; describe the sectors where language access most impacts these groups; and offer a proactive approach to ensuring the civil rights of the LEP community (Language Rights Briefing Book, Organization Delta Website, June of 2008).

Communication however is also functional and symbolic. Since the media are not unbiased transmitters of information (Klandermans & Goslinga, 2006) and are also constrained by social, political and economic forces such as market demands (Zald, 2006) utilizing one's own media allows this group, and others like it, to circumvent the mass media, when it is prudent, and ensure their messages are conveyed appropriately while continuing to build and maintain its own legitimacy and reputation.

While the parent led group Alpha feels comfortable adopting a more competitive position with school officials and agencies utilizing more unconventional forms of political action, this organization adopts more moderate approaches. This is the only organization of the four that has programs specifically designed for students and strategically involves them in campaign related work and this has an influence on whether groups use direct action as a tactic. Both educator-led organizations do coordinate efforts to bring students to Sacramento, for example, and provide testimony to try and influence policymakers but rarely does this involvement come in the form of student strikes, marches or rallies.

This civil rights group does engage in some form of youth leadership development, which ranges from including students in meetings and actions around educational reform to "placing them in positions of leadership and responsibility for some tactical decision-making" (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002: 19). Two such programs



are worth noting: The Multicultural Education Initiative is an privately funded initiative aimed at building community empowerment, and mobilization through parent and youth leadership training centered in K-12 academic success, college access and civic engagement (The Multicultural Education Initiative, Organization Delta Website, 2010). The organization, in collaboration with the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), and the Los Angeles Urban League supports and develops civic-minded youth advocates through after school workshops that incorporate college awareness, civil rights and the arts as a means to help high school students become active leaders in their schools and communities (The Multicultural Education Initiative, Organization Delta Website, 2010).

The Civil Rights Education Program, reflects the organization's attempt to reduce the high school drop-out rate, increase college access and establish a network of empowered and educated youth through a free, twelve-week after school enrichment program that introduces participants to the arts, civil rights leadership, practical college awareness and the application process, and scholarship information (Civil Rights Education Program, Organization Delta Website, 2010). In addition, the organization has supported efforts involving student initiatives that favored direct action such as the phone-banking outreach event to urge passage of the DREAM Act in the Senate in the fall of 2010 and rallies held in Arizona on immigration related issues (Organization Delta Website, 2010).

Finally, with regards to the organizations' own parent programs the direct work is funded primarily through grants from foundations and corporations. But in order to work with schools this group does engage in formal agreements with them where roles and

responsibilities are delineated and the school's collaboration secured throughout the duration of the training of parents and beyond (Interview with Mrs. Torres, Director of the Parent School Partnership Program of Organization Delta, November 13, 2009). But when there is an opportunity the organization does take Title I funds from schools and provides training of trainers workshops for parents and/or staff and sometimes the schools are willing to subsidize their traditional Parent School Partnership classes (Interview with Mrs. Torres, Director of the Parent School Partnership Program of Organization Delta, November 13, 2009).

All four groups build, sustain and leverage a mixture of strategic relationships that include the educational establishment, scholars/academics, attorneys, other grassroots and advocacy organizations and parents. These relationships bring significant attention to the struggles and actions for change. As such, they become important targets and allies in campaign efforts.

Moreover, all four groups rely on specific methods or tools that give effect to the strategies aimed at mobilizing resources for accomplishing goals and objectives. Some of these tools include: lobbying, meetings, electronic newsletters, reports, briefs, letter writing, leaflets and flyers, magazines, briefing books, film, conferences, panels, and newspaper publications, political lobbying, mass media strategies, role-playing exercises, storytelling, reflexive dialogue, case studies, shadowing, mentoring sessions, community forums, rallies, public demonstrations, and apprenticeships, (Organization Omega Retreats: September 22, 2008; December 8, 2008; March 12, 2009; June 25, 2009; October 1, 2009; January 5, 2010; April 9, 2010; Organization Beta Board Meetings:

June 27, 2009; October 24, 2009; January 9, 2010; Parent and Community Forum, Organization Alpha and Montebello Unified School District, December 5, 2009; Parent Information Resource Center Meeting, Organization Beta, September 8, 2009; Parent/School Partnership Training, Organization Delta, November 16, 2009).

These technical tools help guide the debate and assist in the construction of collective understandings and formulation of arguments to be converted into talking points, fact sheets, policy briefs, resource guides, position papers, reports, action items and research priorities. The actual tools selected depend on their potential to reach a wide number of people, cost-effectiveness, organization's resources, advocacy aims, allies and targets of campaigns, and the legitimacy of the issue at hand (Council for International Development, 2003).

### *Conclusion*

All four activist groups combine a mixed strategy that involves *organizing, advocacy, lobbying, program operation, research activities and legal strategies*. The program elements that each organization supports and maintains is dependent on the groups' ability to acquire the crucial resources that will allow it to put into place an infrastructure, the institutional arrangements including a decision-making apparatus, and recruit the talent necessary that can successfully sustain organizing efforts for long-term impact. Equally important in this equation, though is the role that constituencies play in the problem identification process through which conceptions of inequality are articulated

and become translated into strategies and targets for campaigns.

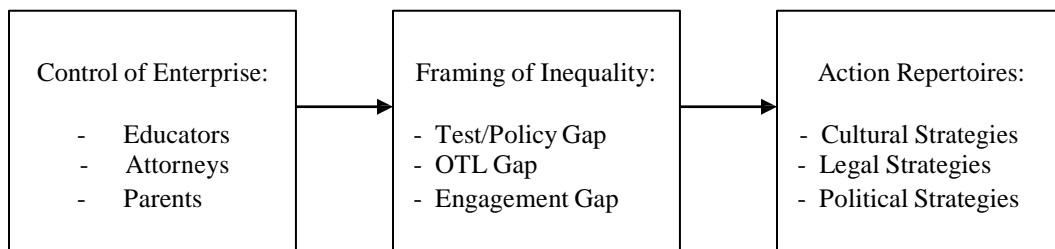
And this leads us to the final research question, which is one that relies more on conceptual analysis than empirical scrutiny affording me the opportunity to use key findings in the social movement literature, including important concepts found in the education organizing scholarship, that can help make the connection between organizational factors and the issue selection and equity agenda setting process. In other words, the education organizing and social movement scholarship will help bridge the gap between the evidence collected, in light of some serious limitations, and the need for compelling interpretations across a variety of data sources that successfully addresses this final research question. As mentioned earlier, scholarship is used where empirical scrutiny in this study either fails or is not possible.

## **II. Organizing for Change: The Role of Organizational Factors** *(Discussion: Research Question #1C)*

The figure below illustrates in its simplistic form the equity agenda setting process undertaken by these groups. Who controls the movement enterprise will largely determine how problems and its sources are framed, facilitating the use of an array of strategies in action repertoires through which issues may be remedied. Educators (Beta and Omega) tend to frame issues around a “test/policy gap” lens which are best embedded in cultural strategies since changing value systems are best accomplished through institutional approaches. Attorneys (Delta) typically define concerns using “opportunities to learn” arguments which better lend themselves to the adoption of legal

strategies but still fall within the purview of institutional methods as they indirectly affect political systems. Finally, parents (Alpha) naturally interpret obstacles in “engagement” related terms empowering them to use political strategies that elicit more direct and unconventional forms of political action since they have very little access to the system to begin with and are the most burdened by different elements of inequality.

**Figure 6.1: The Equity Agenda Setting Process of Activist Groups**



In addition, as we have seen organizational characteristics (structure, history, age, practice, capacity) also play a significant role in the construction of equity agendas. The level of internal structuration of an organization (formalization, professionalization, internal differentiation) which is mainly driven by the level of available resources and institutional life cycle help to shape goal orientations and action repertoires (Kriesi, 2006). The older and more resourceful the group, the greater the likelihood that activities follow an interest group model characterized by an emphasis on formal organization, resulting in more conventional, and less disruptive, set of tactics in equity agendas aimed at remedying inequality (Kriesi, 2006).

Moreover, how these groups define and include constituencies, whether they are actively involved in mobilization efforts, also positively impacts the degree to which more direct forms of action are applied. As such, groups that rely heavily on committed

adherents (base) and function within informal and decentralized structures (grassroots model) are more likely to use more disruptive and aggressive strategies. There are exceptions to the rule, of course.

For example, the Latino, public interest law firm (Delta) and the educator-led group focused on professional development (Beta) rely the strongest on formal organization (distinct territorial units, largest Executive Boards and paid staff, functional division of labor) and prefer to build strategic relationships that “enable them to negotiate with people in power” and, thus use “more conventional political actions” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006: 101). They prefer to use institutionalized tactics because “they are more compatible with a formalized structure and with the schedules of professionals” (Kriesi, 2006: 158). The behaviors governing these relationships include: negotiation, compromise, mediation, bargaining and plenty of discussion.

These two groups have the longest institutional life cycles and enjoy the largest revenue sources. Greater sources of income allows these two groups to secure the services of public relations firms to assist with message distribution and add television, web-based and/or social media to its toolkit. These sophisticated media strategies allow them to garner widespread public knowledge and sympathy for problems (Oakes & Rogers, 2006).

While the attorney-led group (Delta) has no membership base and does not depend on the direct participation of their constituency for attaining goals, the educator-led group (Beta) relies more heavily on the collective voice of their constituency or membership as they contribute the heaviest to funding streams and participate more strongly in decision-making activities (electoral system). For organization Beta this greater dependency on

and participation by its constituency does not manifest itself into more unconventional forms of political action, as formal structures typical of groups that employ interest group frameworks usually serve to limit expressive action. Since educators control the entire movement enterprise, giving them strength and resources in the form of access to experts and institutionalized channels inequality, its sources and solutions will continue to be defined within the scope of the system requiring equity agendas to comply to existing conventions if they are to be successful.

The coalition-based organization (Omega) and the parent led group (Alpha) rely the least on formal organization (lowest number of paid staff, etc.) with differentiation happening only at the most basic functional levels (president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer). They also have the shortest life cycles and operate the smallest budgets. Since the coalition receives very little revenue from its members and emphasizes activities aimed at influencing policies and policymakers at the state level, requiring a specialized set of skills and knowledge, decision-making is highly centralized limiting mobilization activities as movement efforts are carried out by a small core of activists. It is also the group that relies the strongest on “conventional political actions to persuade authorities that have the power to enact change” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006: 101), and therefore engages in the least disruptive tactics making it easier to access public authorities.

The parent led group is the complete opposite. It relies the most on the mobilization of its power base, and relies the least on formal structures, in order to move agendas forward enabling the group to use more contentious approaches to its efforts in motivating change. Some of these unconventional tactics to communicate their message

include: signing petitions, lawful demonstrations, marches and sometimes boycotts.

Extreme cases of action are rare, hunger strikes and damage to property, with the exception of one particular instance where one parent was nearly arrested for videotaping a Board meeting and refusing to stop recording the meeting when the police were called on to handle the matter (Interview with Mr. Perez, Advisory Group member of Organization Alpha, June 22, 2010). This incident vividly illustrates the power of *material damage* and of *bearing witness* as the act of video-recording this meeting stopped business as usual, even when the activist was under the threat of arrest.

While this group employs more aggressive strategies the major appeals of conventional forms of contention, away from acts of violence, allow them to continually minimize the polarizing effects of violence on alliance systems and create some form of stability that enables the group to continually attract large numbers of participants (logic of numbers) to help sustain the group's momentum, and open the possibility of working cooperatively with elites and other public authorities (Tarrow, 1998).

In addition, the fact that this group is affiliated with a regional and state-wide network known to employ more institutionalized tactics, or conventional political actions, which is capable of bringing less connected groups to power, places pressure on the group to stay away from more extreme forms of action in order to continue to benefit from these partnerships and protect existing alliances (Tarrow, 1998). After all, "movements that make extreme forms of policy demands can be outmaneuvered by groups that pose the same claim in more acceptable forms" (Tarrow, 1998: 88).

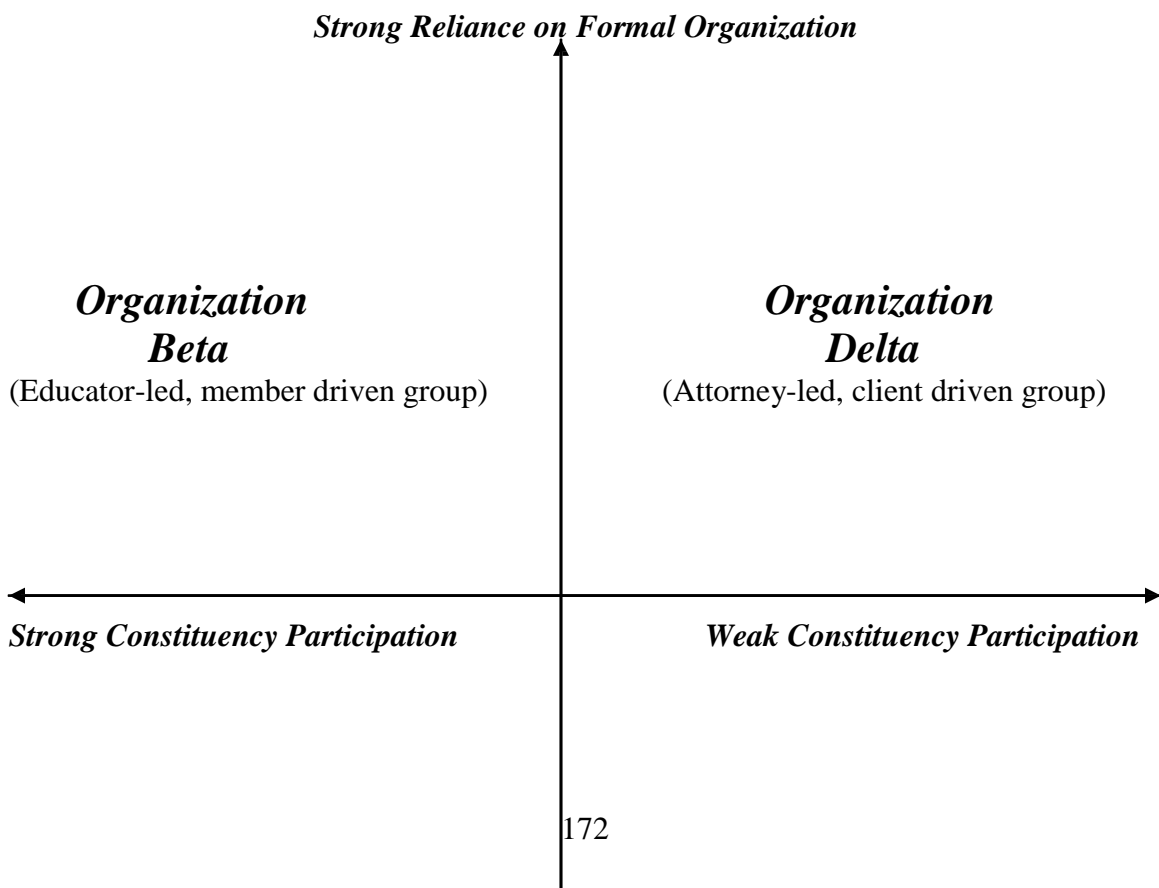
The visual below shows the relationship between level of formal organization and role of members/constituencies in mobilization efforts allowing for differentiation among



groups involved in English learner policymaking work by organizational type. It is also important to note that while all four groups engage in actions meant to bring about change, its forms can be placed along a continuum from least to extreme, with institutionalized tactics (Beta, Omega and Delta) on one end, more direct-action techniques in the middle (Alpha) and its most intense forms such as activities involving personal injury or physical damage at the other end. All forms of action have benefits and costs attached to them. It is up to the group to decide which route to take.

I now offer a new blended theoretical framework in light of existing strategies aimed at bringing about change by placing the primary focus on coalitional pursuits and provide some recommendations for advancing coalitional work around efforts designed at improving the educational opportunities and outcomes of English learners.

**Figure 6.2: Typology of Activist Groups Involved in English Learner Policymaking Efforts**



***Organization  
Alpha***  
(Parent-led, grassroots group)

***Organization  
Omega***  
(Educator-led, coalition-based group)

***Weak Reliance on Formal Organization***

**III. Organizing for Change: A New Blended Theoretical Framework**  
*(Recommendations and Conclusion)*

The new blended theoretical framework below takes into consideration differences in the way activist groups define and act on education problems and their sources by placing the primary focus on coalitional pursuits. Since the coalition is most enthusiastic about the findings in this study I wish to make recommendations most useful to it. After all, the “capacity to build alliances and coalitions has been found to increase interest groups” influence over decision makers in key policy domains” (Diani, 2003: 106).

It begins with the movement structural context in which activist groups must operate. Namely, those conditions external to movement activities, that either “restrict or facilitate the building and maintenance of movement structure devoted to conducting

movement actions” (Rucht, 2006: 189). What makes this “context relevant to any movement effort is that it involves resources and conditions beyond the movement”’s immediate control” (Rucht, 2006: 189). Since all activist groups must conduct their work in this external arena, organizations can make use of its influence by identifying “patterns that work in favor of the movement and avoid that which could weaken it” (Rucht, 2006: 189). According to the central tenets of Rucht”’s (2006) framework, the overall context structure has three basic dimensions:

- *Cultural Context:* Refers to attitudes and behaviors of individuals who may or may not provide support such as monetary resources, organizational assistance, or actual participation in protest events. Such support will depend on how “resonant a movement”’s issues and demands are with the experiences and interests of larger sections of the population”(190). General values and situationally bound issue perceptions play an important role in this context.
- *Social Context:* Includes the different social networks and relationships which help to socialize activists in a similar way and that provide the foundation and stability through which collective efforts can be coordinated and carried out. These networks which are dependent on ecological factors such as material conditions, “population density or means which facilitate communication or mobility,” or class structure can either “facilitate or restrict the forming of collective identity and the building of movement structures” (190).
- *Political Context:* Involves the different interactions with authorities and counter-movements including “political alignments, presence or absence of allies, and the

configuration of opponents which have the capacity to limit, undermine, or repress social movement mobilization” (191).

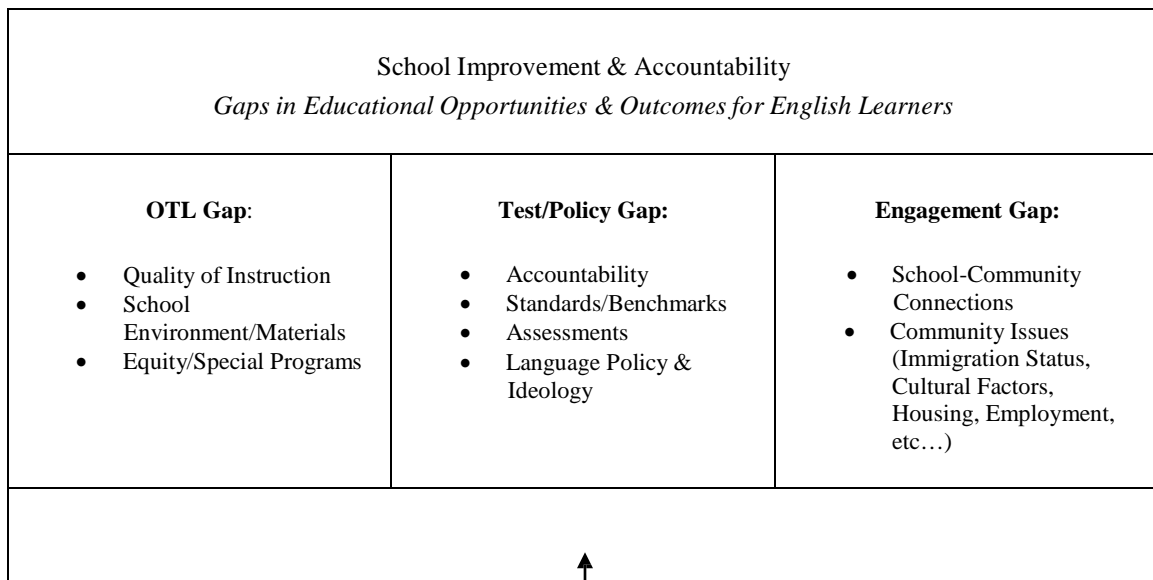
- *Economic Context:* Rucht’s framework does not specifically include an economic dimension but economic factors contribute heavily to the mobilization capacity and development of organizations within a movement. All four activist groups involved in this study are undergoing a period of retrenchment and demobilization due in large part to the economic recession. Therefore, we can specifically incorporate this new dimension as reflecting the general availability of financial resources, within a given society or community that can potentially expand, or restrict organizing efforts (foundation monies; local, state and federal grants; corporate sponsorships; public/private contributions; merchandising; membership fees; program operation and services; legal activities; social and political events, etc...)

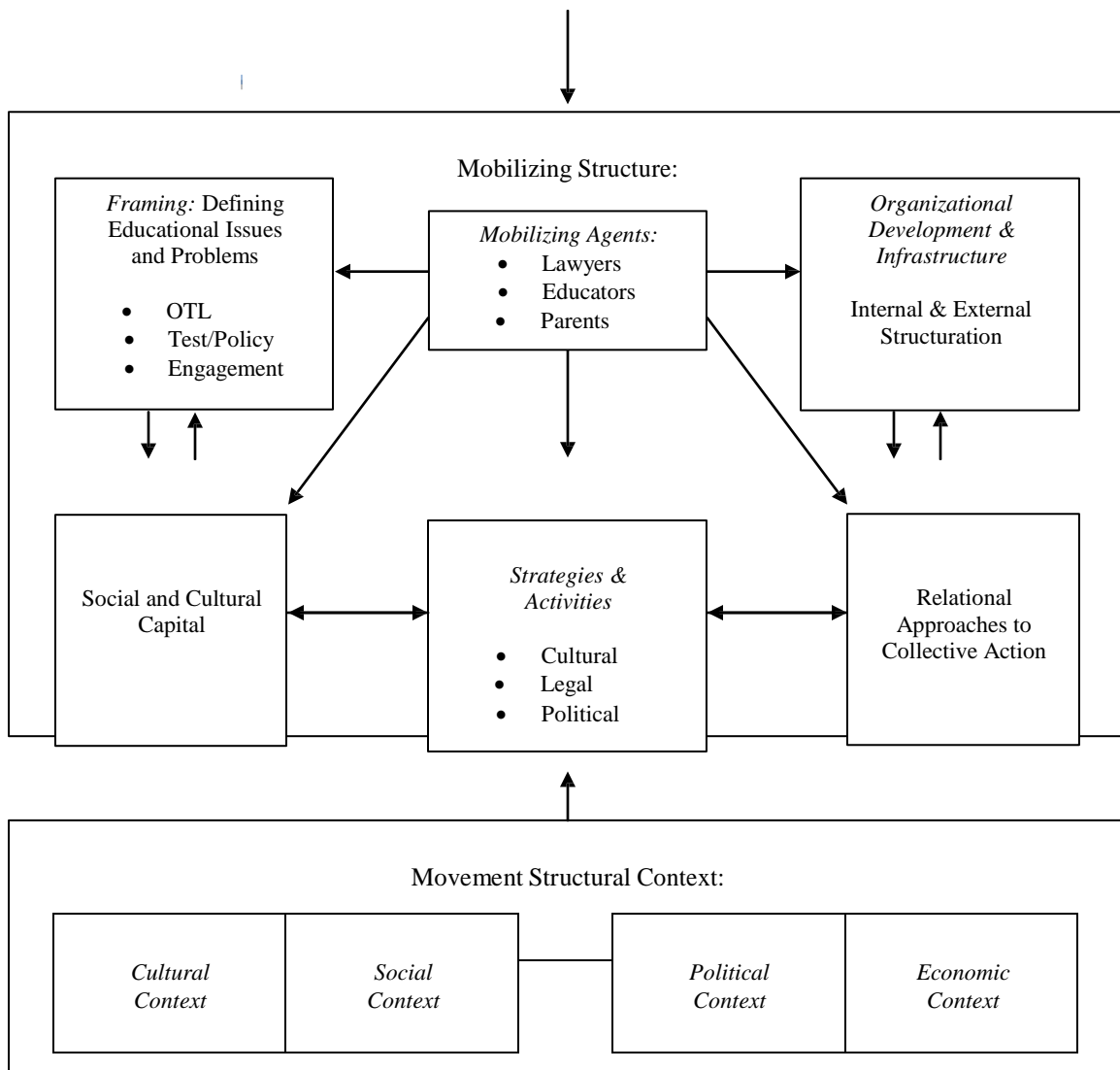
All four dimensions help shape the different elements that constitute the mobilizing structure, which in turn has an impact on network strategies and activities and the kinds and levels of mobilization needed to address a variety of issues and gaps in educational opportunities and outcomes of English learners.

In order to change things it is important to understand how change occurs and this requires an analysis of where and how the decision-making process takes place for the issues that require remedy (Council for International Development, 2003). As such, all four groups subscribe to a theory of change and employ an organizing model that largely determine how priority issues are identified, goals and objectives constructed, and movement activities carried out. How problems are defined, which is a function of the

mobilizing agents actively involved in strategic framing efforts and organizing activities (educators, attorneys, parents), along with organizational focus and factors (grassroots v. interest group model) have important implications for the kinds of pursuits utilized by groups and the way they translate themselves into actions. For this reason, the new framework incorporates these differences and the various elements of organizing in such a way that is most useful and relevant for coalitional endeavors.

**Figure 6.3: *Theory of Change: Relationship of Mobilizing Structures & School Improvement***





*The Power of Relational Approaches to Collective Action:* The original blended theoretical framework used to inform this study places great importance on this notion of relational organizing and social capital in terms of how groups define and act on issues. Key findings in this study, with the assistance of both the social movement and education organizing scholarship, point to the importance of organizational factors, relational approaches to collective action, and social capital—all equal elements that help groups define and act on educational problems. Collective and sustainable approaches to

problems cutting across organizational boundaries are becoming more common in the field of education organizing (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002).

The fact that all four activist groups are connected together through the statewide coalition in which representatives from a variety of organizations scattered throughout California come together to discuss issues and coordinate campaigns aimed at remedying these issues is a perfect example of this powerful phenomenon. The cultural and political orientations of individuals within, and across organizations that define involvement and its intensity, “develop in a web of social interactions” (Passy, 2003: 23).

Studies of social movements and democratic processes have indicated the “central importance of networks, both as conduits of information and resources, and as qualitative supports for the social and cultural ties essential to community-building, solidarity, or collective action” (Mische, 2003: 258). The social spaces created as a result of human interaction that facilitate political participation within the coalition reflect the potential for multiplicity of voices and experiences to come together to challenge various forms of inequality, develop a powerful collective identity and construct new knowledge. They rely on having access to experts, resources and information to make this synergy possible. And this statewide voice for justice for English learners and their communities invite numerous experts and presenters to help engage the group in discussions around various forms of problems.

However, the organization’s historical trajectory (why it was formed), the small role parents and students play in organizing efforts, their relatively small operating budget, and the composition of the executive board that make all the leadership decisions

(seasoned educators) heavily influences the framing of issues and construction of equity agendas centered strongly on accountability and assessment.

For example, the fact that parents and students play a minimal role in the decision-making process of these organizing efforts limits the discussion and confines the space through which issues are defined away from more resource centered concerns such as school environment/materials (access to textbooks) and home/school connection since parents and students typically focus more of their attention on these issue related categories and the data supports this claim. Restricted operating budgets further complicate the matter as capacity building endeavors are confined to activities that are not resource intensive or financially hungry.

The coalition needs to maximize the power of networks more fully by incorporating dialogue, interaction and inquiry as tools to be used to solidify strategic relationships with a variety of stakeholders and the political offices, agencies, parent groups, universities or school systems they represent to achieve mutual goals and objectives collectively.

Having social connections to people who are already mobilized is a crucial resource in movement expansion (Gould, 2003). While the coalition makes every effort to expose its efforts through its members in order to build its authority and have easier access to decision makers based on this authority, it lacks the voices, internal structures, and sensitivity to those groups that place more of the focus on local reform efforts and that are more driven by parents and students in favor of professionals and the statehouse.

For example, Organization Delta refuses to participate in coalition meetings during the onset of the Coachella case because there is serious disagreement on how best to define and act on issues relating to English learners from a legal point of view, as both



groups are plaintiffs in two very different legal battles (Williams and Coachella). But inter-organizational issues extend beyond legal strategies. On numerous retreats, several members of more locally focused organizations, including the attorney representing organization Delta, are quiet throughout most of the deliberations. Governance structures, along with the role of constituencies, conspire to favor certain voices over others in the issue selection and equity agenda setting process.

Since the coalition is making concerted efforts to expand its participation base to include more grassroots groups it needs to consider the way business is handled and reorganize itself to best incorporate grassroots voices into a largely advocacy organizing framework. And here is where key concepts from the education organizing scholarship such as Warren's (2001) notion of "political leadership" and Oakes and Rogers' (2006) framework on "disrupting knowledge," may prove to be useful.

According to Warren (2001) a more expansive and appropriate definition of leadership, away from technical and procedural processes, is needed when referring to organizing efforts operating in the public sphere. This definition includes the teaching of skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to conduct the "art of politics—teaching participants to weigh alternatives, negotiate differences, analyze power dynamics and strategize" (Warren, 2001: 220). Moreover, by extending a perspective of leadership beyond traditional and popular notions existing in such a genre, which ground their construction too much around the "functions, routines and roles" that typically anchor such a perspective, one is able to embrace a more appropriate definition to explain how organizing activities help to generate "leadership practice" (Spillane, 2006). In doing so, we move beyond equating leadership with individuals and individual acts and instead

place our attention on the dynamics governing interactions among different groups of people working together in social spaces, the organizing activities themselves that help forge relationships, and the tools and materials used to exercise leadership behavior and convention.

“Disruptive knowledge” involves the use of dialogue and inquiry as the basis of learning and acting where multiple forms of knowledge are legitimized, leadership is strengthened, collective identity fostered, and the possibilities for change illuminated (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Learning is exhibited as an active social process mediated through dialogue and inquiry whereby a variety of actors are given the opportunity to share their stories and experiences, transmit ideas, identify mutual areas of concern, negotiate different points of view, and develop a salient identity which facilitates “the emergence of a political consciousness related to specific political issues” (Passy, 2003: 30).

Technical skills and knowledge are used to “provide new opportunities to push effectively against the status quo” and create the conditions necessary that will convince and enable a variety of actors to “bestow legitimacy on the moral force of the claims” levied by activists by positively recognizing their efforts (Oakes & Rogers, 2006: 171). Some of the technical tools involve interactive workshops, role-playing exercises; and “education exchanges” in which organizers use lived experience to examine a variety of critical issues and express findings and possible solutions in “plain and compelling language” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006: 75). According to Oakes and Rogers (2006) disruptive knowledge is developed alongside leadership practice and its power “established by the actions that follow” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006: 149).

Armed with some of this scholarship I now turn to specific recommendations for advancing coalitional work around efforts designed at improving the educational opportunities and outcomes of English learners.

- *Expand Multiplicity of Voice in the Issue Selection Process:* There needs to be efforts to connect groups to advocacy efforts more strongly. In many of my observations during retreat meetings, I noticed that many of the representatives of the more local, grassroots groups are quiet and engage, very minimally, in the issue selection and equity agenda setting process. Since most of the membership base and leadership body are dominated by professionals that have a very specific view of problems and their sources, many of which heavily favor issues around assessment and accountability, more concrete resource concerns are often left out. Establish learning opportunities that allow new members to participate more strongly in movement activities, as opposed to having equity agendas carried out by only a small group of activists. Moreover, empower them to convert key issues into demands and actions that will best enable them to ground campaign related work in a long-term strategy to create sustainable pressure for change over time.
- *Seek Other Sources of Funding in an Effort to Expand Operating Budgets:* Conduct fundraising activities and explore financial resource options through grants that can further expand the operating budgets of the coalition. This would certainly require knowing where to look, knowing how to respond to grant proposals, knowing the different organizations that distribute and allocate monetary resources, and knowing how to successfully manage the paperwork that

- follows if and when monies are granted. By increasing monetary resources greater emphasis can be placed in building organizational coherence and legitimacy.
- *Build Organizational Capacity:* Provide the training and resources necessary to nurture and grow organizations engaged in organizing across organizational types. This might involve establishing a technical assistance and training network to build the capacity of groups devoted to organizing on multiple fronts. Technical assistance providers should target organizations in the early stages of development and groups with limited external support, since these are the groups that will most likely benefit from organizational, logistical and planning support. Search for the most effective means of leveraging grassroots activism into meaningful systemic change.
  - *Optimize Strategies and Tactics:* Activist organizations rely on a variety of capacity building efforts in order to bring significant attention to the issues that most concern them and attempt to influence public policy. Center these efforts on two dimensions. The first is to create the internal building blocks that facilitate the mobilization of collective action. In this case, two such areas can be considered, leadership formation and development and knowledge production. The second is to leverage strategic relationships with a diverse set of actors, organized interests and distinct audiences to persuade them of the importance of the issues they work on and enhance the political impact of their efforts. As such, organizing strategies and tactics, or equity agendas that seek concrete change, should be built along these two dimensions.

### *Conclusion*

Activist organizations, or non-profit/public interest entities, fulfill an important goal in society. Without them, entrenched interests with access to powerful allies and large sources of funding will continue to dictate how we come to think about important issues, set the rules and parameters for national debates around educational reform, and ensure favorable legislation for further monopoly of power. Non-profits can leverage valuable and real power to help mobilize resources in favor of advancing the interests of low-income communities in school reform endeavors. Those most impacted by elements of inequality have a vested interest in ensuring that local schools are providing their children with the best education possible to better their living circumstances. This is an interest worth investing in for the benefit of advancing democracy and ensuring the viability of the economy.

## **Appendix A**

University of California, Los Angeles Office  
for Protection of Research Subjects  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

### **Verbal Script: Method of Subject Identification and Recruitment**

**Prompt:** Hello, my name is Gabriel Baca and I'm the principal investigator of a study being conducted at the University of California, Los Angeles [*Make sure they are also aware that it is being conducted by the Graduate School of Education at UCLA*]. This is a study that aims to examine how different activist groups grapple with, make sense of, and ultimately take action around English learner issues. This study will document how activist groups use a variety of tools, some grounded in knowledge production and others

grounded in political interaction, to advocate for English learners and hold the system accountable for their learning opportunities and outcomes. Specifically, this case study investigation examines how four different activist organizations leverage power through social movement activism for equity-focused education policy for English learners.

You were identified and selected as a possible participant in this study because your organization is involved in equity-focused education reform around English learner policies and practices in California [*Make sure to modify the aforementioned statement once the activist organization has been recruited and potential subjects within the organization itself have been identified and selected to participate based on conversations with either the Executive Director, President or Program Manager*]. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Should you agree to participate in this study you may be asked to do one or all of the following: A consent form will be provided for you.

- a. **Interviews:** Participate in a 20-30 minute interview with the principal investigator [*Remind him/her that you are the PI in this study and that you will be conducting all of the interviews*]. All of the interviews will be audio-taped. You will have the choice of whether or not to allow your interview to be audio-taped.
- b. **Direct and Participant Observations:** Allow the PI to conduct direct and participant observations that will range from formal to casual data collection activities. Observational protocols will be used and structured to allow for the documentation and incorporation of a variety of behaviors. Some of the anticipated observations will include meetings, organizational activities, workshops/conferences, and field-related work in schools and communities.
- c. **Document Analysis:** Finally, allow the PI to collect and analyze multiple sources of documentary information that will be used to make inferences that may lead to worthy avenues of further investigation. Some of the documents that may be collected include letters, memorandums, agendas and minutes, administrative documents such as proposals, reports and other forms of internal documents that may include formal studies or evaluations conducted by the organization itself, some of which may or may not be made public and any public sources of information such as newspaper clippings and/or media related publications.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

**Principal Investigator:** Gabriel Baca, Graduate Student Researcher  
UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies  
Phone: (310) 391-1567  
Email: [gbaca@ucla.edu](mailto:gbaca@ucla.edu)

## **Appendix B**

University of California, Los Angeles Office  
for Protection of Research Subjects  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

### **Announcement: Group Consent for Direct and Participant Observations**

**Script:** Hello, my name is Gabriel Baca and I'm the principal investigator of a study being conducted at the University of California, Los Angeles [*Make sure they are also aware that it is being conducted by the Graduate School of Education at UCLA*]. This is a study that aims to examine how different activist groups grapple with, make sense of, and ultimately take action around English learner issues. Using a comparative case study

design, including ***direct and participant-observations***, this study attempts to document the processes through which activist groups frame multi-dimensional solutions and use a variety of tools, some of which are grounded in knowledge production and others grounded in political interaction, to advocate for English learners and hold the system accountable for their learning opportunities and outcomes.

You were identified and selected as a possible participant in this study because your organization is involved in equity-focused education reform around English learner policies and practices in California. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. The focus will be placed on examining social phenomenon and therefore individuals will NOT be identified in the data collected. Should you wish NOT to be observed, you have the right to do so, simply let me know and I will refrain from recording any observations regarding your participation in these group activities. In addition, you have the right to opt out of having data collected regarding your participation at any time, just let me know that you no longer wish to be observed. Should you agree to be observed for the purposes of this study the following concrete group behavioral and setting descriptions will be observed by analytic process [*It is important to note that if and when I describe each of the different types of data I plan to collect by analytic process that NOT all of what I have identified in this script for each respective category will be shared. I use examples of concrete behavioral descriptions as an option to share with the group in case they ask for further elaboration*].

- d. ***Leadership Development and Relationship Building***: I will be examining how individuals within the organization use political leadership as a mechanism to build a collective voice in the service of activism. Political leadership involves engaging in the art of politics where participants weigh alternatives, negotiate differences, analyze power dynamics and strategize. Some of the activities involve the following: running a meeting, chairing committees, holding others accountable, negotiating with decision-makers, running an evaluation plan, planning issue campaigns, knowing how to involve others, role playing, negotiation and compromise, informal consultations with other members, how to view and accept tension, how to invite new members and develop allies.
- e. ***Disrupting Forms of Knowledge***: I will be examining how members of the organization build the types of knowledge and learning producing spaces required to understand and combat inequitable school practices and policies. This would involve engaging those most affected by inequality; ensuring access to knowledge and its construction; adopting a critical stance; and developing a transformative goal (such as community forums, formal reports, newspaper stories, testimony, critical messages on t-shirts and banners, and public demonstrations). Some of the activities include: connecting people with experts (asking generative questions); reflexive dialogue; “Research translation” (documenting problems, summarizing evidence, interpreting data, writing summaries and biographical sketches); educational exchanges (storytelling, role playing, asking questions, exploring intuitions, looking at existing knowledge, and using tools of research to generate new knowledge).



- f. ***Building Relationships with Allies, Constituencies and Authorities:*** I will be examining how the organization is building relationships with external authorities and allies which include: it's own constituency, businesses, research and legal community, elected officials, the general public, PR firms and/or media outlets. Some of the activities include: focus groups, seminars, institutes, conference calls, media advisories, public testimony, etc.... Any activity that would shed some light on how activist groups are engaging external entities to help them advance equitable policies for English learners is what will be examined.
- g. ***Logic and Forms of Protest:*** Finally, I will be examining the different types of external activities that activist groups employ that relate to political notions of protest. For example, these "new repertoires of action" would include signing petitions, lawful demonstrations, boycotts, occupations, sit-ins, blocking traffic, etc....along with any "conventional forms of political participation," such as following politics in the newspapers, discussing politics with others, working for political parties or their candidates, attending political meetings, contacting public officials, persuading friends and acquaintances to vote in particular ways, etc...

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

**Principal Investigator:** Gabriel Baca, Graduate Student Researcher  
UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies  
Phone: (310) 391-1567  
Email: [gbaca@ucla.edu](mailto:gbaca@ucla.edu)

## **Appendix C**

University of California, Los Angeles Office  
for Protection of Research Subjects  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**Title:** Education Organizing, Policy Advocacy and Restrictive Language Policies:  
How Activist Organizations Define and Remedy Educational Inequality for  
English Learners in a Post-Proposition 227 Era

You are asked to participate in a research study of the University of California, Los Angeles conducted by Gabriel Baca, doctoral student in the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. This is a study that aims to examine how four very different activist groups grapple with, make sense of, and ultimately take action around English learner issues. The diversity of these organizations will permit me to highlight a wide range of specific equity issues and organizing strategies community groups are using as well as to identify beliefs and practices that they share. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your organization is involved in equity-focused education reform around English learner policies and practices in California. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study will document how activist groups use a variety of tools, some grounded in knowledge production and others grounded in political interaction, to advocate for English learners and hold the system accountable for their learning opportunities and outcomes. Specifically, the study examines how four different activist organizations leverage power through social movement activism for equity-focused education policy for English learners.

### **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following: We will ask you to participate in a short, one on one interview with the Principal Investigator. The interviews will be audio-taped and take place at the offices of the organization or if you were not able to participate in person, we would conduct the interview by telephone. You will have the choice of whether or not to allow your interview to be audio-taped. Each interview will last between 20-30 minutes.

### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no risks to you for participation in this study. If a scheduled interview is inconvenient for you, we will re-schedule, at your convenience.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

You will not benefit directly from participation in the research. However, this study aims to achieve a greater understanding of the varied elements that directly or indirectly influence the kinds of mobilization efforts required to enact social, policy and educational change. Since this study will document how activist groups use a variety of tools, some grounded in knowledge production and others grounded in political interaction, your participation in the research may help to change the landscape of education politics for English learners in powerful ways and hold the system accountable for their learning opportunities and outcomes.

In addition, the findings of this study may have major implications for the work of

activist groups by facilitating the use of strategic research to help better inform advocacy efforts.

## **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

You will receive no payment for your participation in the study.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of our coding system. We will not use your name on any documents, but will give you a number code. Only the principal investigator will have access to the document containing all codes. This document as well as all other data related to the study will be kept at the residence of the principal investigator. In addition, you will have the right to review any recordings made of your interviews to decide if they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

## **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

**Principal Investigator:** Gabriel Baca, Graduate Student Researcher  
UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies  
Phone: (310) 391-1567  
Email: [gbaca@ucla.edu](mailto:gbaca@ucla.edu)

## **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Office for Protection of Research Subjects, UCLA, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 102, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694, (310) 825-8714.

## **SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR OR DESIGNEE**

In my judgment the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D**

University of California, Los Angeles Office  
for Protection of Research Subjects  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

**CONSENTIMIENTO PARA PARTICIPAR EN ESTUDIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

**Title:** Education Organizing, Policy Advocacy and Restrictive Language Policies:  
How Activist Organizations Define and Remedy Educational Inequality for

## English Learners in a Post-Proposition 227 Era

**Título:** Organizando Educativa, Defensa de Pólizas y la Distancia de Explicación de Educación: Como las Organizaciones Activistas Utilizan el Poder como una Palanca para Avanzar Pólizas Equidades Educativas para los Alumnos Estudiando el Ingles en una Epoca de la Proposición 227.

Se le pide participar en un estudio de investigación académico dirigido por el profesor Gabriel Baca, Doctor en Filosofía, de la Escuela de Educación en la Universidad de California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Este es un plan de estudios que se informa de las experiencias de las organizaciones activistas con el propósito de modificar las pólizas para los alumnos estudiando el ingles. La diversidad de las organizaciones me permitirá destacar problemas equidades y estrategias utilizadas y también identificar creencias y costumbres colocadas en las organizaciones. Su organización fue identificada como un participante posible en esta investigación por las actividades alrededor de pólizas relacionadas al estudio de los alumnos estudiando el ingles. Esta investigación es completamente voluntaria.

### **PROPÓSITO DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN**

El propósito de esta investigación es aprender más sobre cómo incorporar las experiencias de las organizaciones activistas para avanzar pólizas equidades para los alumnos estudiando el ingles incluyendo jóvenes bilingües. También queremos aprender las diferentes estrategias utilizadas por parte de la organización activista con el propósito de usarlos como palancas para defender a los alumnos estudiando el ingles y mantener un sistema que apoya y protege las experiencias y oportunidades educativas de estos alumnos.

### **PROCEDIMIENTOS**

Si participa en nuestra investigación, vamos a pedirlo lo siguiente: Le pediremos participar en una breve entrevista con el profesor y investigador principal. Durante las entrevistas, el investigador principal tomará notas, y grabará en cinta la conversación. Además, las entrevistas se llevarán acabo en las oficinas de la organización o si no se puede en persona, se llevará acabo por parte de una llamada. Usted tendrá el derecho de participar en la entrevista sin que la conversación sea grabada en cinta. Cada entrevista durará entre 20 o 30 minutos.

### **POSIBLES RIESGOS E INCOMODIDADES**

Esta investigación no presenta ningún riesgo fuera de lo que se encuentra en la vida cotidiana. Es posible que sienta un nivel mínimo de incomodidades por su participación en esta investigación. Usted puede decidir no responder a cualquier pregunta o tomar un descanso, o también pedir que paremos de grabar en cualquier momento. Usted también pueden descontinuar su participación en esta investigación a cualquier momento y

respetaremos y honraremos su decisión. mantendremos la confidencialidad de la organización en todas partes de el estudio de investigación y no revelaremos nada que aprendemos sobre usted o las actividades de la organización fuera del equipo de investigación sin su permiso.

### **POSIBLES BENEFICIOS PARA EL SUJETO Y/O LA SOCIEDAD**

Tal vez no habrá un beneficio directo para usted o la organización al participar en este estudio. Sin embargo, su participación puede beneficiar a otros porque usaremos la información de este estudio para mejorar las prácticas educativas para los alumnos estudiando el ingles. Es posible que los resultados de esta investigación les ayuden a los políticos en pensar en maneras útiles de incorporar estrategias para avanzar pólizas favorables hacia los jóvenes bilingües.

### **COMPENSACIÓN POR PARTICIPAR**

No recibirá ninguna compensación monetaria por su participación.

### **CONFIDENCIALIDAD**

Cualquier información que se obtenga en relación con esta investigación y que se pueda identificar con la organización se mantendrá confidencial y solamente será revelada con su permiso o de acuerdo con los requisitos de la ley. Se mantendrá la confidencialidad por varias maneras: (1) usaremos seudónimos para identificar la organización; (2) Gabriel Baca, guardará bajo llave en su residencia o oficina de UCLA todos los documentos, grabaciones originales que estén relacionados con esta investigación; y (3) solamente el equipo de investigación mencionado anteriormente tendrá acceso a estos datos. Además, usted tendrá el derecho de revisar la grabación en cinta para decidir si cualquier parte de la conversación debe ser corregida o redactada por completo o en parte.

### **PARTICIPACIÓN Y RETIRO**

Usted puede participar como voluntario/a en esta investigación. Usted puede discontinuar o retirarse de la investigación a cualquier momento sin ninguna consecuencia. Si hay alguna cosa que usted no quiere que se grabe, puede pedir que se apague la grabación en cualquier momento durante nuestras pláticas o entrevistas. Si decide retirarse de esta investigación, puede comunicarse con el investigador principal por teléfono, en persona o con una nota.

### **IDENTIFICACIÓN DE INVESTIGADORES**

Si tiene alguna pregunta o preocupación con respecto al estudio de investigación, por favor llamen con confianza al:

**Investigador Principal:** Gabriel Baca, profesor  
Escuela de Educación en la Universidad de California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Teléfono: (310) 391-1567

Email: [gbaca@ucla.edu](mailto:gbaca@ucla.edu)

## **DERECHOS DE SUJETOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

A cualquier hora puede retirar su consentimiento y dejar de participar sin ninguna penalidad. No ceden ningunos derechos legales por participar en esta investigación. Si tienen preguntas sobre sus derechos como sujeto de investigación, comuníquese con la Oficina para la Protección de Sujetos Humanos, 2107 Ueberroth Building, UCLA, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694, (310) 825-8714.

## **FIRMA DEL SUJETO DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

Entiendo los procedimientos descritos arriba y he recibido una copia de este formulario. Sé que mi consentimiento aquí significa que los investigadores estarán observando. También grabarán en cinta durante este tiempo. Mis preguntas han sido suficientemente respondidas, y permito y consiento la participación en esta investigación.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del Sujeto

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Sujeto

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

## **FIRMA DE INVESTIGADORA O PERSONA DESIGNADA**

A mi parecer, el sujeto está consintiendo participar en esta investigación voluntariamente y conscientemente.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del Investigador Principal o Persona Designada

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Investigador Principal o Persona Designada

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

### **Appendix E**

University of California, Los Angeles Office  
for Protection of Research Subjects  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

## **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**Title:** Education Organizing, Policy Advocacy and Restrictive Language Policies: How Activist Organizations Define and Remedy Educational Inequality for English Learners in a Post-Proposition 227 Era

**Abstract:** Education organizing has increasingly been seen as a significant alternative, given the failure of traditional educational reform strategies, to realize more equitable schooling for students learning English in under-resourced communities. Dozens of organizing groups have entered the field of education reform in the last decade, helping to change the landscape of education politics in powerful ways. In the Southwest, many of these groups hope to remedy the deplorable state of education for English learners, as evidenced by high drop-out rates and poor test scores, and in light of the onerous effects of an accountability system that positions English as the superior and legitimate language to be learned in school. This activism around education has been examined very infrequently either by scholars in education or by scholars of social movements. Moreover, almost nothing is known about how these groups grapple with, make sense of, and ultimately take action around English learner issues. This study begins to fill this gap. Using a blended conceptual framework which draws from studies of equity reform in education, scholarship on education organizing and social movement theory, and using a comparative case study design, this study documents how activist groups use a variety of tools, some grounded in knowledge production and others grounded in political interaction, to advocate for English learners and hold the system accountable for their learning opportunities and outcomes. Specifically, the study examines how four different activist organizations leverage power through social movement activism for equity-focused education policy for English learners. By situating the study within the context of NCLB implementation in California, attention can be given to the complex processes through which education organizing, policy advocacy and restrictive language policies intersect.

Blending findings from studies of equity reform in education, scholarship on education organizing and social movement theory, I will use a theoretical framework that will allow me to probe deeply into the phenomenon of education organizing. Through this framework, I will address two important elements of the groups' efforts to build power for reform:

## **I. Individual Background:**

### ***Interview Questions:***

1. How many years have you been with the organization?
2. Describe some of your responsibilities? **OR** What is it that you do?
3. Where and what responsibilities did you have prior to this position?



4. What compels you to become involved in this line of work? **OR** What drives to stay in this line of work [*non-profit work*]?
5. How does the organization sustain itself financially? **OR** What are the sources of funding?
6. How are monies used/spent?
7. What are the different financial constraints?
8. Why do these constraints exist [*what is the logic behind these constraints*]?
9. Any ideas of how more money can be brought into the organization? **OR** What is the organization currently doing to help expand its financial base?
10. If the organization had an unlimited amount of financial resources how would they be used? [*have them identify 2-3 areas where the resources would be spent*]

## **II. Making Sense of Educational Inequality:**

How do activist organizations make sense of or define educational inequality? By documenting empirically how these groups frame or come to understand existing issues the study aims to shed some light on multiple conceptions of inequality held by different activist groups that influence the construction of equity-agendas, solutions and actions. In addition, the study aims to illuminate how varied interpretations of existing conflicts may either hinder or advance the development of *inter* and *intra* organizational social cohesion since many activist groups mobilize on behalf of similar causes and recruit from the same participation base (Kriesi, 2006).

### ***Interview Questions:***

1. Can you identify ONE issue(s)/area in education [*a site of inequality*] that the organization considers important/vital component of its mission?
2. What makes this issue important to look at? **OR** So what? Why focus on this issue? **OR** What makes this issue/condition of education inequitable?
3. Describe some of the resources and strategies the organization is currently undertaking to help combat/mitigate this ONE issue or problem?
4. How has the passage of Proposition 227 changed, if any, the way the organization combats this issue or area of inequality?
5. Does the organization work with a PR firm? If not, why not? If so, how are they helping with message distribution?
6. Is the organization currently working in collaboration with other activist groups to help combat this issue or condition of inequality? If not, why not? If so, how so? Any issues in these relationships [*competition, etc...*]

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