Empowering Marginalized Parents: An Emerging Parent Empowerment Model for School Counselors

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Abstract

We describe a parent empowerment model focused on how school counselors facilitate empowerment of parents, especially marginalized parents, to support and advocate for their children. Based on Young and Bryan's school counselor leadership framework, the parent empowerment model was designed to guide school counselors in developing programs that help marginalized parents become actively involved in their children's education. We present school counselor leadership practices that foster empowerment for marginalized parents with an example case vignette and discuss implications for school counseling practices.

Keywords

parent empowerment model, school counselor leadership framework, marginalized parents

The school counseling literature presents parent empowerment as a critical tool to address academic and opportunity gaps, systemic barriers, and educational inequalities that affect students' academic, social/emotional, and career development (Holcomb-McCoy & Bryan, 2010; Lopez-Baez & Paylo, 2009; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). Parent empowerment refers to:

> the process by which parents gain greater influence on their families, schools, and communities; greater access to networks, resources, and information; and greater skills and agency in facilitating effective schooling of their children and bringing about change in their children's school. (Kim & Bryan, 2017, p. 169)

Indeed, scholars have suggested that empowerment is an important vehicle for helping marginalized parents find their voice, gain control over their lives, and advocate for their children (Ball, 2014; Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Kim & Bryan, 2017; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). Consequences of facilitating the empowerment of parents of adolescents have included reducing suicide risk factors (Toumbourou & Gregg, 2002) and increasing academic performance (Jasis & Ordóñez-Jasis, 2004; Kim & Bryan, 2017). Despite recognition that parent empowerment matters to students' mental health and achievement, little is known about school counseling practices and activities that effectively lead to empowering parents. We present key school counseling practices and activities to help school counselors create programs and interventions to foster parent empowerment.

Increasingly, school counselors' efforts to support and partner with parents to improve students' academic achievement are considered essential competencies for school counselor leadership (Dollarhide, 2003; Dollarhide, Gibson, & Saginak, 2008; Young, Dollarhide, & Baughman, 2015). Although the school counseling literature has emphasized the importance of school counselor leadership, only a few studies have provided a specific leadership framework school counselors can use for successful school counseling programs, and none specifically address working with parents. Dollarhide and colleagues (2003, 2008) proposed a useful framework of school counselor leadership, comprising structural, human resources, political, and symbolic leadership, which can be applied to a comprehensive school counseling program. Such leadership involves a sense of competence and responsibility with a clear, measurable, and focused vision and goals to bring about change in schools (Dollarhide et al., 2008). Utilizing survey research and factor analyses, Young and Bryan (2015) identified five dimensions of school counselor leadership practices and behaviors:

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interpersonal influence, systemic collaboration, resourceful problem-solving, professional efficacy, and social justice advocacy. These five dimensions were incorporated into Young and Bryan's (2015), Bryan and Young's (2017) school counselor leadership framework.

Using the school counselor leadership framework (Young & Bryan, 2015) and recent research on parent empowerment (Kim & Bryan, 2017), we have proposed an emerging parent empowerment model specifically for school counselors. This model aims to help school counselors create and implement parent empowerment programs and interventions. To illustrate the different aspects of the model, we present a fictional case example that demonstrates how school counselors can use a parent empowerment approach with marginalized parents of high school students.

> *An emerging parent empowerment model specifically for school counselors . . . aims to help school counselors create and implement parent empowerment programs and interventions.*

Literature Review

Marginalized Parents and Parent Empowerment

Low-income and racial/ethnic minority students and parents and those with limited English proficiency have less access to resources, information, and social networks (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Cauthen & Fass, 2008; Fann, McClafferty Jarsky, & McDonough, 2009). Thus, low-income parents, minority parents, and immigrants have often perceived schools as unwelcoming environments and have felt as if their voices were not heard (Bryan, 2005; Bryan & Henry, 2012; Griffin & Galassi, 2010). In this vein, many low-income and minority students and their families have often perceived themselves as powerless, worthless, marginalized, and isolated in schools (Bemak, Chung, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). However, parents' involvement and empowerment in schools have long been held as central components to students' academic success (Holcomb-McCoy & Bryan, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Although school administrators and district leaders have devoted efforts toward parent involvement, these efforts have often failed, likely due to the presence of systemic barriers and power differentials (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Cooper, 2009). The power differential explanation has merit given that conventional parent involvement approaches seem to work with privileged parents who have been successful in utilizing their power for meaningful action in schools, while less privileged parents remain quiet and isolated (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011). To mobilize less privileged parents, empowerment may be an effective alternative to conventional parent involvement approaches for helping marginalized parents become more involved in their children's education (Ball, 2014; Bolívar &

Chrispeels, 2011; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Kim & Bryan, 2017).

School counselors cannot ignore the importance of power dynamics and empowerment in their work with marginalized or less privileged parents given their leadership roles as collaborators and social justice advocates. Effective social justice advocacy and collaboration must include empowerment because multicultural and social justice competent counselors intentionally address issues of power, privilege, and oppression in clients' lives and "employ empowerment-based theories to address . . . internalized oppression experienced by marginalized clients" (Ratts et al., 2015, p. 11). The importance of school counselors in addressing students' and parents' empowerment is emphasized by the mention of "power" more than 20 times in the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts et al., 2015), which guide the work of school counselors.

Given the importance of school counselors in promoting parent empowerment, Kim and Bryan (2017) developed a conceptual framework based on parent empowerment research that identified six key components of parent empowerment: consciousness, sense of meaning, self-determination, competence, community belonging, and community participation. Empowered parents believe in the importance of education and their educational involvement in their children's schooling (sense of meaning) and recognize power differentials and structural inequalities that impact their lives and children's education (consciousness). Parents also identify their capacity to support their children for school success (competence) and recognize their ability to express their voice and make decisions about their children's education (self-determination). Further, empowered parents feel a greater sense of belonging in their children's schools (community belonging) and are more likely to participate in their children's schools and their communities (community participation) to achieve desired outcomes. In their leadership roles, school counselors should facilitate parent empowerment programs that build parents' sense of meaning, consciousness, competence, self-determination, community belonging, and community participation (Kim & Bryan, 2017). Using the school counselor leadership framework (Young & Bryan, 2015) as a basis, we have incorporated how school counselors in their leadership roles can promote different components of parent empowerment.

School Counselor Leadership and Parent Empowerment

School counselors engage in leadership practices and behaviors that can help parents feel more empowered to engage in meaningful advocacy and action in their children's schools, leading to better achievement outcomes for their children (Dollarhide et al., 2008). School counselors who practice interpersonal influence, systemic collaboration, resourceful problem-solving, professional efficacy, and social justice advocacy can effectively integrate parent empowerment strategies into their practices and comprehensive school counseling programs in

ways that empower parents in their children's schooling (Young & Bryan, 2015, in press).

Interpersonal influence. School counselors play influential roles in relationship building with students, school staff, and parents in schools and communities (Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2013; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; Young & Bryan, 2015, in press). They use their interpersonal influence to promote positive relationships with parents and family members who recognize them as valuable partners in school success (Young & Bryan, 2015). School counselors' interpersonal influence skills include their understanding of parents' diverse communication styles, their encouragement of parents to share their views, and their expression of high expectations for students. These skills enable them to earn the trust of parents and other stakeholders, helping to create norms of cooperation and collaboration (Dollarhide et al., 2008). Specifically, counselors' interpersonal influence allows them to use creative strategies such as facilitating consciousness-raising among parents (a key aspect of parent empowerment) and fostering parents' involvement as leaders in their children's schools and their communities.

> *Counselors' interpersonal influence allows them to use creative strategies such as facilitating consciousness-raising among parents and fostering parents' involvement as leaders.*

Systemic collaboration. Systemic collaboration is a school counselor leadership skill that is essential to developing a comprehensive school counseling program and working with parents and other partners to meet students' needs and program goals (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Dollarhide, 2003; Young & Bryan, 2015). Systemic collaboration means that school counselors foster collaborative relationships and gain buy-in from administrators, teachers, parents, and community members for partnership programs and interventions. In terms of parent empowerment, school counselors utilize collaboration in initiating, planning, and implementing practices and activities such as parent consciousness-raising discourse groups, parent outreach and home visits, parent leadership trainings, parent support or network groups, and school or community organizing activities (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). For example, school counselors who are systemic collaborators reach out to local faith-based organizations and community groups to coordinate and facilitate parents' connection to resources and programs, especially for parents who are typically marginalized (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Henry, Bryan, & Zalaquett, 2017; Noguera, 2002). Systemic collaborators also prepare school personnel to view parents as central partners and develop creative strategies to bring parents, schools, and communities to the table (Green & Keys, 2001; Shillingford & Lambie, 2010).

Resourceful problem-solving. Resourceful problem-solving refers to school counselors' ability to solve problems and find resources and solutions to accomplish programmatic goals effectively and strategically (Dollarhide, 2003; Young & Bryan, 2015; Young, Millard, & Miller Kneale, 2013). School counselors use their resourceful problem-solving skills to help parents identify issues that affect their children and find resources and innovative resolutions to these issues. These skills also are essential for working with parents in designing, implementing, and facilitating parent empowerment interventions and programs (Bryan & Henry, 2012). In particular, counselors use their problem-solving skills and innovative strategies to facilitate parents' development of competence in helping their children succeed in school; to foster parents' connection to parent and community networks and resources; and to aid parents in locating valuable opportunities, resources, and information. Finally, school counselors use problem-solving skills to teach parents leadership skills and promote social and community networking, so that parents gain greater access to social networks as support systems (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007).

Professional efficacy. Professional efficacy refers to school counselors' belief in their ability to lead school counseling programs and make systemic changes that foster students' success (Young & Bryan, 2015, in press; Young et al., 2015). Further, professional efficacy means school counselors believe they have the power to effect change for students by promoting the empowerment of parents as leaders and advocates. School counselors help parents become empowered in the school through involving parents in leadership trainings (e.g., including parents on advisory councils) and in programs that develop parents' competence and skills in helping their children succeed (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Lopez, 2003; McMahon, Mason, & Paisley, 2009).

Social justice advocacy. Social justice advocacy encompasses school counselors' awareness, capacities, and skills to challenge the status quo, inequities, and systemic barriers in schools to bring about change for students, including systemic and social changes (Young & Bryan, 2015, in press). Indeed, school counselors who are devoted to social justice advocacy leadership recognize power differentials, systemic inequity, and institutionalized racism that may affect students' academic outcomes (Kim & Bryan, 2017). Specifically, social justice advocacy can be translated into school counselors' efforts to facilitate consciousness-raising conversations, in which marginalized parents may share the challenges and barriers that they and their children experience in schools. Commitment to social justice advocacy leadership also guides school counselors to promote culturally responsive school cultures for marginalized students and their parents, such as promoting welcoming, rather than oppressive, school environments (Cooper, 2009; Kim & Bryan, 2017). Further, social justice advocacy leaders recognize the importance of connecting

Table 1. Parent Empowerment Model and School Counselor Leadership Framework.

Four Elements of the Parent Empowerment Model	Empowerment Practices/Activities	Aligned With School Counselor Leadership Dimensions
Engaging parents in consciousness-raising	• Providing comfortable and safe spaces and support groups to discuss barriers and constraints • Helping parents share the frustration, confusion, and alienation that they often encounter in schools • Facilitating parents working together in a cohesive and productive manner to develop strategies for advocating for their children	Interpersonal influence, systemic collaboration, and social justice advocacy
Facilitating parents' competence and skill development	• Helping their children to access valuable school and community resources and information and to become decision makers in schools and communities • Developing parent leadership trainings • Engaging parents on school counseling advisory councils and other school decision-making teams	Systemic collaboration, resourceful problem-solving, and professional efficacy
Connecting parents to their communities through parent and social networks	• Connecting parents to social networks such as parent groups and community groups • Helping parents build relationships with school personnel and community agents	Interpersonal influence, systemic collaboration, and resourceful problem-solving
Facilitating parents as leaders through organizing groups in the school and in the community	• Encouraging parents to join organizing groups in the school and/or community to exercise their leadership to address important educational issues and serve as decision makers and advocates • Connecting parents to active parents in organizing groups who can serve as mentors and coaches • Encouraging organizing groups to adopt transformative and innovative approaches to meet their needs and achieve targeted goals	Interpersonal influence, systemic collaboration, and social justice advocacy

groups of marginalized parents to increase their power and representation in schools.

In summary, using the five dimensions of the school counselor leadership framework (Young & Bryan, 2015), we have described how specific skills of school counselors in their leadership roles can facilitate parent empowerment. Based on this framework, we propose an emerging parent empowerment model that comprises practices and activities that school counselors can use with parents to facilitate six specific aspects of parent empowerment: parent sense of meaning, consciousness, competence, self-determination, community belonging, and community participation (see Table 1).

An Emerging Parent Empowerment Model

The parent empowerment model emerged from a thorough review of the parent empowerment literature (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Cochran & Dean, 1991; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Ditrano & Silverstein, 2006; Holcomb-McCoy & Bryan, 2010; Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012; Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009). Building on Kim and Bryan's (2017) conceptual framework of six dimensions of parent empowerment (i.e., sense of meaning, consciousness, competence, self-determination, community belonging, and community participation), the model has delineated four practices school counselors can use to facilitate parent empowerment with the aim of enhancing the educational success of students,

especially those from culturally, economically, and linguistically marginalized family backgrounds. The four elements of the parent empowerment model are (a) engaging parents in consciousness-raising, (b) facilitating parents' competence and skill development, (c) connecting parents to their communities through parent and social networks, and (d) facilitating parents as leaders through organizing groups in the school and in the community. Table 1 presents these four elements of the parent empowerment model with related dimensions of school counselor leadership (Young & Bryan, 2015).

The Parent Empowerment Model: Four Elements of Parent Empowerment

Engaging parents in consciousness-raising. Consciousness-raising is an important aspect of parent empowerment (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Holcomb-McCoy & Bryan, 2010). When parents engage in consciousness-raising activities, they increase their critical awareness and reflection on their own history, culture, power, internalized oppression, systemic barriers, and inequitable resources, and how these factors may affect their lives and their children's education (Holcomb-McCoy & Bryan, 2010; McWhirter, Hackett, & Bandalos, 1998). Much like social systems in our society operate to maintain or perpetuate the power of dominant groups (Degado & Stefancic, 2012; Ratts et al., 2015), schools also operate in

ways that benefit privileged parents more than marginalized parents, unless efforts are made to disrupt or reduce inequities in parent power in schools (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013). One such disruption involves discussing these inequities with marginalized parents. School counselors can provide comfortable and safe spaces and support groups to discuss the barriers and constraints that parents experience in schools (Holcomb-McCoy & Bryan, 2010). The consciousness-raising activities can help parents share the frustration, confusion, and alienation they often experience in schools (Holcomb-McCoy & Bryan, 2010). Shared stories and voices help parents feel connected with other parents and view themselves as being valuable (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Increased awareness, shared stories, and critical reflections empower parents to act to change the conditions of their lives and the education of their children (Holcomb-McCoy & Bryan, 2010; Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012).

Facilitating consciousness-raising conversations requires school counselors to employ empathy, active listening, and process illumination that allow parents to feel their voices are heard and their perspectives are respected (Dollarhide et al., 2008). To aid parents in being heard by teachers and administrators, school counselors can facilitate parents working together in a cohesive and productive manner to develop strategies for advocating for their children. Consciousness-raising practices also require that school counselors courageously lead as social justice agents and use their interpersonal influence and systemic collaboration skills to advocate for parents beyond the parent groups and conversations.

Facilitating parents' competence and skill development. Parents' competence and skills refer to their beliefs and confidence in their abilities to help their children with schoolwork and, when needed, to find resources and information to support their children's academic and career success (Kim & Bryan, 2017). School counselors can collaborate with parents and community members to help them further develop competence and skills in helping their children, to access valuable school and community resources and information, and to become decision makers in schools and communities (Ball, 2014; Bryan & Henry, 2012; Holcomb-McCoy & Bryan, 2010). When parents are more confident in their abilities, they are more likely to exercise their power to support their children's education (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011). Working with parents and teachers to develop parent leadership trainings and/or to engage parents on school counseling advisory councils and other school decision-making teams are useful ways to help parents develop competence and confidence in their skills (e.g., self-determination, decision-making, and assertiveness; Kim & Bryan, 2017). For example, parent leadership trainings may consist of educational knowledge sessions (e.g., on educational rights and responsibilities, school norms, the educational system, and school information channels), skill development sessions (e.g., assertiveness and other strategies for interacting with schools, speaking in front of groups, and volunteering in school and community

organizations), and competence building sessions (e.g., meeting with school staff to address important educational issues).

> *Working . . . to develop parent leadership trainings and/or to engage parents on school counseling advisory councils and other school decision-making teams are useful ways to help parents develop competence and confidence in their skills.*

School counselors will need systemic collaboration and resourceful problem-solving skills to create various opportunities for parents to exercise decision-making skills and to take leadership roles in their schools and in communities (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). School counselors' resourcefulness is necessary to connect parents to valuable resources and information that increase their capabilities to take action to bring about positive change in educational settings (Dollarhide, 2003). School counselors must have professional efficacy (i.e., confidence in their own ability and beliefs that they can make positive change) to help parents become more empowered through competence and skill development.

Connecting parents to their communities through parent and social networks. Parents' connections to school and/or community networks are integral to their sense of empowerment (Neal & Christens, 2014). School counselors play leadership roles in building communities by connecting parents to social networks such as parent groups and community groups. Through these groups, parents gain access to valuable resources, information, and support (i.e., social capital); take collective actions that enhance their children's education and their own lives; and, ultimately, solve their own problems (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Neal & Christens, 2014; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Social networks, such as parent groups that facilitate parent empowerment, may be particularly important for economically, culturally, and linguistically marginalized parents to take action to attain desired goals (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Beyond networking with other parents, school counselors can also help parents build relationships with school personnel and community agents (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011). For instance, school counselors may help isolated or disconnected immigrant parents connect with co-ethnic networks in the school or community where parents may develop a sense of community belonging and build trusting relationships (Mitchell & Bryan, 2007). Through parent, school, and/or community social networks, parents may engage collectively in activities to gain access to information and support for their children's education.

School counselors' leadership skills of systemic collaboration, interpersonal influence, and resourceful problem-solving are essential to helping parents forge valuable connections with other parent social networks, school personnel, and community organizations (Young & Bryan, 2015). School counselors' interpersonal influence skills also help get buy-in from and negotiate with stakeholders and build positive relationships with community organizations to enhance parents'

access to emotional, financial, and social supports (Young & Bryan, 2015).

Facilitating parents as leaders through organizing groups in the school and in the community. Organizing groups serve as "parent-guided, parent-run, and parent-directed" groups through which parents exercise their leadership to address important educational issues and serve as decision makers and advocates (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2016, p. 29; Lopez, 2003). Lopez (2003) indicated that organizing groups in education are centered on "the policy and system changes needed to revitalize schools and ensure student achievement" (p. 5). For instance, organizing groups may initiate meetings with school staff members to convey their educational concerns such as scheduling problems and school safety (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2016). Moreover, through organizing groups, parents can plan and conduct parent empowerment programs to encourage other parents to become leaders (Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012; Speer & Hughey, 1995). As parents engage with organizing groups, these parents become effective leaders for positive changes in the school and in the community (Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012).

School counselors can encourage parents to join organizing groups in the school and/or community or create their own groups. School counselors can also connect parents to active parents in organizing groups who can serve as mentors and coaches for developing advocacy and decision-making skills. Parents who are active in organizing groups can help other parents organize and mobilize their own groups to address their specific needs and educational issues (Bryan & Henry, 2012). Within these groups, school counselors can lead social justice advocacy efforts by encouraging organizing groups to adopt transformative and innovative approaches to meet parents' needs and achieve targeted goals. The following fictional case example illustrates how to apply the emerging parent empowerment model into practices and activities in a high school by incorporating school counselor leadership skills.

Case Example

Hope High School is a diverse school in an urban school district serving more than 1,000 students in Grades 9 through 12. Of the total student enrollment, approximately 45% are Asian students, 33% are Black or African American, 14% are Hispanic/Latino, and 7% of students are White. There are three full-time counselors serving more than 300 students each. Of the student body, English-language learners comprise 30% and almost 70% of students receive free and reduced lunch. Students' on-time graduation rates for the 12th graders range from 41% to 71% over 3 years, compared to the district average of 77%. In particular, African American students have on-time graduation rates ranging from 47% to 60% over 3 years. The initial needs assessment revealed several challenges and barriers faced by families in the school. Asian and Hispanic immigrant families experienced difficulties engaging with the school due

to language barriers and unfamiliarity with the school system (Dotson-Blake, 2010; Dotson-Blake, Foster, & Gressard, 2009). Regardless of race/ethnicity, low-income families were so busy with demanding work schedules that they had little time to become involved and interact with the school (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). African American parents from low-income backgrounds wanted to support their children but lacked knowledge about available academic and college resources. Another concern was that parents and students from culturally diverse backgrounds experienced a hostile school climate and institutionalized racism. Based on the school data, one of the goals of the comprehensive school counseling program was to increase on-time graduation rates, particularly for 40 students who were experiencing one or more factors that put them at risk of not graduating. These factors include having two suspensions, four disciplinary referrals per semester, one or more course failures per grading period, and low scores on the state math and reading tests. Accordingly, the school counselors designed and developed strategies and interventions utilizing the parent empowerment model to increase graduation rates that focused on the parents of the 40 identified at-risk students.

Engaging parents in consciousness-raising. The school counselors reached out to parents of the target students for consciousness-raising conversations in which parents identified and shared common obstacles and challenges they were experiencing in supporting their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Holcomb-McCoy & Bryan, 2010). The school counselors provided a safe space for parents to share challenges and constraints and to discuss how systemic and institutional oppression affected their children's academic achievement and on-time graduation (Ditrano & Silverstein, 2006). School counselors exercised social justice advocacy leadership by working with parents to develop outreach strategies suited to the cultural norms of the parents such as invitation letters in multiple languages and information nights in a family information center. School counselors also utilized their interpersonal influence and systemic collaboration skills by implementing multiple strategies to reach out to parents, such as telephone calls, e-mails, school letters, and personal invitations. Their interpersonal influence skills helped school counselors facilitate consciousness-raising conversations while ensuring parents felt respected, understood, and treated as equal partners. Thus, the consciousness-raising process increased parents' sense of empowerment, increased participation in their children's schooling, and addressed their concerns about school. They took action to both support and advocate for their children's on-time graduation.

Facilitating parents' competence and skill development. School counselors designed and implemented a leadership training workshop for the parents, with an average of 15 parents attending on each of the 4 nights. The curriculum comprised information sessions and skill development sessions. School counselors used systemic collaboration and resourceful problem-solving skills to design the parent workshop and to

collaborate with school staff, parents, and communities for successful outcomes. For instance, in the information sessions, school counselors focused on increasing parents' knowledge of school norms, graduation requirements, and curricula, so that parents understood the school system and could make informed decisions for their children. The increased knowledge helped parents think about better ways to solve critical issues, take actions to achieve desired goals, and advocate on behalf of their children. School counselors utilized their resourceful problem-solving skills to help parents learn about and develop new strategies to solve problems and achieve goals. In the skill development sessions, school counselors' systemic collaboration leadership assisted them in providing parents with a step-by-step strategy about how to work with the school to address their concerns in effective ways (Young & Bryan, 2015). In the leadership training workshop, parents suggested several ideas to improve student on-time graduation and increase college readiness, such as individualized meetings with school counselors for college/career plans, family nights at the school, and college and financial aid information workshops in and outside the school. On the basis of these suggestions, school counselors set up staff meetings to discuss parents' ideas and to influence changes in school policy. As parents increased their competence and skills, they wanted to come to the school more often and engaged more in their children's education to increase academic achievement and school attendance. Ultimately, the leadership training workshop on parent empowerment had a positive impact on reading test scores, attendance, and on-time graduation rates.

Connecting parents to their communities through parent and social networks. The school counselors helped parents develop their own social networks in which they could support each other in learning practices and taking collective actions in the school and communities (Neal & Christens, 2014). School counselors' systemic collaboration and interpersonal influence skills played vital roles in building connections between parents and with community groups, engaging parents to form and sustain social networks. The school counselors also used resourceful problem-solving skills to develop innovative and creative methods to encourage parents to join or create networks through Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), school events, parent–teacher interaction meetings, and parent nights, using communication tools such as school letters, personal invitations, and e-mails. With systemic collaboration skills, school counselors helped parents understand the importance of the parent and/or community networks in addressing various educational issues, accessing social support and valuable resources, building social capital, and taking social actions (Ditrano & Silverstein, 2006). The school counselors sent invitations for a networks orientation meeting to parents who attended various meetings and events (e.g., PTA, school events, parent–teacher interaction meetings, parent nights, and leadership training workshops) and who might be interested in parent networks. The eight parents who attended the orientation meeting reached

consensus regarding the purpose of the networks and formed a network that would meet independently of the school. The parent network group planned to have monthly meetings to exchange resources and information and to share educational issues. Moreover, the parent network group set its own agenda and invited school counselors to share their ideas on school policies and practices related to on-time graduation. For instance, during monthly meetings, the group discussed inequitable disciplinary referral rates of Latino students. They then collaborated with school counselors to design and implement a diversity workshop to help school staff understand unique obstacles, challenges, and strengths to effectively work with culturally diverse families (Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012).

Facilitating parents as leaders through organizing groups in the school and in the community. School counselors encouraged and supported parents, especially those who attended various school events and activities and the parent leadership workshop, reached out to marginalized parents in the community, and encouraged other parents to create organizing groups. An autonomous group of parents created an organizing group, which established initial goals focused on increasing reading and math test scores and attendance and on-time graduation rates. The group began with five parents and was increased by 20 parents after 1 year. Those in the organizing group started their work for their own children but eventually began to work for all children in the school and the local community (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011). As such, the organizing group set up its own vision, goals, and agenda; developed programs and practices; and met with school staff to discuss school policies, decision-making processes, budget, and curriculum. The organizing group met regularly and dealt with ongoing educational issues. School counselors exercised systemic collaboration leadership to partner with the organizing group in planning, implementing, and evaluating empowerment practices and activities. Utilizing interpersonal influence and social justice advocacy skills, school counselors designed a parent empowerment workshop, in collaboration with the organizing group, for other parents of students who were academically struggling in the school (Warren et al., 2009). Through the organizing group, parents developed a proposal to request more English as a second language teachers for immigrant students and monthly newsletters for Spanish-speaking families. Serving as a bridge between the group and school officials, the school counselors invited the school administrators to the organizing group meeting, where the parents presented their proposal and requested resources to support the efforts.

Conclusion

Parent empowerment is integral to school counseling in closing educational inequities and achievement gaps. At the same time, school counselor leadership is a key factor in implementing parent empowerment successfully in schools. The aim of this article is to incorporate the parent empowerment model and the

school counselor leadership framework. When school counselors desire collaboration with parents to promote students' academic success, the parent empowerment model may guide school counselors to design and implement effective parent empowerment interventions. Our integration of parent empowerment and school counselor leadership as a theoretical model represents a first step, with more research needed for empirical validations of the model. We offer the proposed model in hopes that it will open new lines of inquiry with theoretical and practical significance for parent empowerment.

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