



Title: Immigrant stories in gaining social capital through U.S. schooling:
Successes, challenges, and lessons to be learned

Author: Paula Madrigal-Chinolla

Source: Journal of Transborder Studies - Research and Practice Summer 2014

Immigrant stories in gaining social capital through U.S. schooling: Successes, challenges, and lessons to be learned

By: Paula Madrigal-Chinolla

ABSTRACT

Current systems of educational accountability in the United States focus on holding schools accountable for school-wide low performing standardized test scores and schools are pressured to ensure historically underachieving groups meet achievement targets (Calaff, 2008). Particularly, schools serving underachieving groups such as low-income students, Latino immigrant youth, are struggling to meet these demands. It is imperative that schools are equipped with the necessary knowledge to meet the needs of Latino immigrant students, by 2040 one in three will be growing in an immigrant household, and currently 60% of immigrants are Mexican (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Torodova, 2010). Using Stanton-Salazar's (1997) framework of *Social Capital and Institutional Support*, this study is a case study that analyzes the experiences of two educators (first and second generation Mexican immigrants) whose educational experience of school support networks helped gain social capital that resulted in school achievement and in successfully moving upward in the social class ladder. Results supported the *Social Capital and Institutional Support* framework; both educators gained some social capital by their school network support relationships. The implication of this study are in two future areas of research; 1) determine the differences provided in support systems among different secondary schools, and 2) analyze the role of accountability systems and how they may increase opportunities of student support networks for Latino immigrant students.

INTRODUCTION

The fastest growing populations in US public schools are minority children, specifically immigrant children (Paik & Walberg, 2007). It is estimated that by 2040 one in three people residing in the U.S. will grow up in an immigrant household (Suarez, Suarez-Orozco, & Torodova, 2010). The current U.S. immigration trend show that most immigrants are from Latino descent, and 60% of them are Mexican (Suarez, Suarez-Orozco, & Torodova, 2010). Currently, Latinos are the largest minority within the United States, and by 2050 will make-up one fourth of the population (Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2012). Additionally, Latinos are now the largest ethnic group in the state of California (Lopez, 2014).

Unfortunately Latino immigrants continue to struggle in battling low-test scores, high dropout rates, and low-level enrollment in preparatory college courses (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Malveux, 2006; Pluviose, 2006; & Riegle-Crumb & Grodsky, 2010). Immigrants of ethnic minority groups also struggle with economic hardships since they tend to have the lowest income among social groups (Alba, Loan & Sterling, 2011; Crosnoe, 2006; Paik & Walberg, 2007), immigrants are often at poverty level. The U.S. News (Francis, 2012) defined that poverty level is an annual income of \$23, 050, lower middle class (workers who typically have college educations but do not have the graduate degrees needed to advance) is calculated to be an annual income between \$32,500 and \$60,000, upper middle class workers earn above \$100,000. If this immigration trend continues, the U.S. will have to rely on immigrants, particularly Latino immigrants, to sustain the economic, social and cultural vitality (Alba, Loan, & Sperling, 2011), and acknowledging that most immigrants are often at a lower middle class or at poverty level then we must understand how to mobilize the Latino immigrant group upwards in the social class ladder for better U.S. economic stability.

Although the future of U.S., in terms of economy and social vitality, will rely on immigrant Latinos, the social concern should be the lack of academic success that this population has thus far portrayed. Generally speaking, Hispanic immigrants experience low to average academic outcomes (Song & Elliott, 2011). Additionally, Latinos have one of the highest dropout rates of any group (Calaff, 2008). If we want to produce economic stability for the future of the U.S., then we must address the current needs of our fastest growing population.

Recently a pronounced breakthrough has occurred with college enrollment rates for Latino students. The University of California (UC) systems offered, for the first time ever, more freshman admissions to Latino students than Whites, from applicant pool 28.8% were Latinos, 26.8% Whites, 36.2% Asian American, and 4.4% Black were accepted (Gordon & Rivera, 2004; O'Connor, 2014). Although this is one of the largest highlights, if not the biggest, in Latino academic achievement, we still need to increase the number of Latinos graduating from college (O'Connor, 2014).

In the last 46 years, college enrollment among Hispanic students that are between the ages of 18 and 24, has tripled outperforming any other ethnic group (Krogstad, 2014). On the other hand, when looking at the data further, only 9% of young adult Latinos between the ages of 25 and 29 obtained a bachelor's degree (Krogstad, 2014), and in 2000 only 10% earned a college degree (Gandara, 2004). Even universities that are considered Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), where at least 25% of the total enrollment are Latinos, are struggling to graduate them where less than 35% of Latinos graduate in less than six years (Hess, Schneider, Carey, & Kelly, 2009).

Education is the vehicle to success, and schools should help increase academic attainment, and provide opportunity for upward social mobility. The demographic trends imply that the low Latino college graduation rates will have a large-scale effect on national attainment (Kelly, Schneider, & Carey, 2010). Education beyond a high school diploma is critical for both economic security of American families and for individuals to be able to earn more money (Bill & Melinda Gates foundation, 2010). Therefore we must provide students, particularly Latino-immigrant students, with the tools to attain not just college access but graduate from college as well. The tools needed to obtain school achievement or social class mobility does not rely solely on college skills, but also on the attainment of the various forms of capital.

Bourdieu (1973) developed the cultural reproduction theory where he describes that cultural values and norms are transmitted from generation to generation, and thus social classes remain as status quo since the transmission of capital and cultural values are only transferred within families. In other words, families that belong to the upper middle class or upper class will remain in the same class status because they transfer the capital and cultural values needed to maintain within their families. Bourdieu (1973) also

argues that the educational system serves as another agent of cultural reproduction and maintains status quo among the distribution of capital among classes. There is no question that the attainment of social and cultural capital are needed to change social class status, and if immigrant children of lower income do not have access to social or cultural capital through their families, then they should be able to get it elsewhere.

For the purpose of this study, success is defined as school achievement and social capital attainment (social networks that have provided opportunities to earn capital and move up the social class ladder). In general, school systems are entities where immigrants build experiences to attain success (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Torodova, 2010). Schools are systems where immigrants gain experience, attain learning academic outcomes, and gain social networks that lead to capital attainment which may potentially be the key to upward social mobility.

In the last decades, accountability has been a focus in holding schools responsible for low achieving students. Unfortunately, accountability systems fail to address how Latino students may gain social capital, which will consequently convert into resources that will help upward mobility in social class status. Legislation such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was a promise for students that had been historically underserved, such as immigrant Latinos, to obtain greater quality in education. NCLB focuses on academic accountability and great consequences await schools that do not meet the state and federal accountability goals from a label of “failing school” to the complete reorganization of the public school (Katsiyannis, Zhang, Ryan, & Jones, 2007; Melyko & Gawlick, 2011; Odland, 2007). Even though these systems have begun to publicize the inequities that students of color and low income have faced historically in education, they lack other important accountability factors, such as social support or network attainment.

A vast amount of research exist which analyze the psychological perspectives of immigrant youth and the immigrant experience overall, however, there is a lack of research that address how the schooling system or educational accountability systems, are addressing the network support systems which may result in social capital attainment. The purpose of this study is to analyze two case studies (first and second generation Mexican immigrants) and analyze how their educational experience of school support networks helped gain social capital attainment. The research questions that guided this

study were; 1) how did institutional support help attain social capital, and 2) should support systems be regulated by accountability systems.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To explore the educational experiences of the two case studies, Stanton-Salazar's (1997) framework of *Social Capital and Institutional Support* will be used. Stanton-Salazar (1997) explains that the individual progress in schooling is based on the student's early attitudes, abilities, and behaviors, and the more the student has these skills, the better the chances the student will internalize the academic norms which will become externalized motivational dispositions. In essence, this would increase the probability that peers and teachers will have higher expectations and will think of the students as talented individuals. Stanton-Salazar (1997) expresses that teachers and peers positive perception of individuals will help individuals be academically successful. In addition to these traits becoming internalized academic norms, he extends that mobility rests on the development of these traits. He states that the development of relationships with educational agents (teachers, counselors, peers) may become resources that will help gain social capital (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Stanton-Salazar's (1997) framework was influenced by Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. Bourdieu (1973) explains that cultural reproduction theory entails the continuous transmission of cultural values and norms through family generations. Cultural reproduction theory also refers to the social reproduction or the process of transferring social class status through family offspring. Bourdieu (1973) explains that people reproduce the existing social structures to maintain their status and each cultural group has their specific set of rules and notions of reciprocity. Bourdieu (1986) further explains that social reproduction or cultural reproduction is maintained by the transmission of social and cultural capital.

Cultural capital are forms of skills, knowledge, education that a person attains either through a family transmission or by other networks, and these serve to maintain their social status in society. Social capital is described as a durable social network or work opportunities, which are acquired from relationships or group memberships (Bourdieu, 1986). However most urban or metropolitan working class schools are not

oriented towards the development of students social support networks and researchers argue that schools play a role in the reproduction of social inequality (Bourdieu, 1973; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Stanton-Salazar (2001) argues that the social capital attainment among working-class youth is not the norm, however, in the instances where there are occurrences of social capital attainment amongst the working class this occurs from extraordinary efforts and interventions from within the household (Ream & Stanton-Salazar, 2007).

Social capital could be attained through institutional support, or the network of supportive relationships with educational agents, and this provides opportunity for social capital to become potential resources (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Stanton-Salazar (1997) identified six forms of institutional support that may help low-status individuals cope efficiently and effectively with marginalizing forces in society; 1) funds of knowledge, 2) bridging, 3) advocacy, 4) role modeling, 5) emotional and moral support, and 6) evaluative feedback, advice, and guidance. The findings from this study will be analyzed using the social capital and institutional support framework, and organized using the six forms of institutional support.

METHODS

This study explores issues in social capital attainment with two participants who are educators through the means of a qualitative case study design. One of the participants is considered a first generation immigrant, and the other participant is a second generation immigrant. According to Hernandez, Denton, and Macartney (2008) first generation immigrants are foreign born children, and second generation immigrants are children born in the U.S. with at least one foreign born parent. The other participant is considered a second generation immigrant, where his parents are foreign born who immigrated to the U.S. and he was born in the U.S. Two case studies were analyzed; an autobiographical account of a first-generation immigrant, and a questionnaire-interview of a second-generation immigrant. A purposive sampling technique was used and participants were selected based on their school achievement and social capital attainment that provided upward social mobility.

Procedure

The two participants who were chosen had similarities in various areas; 1) their success in completing a degree from a four-year university, 2) successful class ladder mobility, 3) their immigrant status, either first or second generation immigrant, and 4) at least 5 years of experience as participants in k-12 US public school systems. The first subject, Francisco, a graduate from Stanford University, comes from poverty level income and is now a prominent member of the upper middle class. Additionally, he is a second-generation immigrant, who attended near the border (U.S. and Mexico) public school in elementary, middle school, and one year in high school (he completed high school at a private institution). Francisco's data was collected in several phases using one questionnaire and one interview. During the first phase, a questionnaire was sent to Francisco, via email, regarding social capital experiences in schools. After the results from the first questionnaire were summarized, Francisco was asked to review the summary for accuracy. Three months after the first questionnaire, Francisco was interviewed using a semi-structured protocol where he was asked regarding immigration experiences. Both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview protocol were reviewed by a research expert within the field of social capital and immigrant youth within the U.S.

I was the second subject, a graduate from San Diego State University that came from a lower middle class income family but I am now a member of a mid to upper middle class. Although both of my parents had a college education and our income level in Mexico was a lower middle class income, when we immigrated to the U.S. both of my parents struggled to sustain that level since they lacked the social capital within the U.S., and eventually had to settle for job positions where they earned less income. Although Bourdieu (1973) states that the cultural values and norms are transmitted from generation to generation and explains (1986) that social reproduction is maintained by the transmission of social and cultural capital, my parents transmitted cultural capital but not social capital since we had to start a new social network once we settled in the U.S.

I am a first generation, foreign born, immigrant who arrived to the U.S. at age 11, and I attended US public schools from the middle of fifth grade until high school. My personal story data was also collected through various phases. The first phase involved a

review of several autobiographical reflections throughout a three-month period, pertaining to immigrant experiences. The second phase of the data collection, involved a review and reflection of the six forms of institutional support. The final phase was sharing and comparing some of these experiences with Francisco during our interview.

Once the data was collected, the data was organized using Stanton-Salazar's (1997) six forms of institutional support, guided by the *Social Capital and Institutional Support framework*. An additional section was added that answers the second research question, regarding systems of accountability and how these address the attainment of social capital or social networks.

RESULTS

The first findings will be reported by describing a brief biography of both the researcher and Francisco's experience related to; background information, immigration experience, and current status in society. Francisco was born and raised in a border town that is among the poorest communities in the United States. He grew up in a government-subsidized housing, family had income below poverty level, and received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Over half of the adult members of the community did not complete a high school diploma, nor did they have legal status as immigrants. The community is predominately Hispanic and most members of the community speak a language other than English at home, mostly Spanish. Francisco's parents did not earn higher than a seventh grade education, and immigrated to the U.S. at a young age. His mother was an undocumented immigrant, and was a single mother who cared for her four children.

I was also born and raised in a border town in Mexico. I lived in a neighborhood where most of the neighbors were my family or close friends of my family. The community, dominated by Mexicans, only spoke Spanish. Both of my parents received a bachelor's degree and were part of a lower middle class level. Nonetheless, due to family conflicts, our family had to separate and move to the U.S., which resulted in an economic shift where we came from a Mexican middle class, to a newly immigrated low-income level. My mother, brother, uncle, aunt, and I immigrated to the US, both my aunt and myself were undocumented. Our separation from our father lasted four years and ended

when he immigrated to the U.S. We traveled back and forth to see family in Mexico and stay in touch with friends and family.

Francisco shared some of his experiences regarding crossing the border with an undocumented parent. Due to the undocumented status of his mother, his mother could not cross the border legally and hence found other means to visit her family in Mexico frequently. When his family would go to Mexico to visit relatives they would visit the border state beach, since this had a fence within the water line. His mom would swim across to Mexico, while her kids would play in the water. In order for his mom to cross back, the kids had to go back in the water and “pretend” that they would be playing in the water while she would slowly swim across the borderline. Once she would cross the water borderline, they would all get out of the water and had a picnic. The picnic was done to evade any suspicions from any near by Border Patrol agents.

In addition to the experience of border crossing, he also had other experiences that related to his proximity to the border offices. Living in the subsidized apartments provided him with experiences in helping other undocumented immigrants. He explained that when border patrol officers would find undocumented people, they would be detained in the border patrol station near his home. Sometimes undocumented people would run away from immigration officers and hide within the nearby apartments, where Francisco lived. His neighbors would always help the undocumented immigrants hide, and when immigration officers knocked on doors, the apartment residents would deny that they were there. Francisco said that he wanted to help them hide because he would think, “that could be one of my relatives.”

I also had experiences with the border culture, although when I crossed the border, I did it legally and remained without crossing the border for about two years, until my legal residency status changed. My own experience with border culture had to do with fearing the green patrol cars that the border patrol officers would drive. Whenever I would see a green patrol car, my body would shiver with chills, and I would think “I need to act as if nothing is wrong.” Since I was unable to cross the border due to my undocumented status, in addition to my mom not wanting to risk my deportation, most of the time my family members from Mexico would come visit us instead. One day when we were grocery shopping and a green patrol pulled into the parking lot. My cousin,

jokingly, yells “la migra [the immigration]” and of course I went flying through the door to find my mom. My mom looked at them and smiled while the officers looked back and waived, they must have thought that we were just kids playing around.

Although both Francisco and I had our share of challenges such as low-income struggles, lack of social capital, and a battle with the border culture of undocumented status, we have both successfully breached barriers and are now successful educators. Currently, both Francisco and I are leaders in education, who work in a public school within a low-income newly immigrated community that we are familiar with. Francisco graduated from Stanford University where he obtained his bachelor’s degree. His highest academic degree is a master’s degree, and he currently lives within the community he grew up in, however with a much higher level of income, equivalent to that of upper middle class. I graduated from San Diego State University (SDSU), my highest degree is a master’s in special education, and I am currently pursuing my PhD in the joint doctoral program in Claremont Graduate University and SDSU. I also currently reside within a border-town community, with a higher income level than when we first arrived to the U.S. We are both passionate about promoting social justice within our community.

It is important to note that two large differences exist in the schooling experiences between Francisco and myself. The first notable difference is that I was a first generation immigrant, and some researchers argue that first generation immigrants tend to have greater academic success than second generation immigrants. Marks, Ejesi, and Gacia-Coll (2014) describe that on average, all children may have deterioration in their academic behaviors, however the behaviors of the first generation children deteriorate slower than those children of second generation children. The second difference, which is by far the largest difference, is that I had a greater advantage in comparison to Francisco, in terms of school achievement expectation, based on class status. Both of my parents had a college education, and although upon our arrival our income shifted to a lower income, my parents still transferred the cultural capital and expected me to have academic achievement.

Class level is mentioned throughout this paper since it is instituted that those students of upper middle or higher class level have access to social and cultural capital since it is transferred within their family, and consequently are able to navigate through

the educational system successfully. On the other hand, first or second generation immigrants who are part of the lower or working class do not have that capital, and often may not have access to equally navigate the education system as easily as those in the upper middle or higher class. Even though Francisco and I differed in class level, both experiences contribute to the deeper knowledge and understanding of how social networks in the forms of institutional support, may facilitate the transfer of social capital for students that lack this capital and accordingly increase school achievement for these students.

The results of the data were categorized into Stanton-Salazar's (1996) forms of institutional support and some data could fit in either two or more types of institutional support. For the reason aforementioned, each experience was analyzed and placed under the institutional support form that was most relevant. Thus, each form of institutional support will have one experience from each participant that exemplifies that type of institutional support.

Funds of Knowledge

The premise of funds of knowledge, according to Gonzales and Moll (2002), is that people are capable and have knowledge, and their life experiences gave them that knowledge. For this paper, funds of knowledge are defined as any type of communication between the educational agent (counselor, teacher, peer) and the student, which helped in gaining more educational knowledge, which would ultimately lead to better student outcomes. Both Francisco and myself had positive experiences within this type of institutional support.

One of the ways that Francisco received valuable funds of knowledge was through his sixth grade teacher. While in sixth grade Francisco was able to enroll in a program that was called *Program for the Highly Motivated* based on test scores and teacher recommendation. In general, the program's core values were to ensure that students were motivated to be successful in college. Part of the program was a course which communicated the importance of being tracked towards classes that were rigorous such as honors or accelerated type of courses. During the period of the day where they received information from the program, the teacher would teach specific skills that were

taught including communication, debate, speech, or even relay college information. This program and his teacher communicated the importance of college and the importance of staying on track for college.

I also had a similar experience to what Francisco experienced, the only difference is that I did not enroll in a program. We had a parent meeting where my sixth grade teacher spoke about honors placement. We didn't know what honors classes were since schools in Mexico have no such programs. My teacher informed us what honors type classes were and what were the benefits of such courses. She expressed honors classes provide an extra point on the Grade Point Average (GPA) and would automatically increase my GPA. Additionally she added that when I applied to college these courses would increase my chances of college admission.

Both of these examples are clear examples of funds of knowledge, fortunately for both Francisco and myself these funds of knowledge came from our sixth grade teachers and they were positive experiences. We both learned that regardless of where we would go, we knew that we needed honors type of classes to ensure that we would be tracked for college. Unfortunately many students that are part of minorities, low income, or immigrants are not placed in college type of tracking. In fact, many immigrants face challenges such as lower tracking (Alba, Loan Sperling, 2011; Espinoza, 2011) in classes that are teaching more basic rote memorization learning, instead of college preparatory skills.

Bridging

Bridging is defined as educational agents becoming the bridge from one institution to the other institution or from one place to another. Although both Francisco and myself had positive *bridging* experiences, only one experience was from the general schooling experience. Francisco loved school and he described himself as a good student that wanted to do his best. While in fifth grade, Francisco started making friends with the wrong crowds, as he described it. One day, he and his friends went to the restroom and decided to smoke some cigarettes. The smoke started to come out from the restroom window and the school principal was walking by.

The principal gave the boys consequences for violating school rules and gave them a week worth of detention, plus community service hours. However, he decided not to inform their parents. The deal that the principal made was that he would not involve their parents but they had two choices; they turn their life around for the better, or the next time they made any mistake they were going to be expelled. Francisco described that the principal's action was a bridge for him to turn his life around, and he did. He describes that this principal treated them as adults, and this became the bridge to him enrolling in the *Highly Motivated Program*. Francisco remembers this experience as one of the most crucial experiences where he decided that he would like to develop better as a student and attain academic achievement.

Even though I did have a *bridging* experience, it was from outside of the school with a non-educational agent. Before coming the U.S., my uncle, aunt, and mom began looking for homes to reside in, and my aunts mother in-law knew a realtor that might help us find the right home. One of the largest concerns for my mom was that both my brother and myself attended a good school, so my mom asked the realtor to find a home for us near good schools. Our realtor was our bridge between the new school and us, the newcomers to the country. Our realtor helped us in two ways: demanding a translator for my mother, and ensuring that I was properly placed in a bilingual class. Although my mom did speak English, she felt unsure when she had to talk to school personnel, so our realtor informed my mom that she had the right to get a translator to speak to the school personnel. Both my mom and our realtor went down to the school to demand a translator to ensure that both my brother and I were registered for school.

When we first enrolled I was placed in an all-English class, and I did not know how to speak English. I remember I would go home and cry because I could not understand my teacher, I could not make friends since I couldn't communicate with them, and I could not understand the homework assignments. Seeing my desperation, my mom and our realtor went to the school and demanded placement in a bilingual class. Our realtor fought for us, became our *bridge* by obtaining language services (a translator for my mom), and my correct placement in bilingual classes.

According to Stanton-Salazar (1997), the development of social ties to institutional agents, such as the example of Francisco and the principal, accumulates

social capital if there are successful interactions with the educational agents. In Francisco's experience, the relationship that he developed with the principal led him to his own change in behavior. The educational agents play a role in either reproducing or interfering with the reproduction (Stanton-Salazar, 2001) of inequality, in Francisco's experience; it played a role to interfere with the reproduction.

In my own experience, we had to fight the system to get a translator for my mom and me in bilingual classes. Many times language barriers inhibit parent participation (Crosnoe, 2006), and if we had not received the help of our realtor to ask for a translator, then this might have prevented my mom from being an active participant in school and from me obtaining the language development that I needed. My experience was an example of reproducing inequality since the school was not providing the correct service to communicate with my parent nor did it provide the right tools for my language development until we demanded them.

Advocacy

Another form of institutional support is advocacy on behalf of the student from the educational agent. Just like in the form of *bridging*, following I will describe the two experiences that are examples of *advocacy*.

When Francisco was promoted from eighth grade, he was in honors type of course level work, so naturally he was expected to take the same type of coursework once he was in high school. Unfortunately, when he enrolled in the public high school that corresponded to him based on his geographical area, he was enrolled in all English Language Development (ELD) courses and remedial courses. When he got his schedule he knew he had been placed incorrectly, so he went to speak to his counselor. His counselor dismissed him and instructed him to get back to his classes. He didn't give up since he was headstrong about attending college, and based on the knowledge that he gained from the *Highly Motivated Program*, he knew that if we continued on this track, he would not be able to meet even the bare minimum requirements for university admission. He begged his ELD teacher and explained to her that he did not belong in those classes, and she decided that she was going to give him a chance to prove himself. She made him do five floppy disks of work, which was all related to basic language,

writing conventions, grammar, and sentence structures. He completed the work, and his teacher facilitated the process of being transferred to the correct coursework.

Francisco's experience is an example of how the school system sometimes hinders students by continuing the reproduction of inequality instead of interfering with the reproduction. If Francisco would have not had the educational knowledge that he needed to be in certain classes to get a college education, even if he had the skills, he would have been tracked within remedial coursework and his life would be completely different to what it is now. His mom could not be his advocate since she did not know the language, so he had to be his own advocate.

On the other hand, my experience with *advocacy* was much different. During the time that I was in sixth grade, proposition 187 was up for voting. At the time, I was undocumented, and all I knew from this proposition, was that if it passed, I would most likely get kicked out of school since the initiative would prohibit "illegal aliens" from using health care, public education, and other social services. My sixth grade teacher took action with our bilingual class, where we had formed a bond, and created picket signs and posters, which we placed all over campus. After school we would stand around campus with our posters so that our voices would be heard and seen. By far, this has been one of the greatest advocacy experiences. My teacher not only made me feel safe and cared for, she also taught me to stand up for what I believe is right no matter what the consequences may be.

Role Modeling

The experiences of the institutional support of *role modeling* for both Francisco and I did not come from educational agents instead came from outside support systems. Francisco's role model was the director of the teen and pre-teen community club, Juan. Francisco gained many experiences with Juan, which included field trips to the Grand Canyon, or camping to the beach, etc. He remembers these experiences vividly and always thinks of Juan as his role model.

Francisco maintained contact with Juan throughout middle school and high school. Juan was not only the director of the pre-teen and teen club but he also befriended educational leaders. Doug, a principal that was Juan's friend, lived next door to the

recruiting officer of a prep private high school. One day while conversing with the recruiter, the recruiter asked Doug if he knew of any minority that would benefit from a full scholarship to their private school since they wanted to diversify their school. Doug immediately called Juan to see if he knew any students, and Juan thought about Francisco. Juan took Francisco to the school and showed him what he needed to do in order to obtain the full scholarship. Francisco was granted a full scholarship to the prep private school, where he completed his high school years. This experience was a great example of how relationships within the social network lead directly to capital.

Although my experience did not lead to capital as directly as Francisco's did, my role model helped me gain skills for my academic achievement. My role model was my mother and although she was not an educational agent nor did she have the U.S. educational knowledge, she would ensure that I had people near by who did have U.S. educational knowledge. To help me attain English proficiency faster, my mom hired the daughters of a colleague, two young college students, to tutor both my brother and myself at least two to three times per week. Our tutors were always pushing for us to be successful, helped us in the completion of our homework, provided us with literacy activities, and finally they would play board games to enrich our vocabulary and our spoken English. They were part of our lives for about three to four years. My mothers' action to hire the tutors was an indirect transfer of cultural capital, which led to my academic achievement.

Most of the time, adults serve as role models, have high expectations, build confidence by believing in students' abilities, and encourage college applications (Perez, 2012). Both of our experiences involved our role models having high expectations and encouraging college application. Even though our role models were not educational agents, they helped us gain knowledge, language development, and even direct capital attainment.

Emotional and Moral Support

Emotional and moral support is another crucial form of institutional support. In both cases most of our emotional and moral support also came from non-educational agents, it came from our family. In the case of Francisco, his biggest support emotionally

and morally came from his mom. Even though she could not provide him the academic support that he needed, when he came home late from his hour ride public bus, he would always have dinner on the table and his mom's unconditional love. His mom would struggle in making extra money to ensure that he could have his monthly bus pass. He categorized these examples as acts of emotional and moral support.

As for me, my largest emotional and moral support came from both of my parents. My mom would ensure that I would receive tutoring or spoke to my teachers so that they would provide me with opportunities of extra enriching activities. My dad would always give me sound moral advice. In essence our families were our largest support emotionally and morally. Mexican family bonds are very strong (Crosnoe, 2006), as is evident by our experiences. Even if our parents did not provide that direct academic support, they did provide emotional and moral support to the fullest.

Evaluative Feedback, Advice, and Guidance

The last form of institutional support is described as *evaluative feedback, advice, and guidance* from an educational agent. The results from the interview, questionnaire, and reflection data reflected that Francisco and myself experienced these at different levels. Following is a description of the support systems within the *evaluative feedback, advice, and guidance* type of support that we experienced.

Francisco described that the prep high school had a simple expectation which was engrained as part of the culture of the high school, "College was not an option, it was a requirement." He described that 59 out of 60 students within his graduating class, went to college, while one decided to go to the military academy. The abundance of school-wide guidance at this school was demonstrated by; a full time college counselor, college field trips, college advisors visits to the high school from top universities, and college was the main topic of conversations with all his teachers.

In my experience, it was my family that guided me and advised me to continue on to college. It was expected that I attend college, and there was no other option. The most deep impacting moments of guidance and advice came from my family, not educational agents. My high school served over 2300 students with four full time counselors for all

students. There was no full time college counselor for questions regarding the process or application requirement of college.

The *evaluative feedback, advice, and guidance* form of institutional support was experienced very differently between Francisco and myself. This type of institutional support was by far the strongest form of institutional support that Francisco experienced in the private high school since it had a strong college going culture, while I only experienced a glimpse if anything of this institutional support as part of my schooling experience.

Accountability of Social Network Attainment

Even though this was not one of Stanton-Salazar's (1997) forms of institutional support, this was discussed to answer one of the research questions. Both Francisco and I had to reflect on whether schools should be held accountable in order to provide social network or forms of institutional support that will later turn into resources. Both of us agreed that it depends on the school. For example, the private school that Francisco attended, would not need to be held accountable since it is able to provide the students what they needed to gain social capital; guidance, counseling, college knowledge, connections with college recruiting officers, social networks, etc. Although this was the particular case for this private school, this is not to say that this occurs in every private school. In other words, for this particular private high school, there would be no need to hold this school accountable for providing students social capital. On the other hand, the public high school that I attended would need to be held accountable to ensure that students obtain these forms of institutional support somehow or another.

Academics are being measured by systems of accountability, where schools must exhibit whether they are improving student achievement via test scores. Whether using test scores to provide evidence of improvement is the best way to demonstrate increasing efforts to student academic success is irrelevant, what is important is that schools *must* provide evidence of their efforts to improve student achievement. Our current system of accountability does not measure whether schools are providing forms of institutional support. Odden (2011) expressed that if it gets measured, then it gets managed. If accountability systems would measure the level of schools providing forms of

institutional support then schools would be pressured to ensure that they in fact do provide systems of support and offer it school-wide.

DISCUSSION

Through an analysis of various data collection forms (questionnaire, interview, and analysis of journal reflections) it was found that the two participants in this case study, experienced overall positive forms of support, interestingly most forms were not provided by educational agents. Both Francisco and I were able to obtain the six forms of institutional support and successfully use these supportive networks to our benefit, by obtaining educational knowledge, ensuring that we were tracked correctly, applying to college, etc. Unfortunately our cases reflect outlier results, since many immigrant students are not provided with opportunities that we were provided, otherwise data would show that many immigrant families are able to move up the social class ladder. The question is how can all immigrant youth obtain these forms of institutional support if schools are not held accountable to provide these support systems?

Both of us are successful professional adults who are passionate educators, but we achieved this because of all the opportunities that were provided to us. Not everyone has a relationship with the teen club director, who befriends the principal that lives next to the private school recruiting officer. Not every realtor acts as an advocate for a family that does not speak English and needs certain services provided to their child by the school. I would argue that these two cases are unique and uncommon. Students need to be able to obtain forms of capital through their institutional supportive relationships, otherwise where else will they obtain the information, guidance, support, knowledge, encouragement, motivation, and feedback that is needed to gain success.

LIMITATIONS

Although this study serves as an exploratory case study that helps analyze experiences of institutional support and whether educational accountability systems should hold schools accountable to provide these opportunities, this study contains several limitations. The sample size was very small and participants were selected by purposive sampling, therefore making difficult to generalize these findings to the larger

context of Mexican-immigrant populations. Additionally, the data collected was self-reported data, which may contain instances of biased information, specifically because I participated as both a researcher and a participant. Finally only one researcher reviewed the questionnaire and data, which means that there was no inter-rater reliability. However, particular measures were taken to increase the level of trustworthiness in obtaining the data; thorough review of the questionnaire and summary by the participant, and a thorough review of my own personal reflections throughout a three-month period.

IMPLICATIONS

It is clear by this analysis that forms of institutional support to gain social capital are needed in order for low-income minority students to be successful. It is also clear that schools serving higher percentages of minority students should be held accountable. Ream and Stanton-Salazar (2006) suggest that schools may build opportunities for educational agent relationships and capital attainment by creating such program such as newcomer clubs, peer group and college preparatory support programs such as AVID. Furthermore, schools that have high percentages of minority students and serve mainly low income families, must intentionally design social support systems around each student and provide opportunities to develop social capital through social relationships (Ream & Stanton-Salazar, 2006).

A vast amount of research exists to explain and analyze social reproduction theory; however currently there is a lack of research that analyzes how educational accountability systems may play a role in providing opportunities for students to gain forms of institutional supports through schooling experiences. More research and analysis is needed in educational research to investigate the area of educational accountability systems, student opportunities to gain experiences in forms of institutional support, and how these has the potential to disrupt social class inequities. Subsequently these understandings will serve policy makers in making effective changes in educational policy, resulting in the development of social and cultural capital for all students and therefore disrupt social class inequalities. If we want to truly disrupt the reproduction of social inequality, then we should start by providing opportunities of institutional support for our students that first or second generation Latino immigrant students.

References

- Alba, R., Sloan, J., & Sperling, J. (2011). The integration imperative: The children of low-status immigrants in the schools of wealthy societies. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37, 395- 415.
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. (2010). Low Hispanic college graduation rates threaten U.S. attainment goals [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Press-Releases/2010/03/Low-Hispanic-College-Graduation-Rates-Threaten-US-Attainment-Goals>
- Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In Brown Richard (Ed.), *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change* (pp71-112) London: Tavistock.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J.G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp.241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.
- Calaff, K. (2008). Supportive schooling: Practices that sport culturally and linguistically diverse students preparation for college. *National Association of Secondary School Principals*. 92(2), 95109.
- Crosnoe, R. (2006). *Mexican Roots, American Schools: Helping Mexican Immigrant Children Succeed*. Stanford University Press.
- Francis, D. (2012). Where do you fall in the American economic class system? *U.S. News*. Retrieved from <http://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/articles/2012/09/13/where-do-you-fall-in-the-american-economic-class-system>
- Gandara, P. (2004). Building bridges to college: A high school program for Latinos sets high expectations, offers challenging content, and puts college on the map. *Educational Leadership*, 56-60.
- Gonzalez, N., & Moll, L. C. (2002). Cruzando El Puente: Building Bridges to Funds of Knowledge. *Educational Policy*, 16(4), 623–641.
doi:10.1177/0895904802016004009

- Gordon, Larry, & Rivera, Carla. (2014, April 18). California students feel UC admission squeeze. *LA Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-me-uc-admit-20140419-story.html#page=1>
- Hernandez, D. J., Denton, N. A., & Macartney, S. E. (2008). Children in Immigrant Families: Looking to America's Future. *Society for Research in Child Development*, 22(3). Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521704.pdf>
- Hess, F., M., Schneider, M., Carey, K., Kelly, A., P. (2009). Diplomas and dropouts: Which colleges actually graduate their students (and which don't). Retrieved from: <http://www.aei.org/papers/education/higher-education/diplomas-and-dropouts/>
- Katsiyannis, A., Zhang, D., Ryan, J., Jones, J. (2007). High-stakes testing and students with disabilities. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 18(13), 160-167.
- Kelly, H., Schneider, M., & Carey, K. (2010). *Rising to the challenge: Hispanic graduation rates as a national priority*. Retrieved from <https://www.ctmirror.org/sites/default/files/documents/Rising-to-the-Challenge.pdf>
- Krogstad, J., M., & Fry, F. (2014). More Hispanics, blacks enrolling in college, but lag in bachelor's degrees. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/24/more-hispanics-blacks-enrolling-in-college-but-lag-in-bachelors-degrees/>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3-12.
- Leidy, M., Guerra, N., & Toro, R., I. (2012). Positive parenting, family cohesion, and child social competence among immigrant Latino families. *Journal of Latino/a Psychology*, 1(S), 3-13.
- Lopez, H. (2014). In 2014, Latinos will surpass whites as largest racial/ethnic group in California. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/24/in-2014-latinos-will-surpass-whites-as-largest-racial-ethnic-group-in-california/>
- Malveux, L. (2006). Widening the access gap. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 23(1), 42.

- Meleyko, G. & Gawlick, M. (2011,). No Child Left Behind: What we know and what we need to know. *Education*, 131(3), 600-624.
- O'Connor, Lydia. (2014, April 21). California Latinos exceed Whites in UC freshman admissions. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/21/latino-white-uc-admissions_n_5187943.html
- Odden, A., R. (2011). *Strategic Management of Human Capital in Public Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Odland, J. (2007). NCLB: Time to reevaluate its effectiveness. *Childhood Education*, 83(2), 98.
- Pluiose, D. (2006). Education gaps among U.S. Hispanics stagnating economic progress. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 23(3), 8-9.
- Ream and Stanton-Salazar, (2006). The mobility/social capital dynamic: Understanding Mexican American families and students. In S. Paik & H. Walberg (Eds.), *Narrowing the achievement gap* (67-90). New York: Springer Science and Business Media.
- Riegle-Crumb, C., & Grodsky, E. (2010). Racial-ethnic differences at the intersection of math course taking and achievement. *Sociology of Education*, 83(3), 248-270.
- Song, H., Elliott, W. (2011). The role of assets in improving college attainment among Hispanic immigrants in the US. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, 2160-2167.
Doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.0.023
- Stanton-Salazar, R. (1997). A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youths. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67(1), 1- 40.
- Stanton-Salazar, R. (2001). *Manufacturing Hope and Despair: the School and Kin Support Networks of U.S.-Mexican Youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Suárez-Orozco, M., Todorova, C. (2010). *Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.