SCHOOL-BASED SOCIAL CAPITAL AND
FIRST-GENERATION LATINO COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study seeks to answer the following two questions: What social interactions in high school and college provide school-based social capital to first-generation Latino students? What school-based social capital is obtained by first-generation Latino students in high school and in college?

Procedure: A survey was conducted of literature having to do with first-generation Latino students and their beliefs and experiences associated with school-based social capital. The data for this study were collected from six college freshmen who had graduated from the same high school. Each student was personally interviewed and the student responses were recorded, notes were taken, the recording was transcribed, and the transcriptions were coded. The codes were created based on categories described in the literature.

Findings: At the college level, social interactions with professors, staff members, librarians, peers, and on-campus organizations provided the following types of school-based social capital: networking, the ability to find resources, academic knowledge, study skills, research skills, ability to use resources, and motivation. At the high school level, social interactions with teachers and staff members provided the following types of school-based social capital: motivation, academic knowledge, study skills, networking, guidance for college, and ability to use resources.

Conclusions: Positive social interactions with school-based social networks provided more school-based social capital to students than did negative social interactions. However, in some cases, a negative social interaction led students to find places that provided the same school-based social capital in more positive environments. Professors are very important for helping students in accessing various types of social capital and high schools play an extremely important part in helping students to access knowledge about college.

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As a high school student, I commuted from one small town to another small town each morning. I went to school in a college town where 60.2% of students who graduated from the high school in 1997-1998 completed all courses required for University of California and California State University entrance (Dataquest, 2008). On the other hand, I lived fifteen minutes away in a more affordable agricultural town where 31.4% of students who graduated from the local high school in 1997-1998 had completed all courses required for UC/CSU entrance (Dataquest, 2008). I now know that the experiences I had in these two different environments were very influential in developing my plans of attending college. The friends I had in the town where I lived did not experience the same excitement and passion for college as I did. In addition, they did not have many of the resources that were available to me.

Unlike many of the students attending my high school, I was a potential first-generation college student. Although this made it difficult for me to understand what was needed for college, between my school and my friends, I had enough resources to understand what I needed to do in order to go to college. There were many times where my boyfriend (now my husband) was working on activities to prepare for college, such as college visits, college applications, and scholarship applications that his mother had told him to do, and so I did whatever he did. In addition, several of my friends helped me prepare my FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).
I was very fortunate that the college counselor at our school came to every twelfth-grade English class to talk about the deadlines for college applications. I applied right away to my first choice college on the first day of the application period and was accepted to this school seven days later. I decided not to apply to any other school.

As a college freshman, I decided to enroll in a unique liberal studies program so that I could become an elementary school teacher. This major bases its educational delivery on the Socratic seminar model where the professor is a facilitator and students obtain knowledge by reading, discussing topics with each other in class, and writing as a means of synthesizing information learned. Each course in the undergraduate part of the major was 12 units and together they counted for all of my lower division units. Many of the topics discussed in these seminars had to do with social injustices that exist in the world. In this unique program, I obtained my analytical skills, my research skills, my communication skills, my writing skills, my passion for learning, and my interest in being an agent of social change.

I realized in my senior year of college that I loved math and decided to spend an extra year to pursue a B.A. in mathematics. The following year I decided to obtain a credential in single-subject mathematics instead of a multiple-subjects credential (elementary school teacher). In the beginning of my credential program I learned that “social capital” was the “set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization” (Coleman, 1990, p. 300). During this class I reflected often on my educational experience in high school and college in relation to social capital. I realized that my boyfriend's and my friends' knowledge of what to do regarding college applications, my school's resources and atmosphere, and my academic experiences were
all types of social capital that helped me get into college and to be successful while there. Without these components, I do not think I would have pursued a college education. In addition, my unique small-class-size college program provided me with the opportunity to have a close relationship with my professors. My professors in this program helped me to understand how to find resources, how to research, and how to be a self-directed learner. In addition to my professors, my classmates (through discussion) helped me obtain relevant academic knowledge. To this day, I can explain important concepts from the readings that I did during my freshman and sophomore years of college; I cannot do the same for some of my mathematics classes.

Towards the end of my credential program I heard about a new school that was opening called College Prep High School (CPHS). This school was addressing the social injustices that I knew existed in the educational system with respect to Hispanic/Latino students and first-generation college students. Having spent most of my primary grade education not being able to hear, spent time in upper elementary as a resources specialist program (RSP) student, and being an adult who saw my brother give up on school, I understood the challenges of learning and I wanted to help motivate all students to succeed. I knew that CPHS was the place where I wanted to teach.

As I reflect on all of my educational experiences, I think about the experience of others and why some people go to college and others do not. In thinking about my family, I wonder why I went to college and my younger brother, who lived with the same parents and attended the same schools, did not. Why did only two out of the seven first-generation college-age grandchildren (the majority of whom are non-white) attend college in my family? As I began my career at CPHS, I hoped to provide an educational
environment that pushed all students to believe that they could learn, that they could go to college, and that they could be successful at whatever they chose to do in life.

Context

CPHS is a high school in California whose main purpose is to prepare low-socioeconomic, Hispanic/Latino students and/or those who would be first-generation college students for college. This school was created to meet the needs of the local community and to address the fact that a lower percentage of Latino students are graduated from high school, enter college, and are graduated from college than white students in the county, state, and nation (Ishitani 2006; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2005; Pascarella et al., 2004).

In August, 2004, CPHS opened and the class of 2008 began their high school journey. As the first mathematics teacher at CPHS, my responsibilities were to purchase all the math supplies and to choose the mathematics curriculum. In addition, I assisted with figuring out all the details for the school, such as bell schedule, master schedule, field trips, events, data analysis, etc. In April of 2006, I decided to apply for the assistant principal position since I had already been creating and improving many aspects of the school during the previous two years. CPHS graduated its first class in May of 2008. Of this graduation class, 51 percent went on to attend a four-year university, 41 percent went on to attend a two-year university, and 8 percent did not go on to college for various reasons.

Statement of the Problem

As a first-generation college student and the assistant principal of CPHS, I am devoted to ensuring that our students, and all students like ours, succeed in college. The
probability of a first-generation Latino high school graduate going to college is low and the probability of such a student dropping out of college is high (Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2006; NCES, 2005; Pascarella et al., 2004). Identifying useful school-based social capital obtainable by students during high school and college, as well as identifying the important sources of school-based social capital, will be helpful to educators because educators can then prioritize their efforts in assisting first-generation Latino college students to attend and graduate from college. From this study, I hope to answer the following two questions: What social interactions in high school and college provide school-based social capital to first-generation Latino students? What school-based social capital is obtained by first-generation Latino students in high school and college?

Significance

CPHS is a school that I helped to create. The class of 2008 was the first class to ever be enrolled at CPHS. Their success has been the main focus of my life for the past five years. I am dedicated to learning from the experiences of these students so that we can improve our program and improve the experiences of future graduates.

As a staff, we feel that we work hard to prepare our students for college and the challenges that they face; however, we do not have enough time to prepare students for everything. We need to find out, specifically, what school-based social capital students need in order to be successful in college, and from whom they need it.

This study will provide important information to staff members and current students about the college experiences of our alumni. This study may influence decisions about future improvements made to our school. The use of this study as a tool to improve our school and our students’ educational experiences will help increase the number of
students attending and staying in college. In addition, this study may provide information to educators who are involved with programs similar to CPHS.

Support for the Study

This study is informed by various sociological theories such as interpretive theory, functionalism, and critical theory (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). This study applies the interpretive theorist belief that social interactions are essential in constructing meaning, the functionalist ideas that members of the society transmit rules, customs, and appropriate behaviors for operating in the society (p. 5) as well as the idea that schools are the outlet for improving social problems (p. 10), and the critical theorist perspective that there is oppression and exploitation of subordinate groups, but that we, as educators, can help transform society (p. 27).

This study will use Coleman’s social capital theory as its conceptual framework. There are many definitions of social capital in the literature and it is a concept that is discussed broadly within different academic areas. The definition for school-based social capital that will be used in this study is the following: the intellectual knowledge, skills, group norms, or opportunities obtained from social interactions within the school community that can eventually be utilized to create actual capital or additional intellectual knowledge, skills, norms, or opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Gofen, 2009; Farmer-Hinton, 2008a; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbush, 1995; Ream, 2003; Ream, 2005; Runyan et al., 1998).

The literature on school-based social capital as it relates to first-generation college students is very limited. However, using the definition of school-based social capital described previously, a survey of the literature provides adequate examples of how
school-based social capital is obtained and the types of school-based social capital that
have been actualized.

Stanton-Salazar and Dornbush (1995), Stanton-Salazar (1997), and Farmer-Hinton (2006) provide the most insight into school-based social capital as it relates to
first-generation college students. The most information on various types of social
interactions at the college level is provided by the following researchers: peers (Saunders
& Serna, 2004), professors (Arbona & Nora, 2007), on-campus organizations (Pascarella
et al., 2004), and staff members (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). The most information on
various types of social interactions at the high school level is provided by the following
researchers: teachers (Zalaquett, 2006), staff members (Farmer-Hinton, 2006), and
academic programs (Strayhorn, 2006).

Limitations

The small number of students interviewed is a limitation to this study. The
findings demonstrate only the perspectives of these six students, instead of all alumni of
CPHS or all Latino first-generation college students. The interview protocol is limiting
in that follow-up questions that I asked the students, in addition to the original questions,
could not be replicated in future studies. The open-endedness of this interview protocol
also caused the interviews to be extremely long, so by the end of the interviews the
students and the interviewer were tired.

Another limitation of this study is that the population studied was not chosen
through random selection; instead, I chose the students. Since I was the teacher,
assistant principal, and principal of these students, I had some prior knowledge of them
that could have caused me to have certain types of biases. This may mean that the
students may not have been as honest about their high school experiences as they would have been with a stranger because I was a person of authority in their lives. In addition, a limitation of this study is that it is not a longitudinal analysis; therefore, the information presented is just a snapshot of the participants' college experiences after their first years of college as opposed to a reflection of their entire college experience.
Chapter 2
Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The literature on first-generation Latino college students mostly focuses on the school-based social capital that students lack in college as opposed to what students feel made them successful. Much of the literature does not describe school-based social capital explicitly, as it is a relatively new concept. It can, however, be inferred from the definition that the literature provides examples of school-based social capital and describes sources of school-based social capital.

This literature review will describe school-based social capital as it relates to education, first-generation college students, social interactions that provide school-based social capital to first-generation college students at the college level, the types of school-based social capital obtained at the college level, social interactions that provide school-based social capital to first-generation college students at the high school level, and the types of school-based social capital obtained at the high school level. The end of this chapter will provide a detailed concept map that illustrates main ideas found in the literature review which will be used throughout the study.

Social Capital

Social capital has been discussed in various forms throughout the 1900s. In 1916, one of the earliest discussions of social capital was published in the article “The Rural School Community Center” by L. J. Hanifan. During the 1980s, the topic of social capital became popular through the writings of Putnam, Coleman, and Bourdieu (Dika & Sighn, 2002; Portes, 2000; Ream, 2003; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Since then, many
people have had different interpretations of social capital and how this concept relates to various academic areas. Portes (1998) pointed out that confusion concerning social capital exists because there are many different components: "A systematic treatment of the concept must distinguish among: (a) the possessors of social capital (those making claims); (b) the sources of social capital (those agreeing to these demands); (c) the resources themselves" (p. 6). One of the most difficult aspects of social capital is that the "capital" obtained with social capital is not necessarily tangible (Kao, 2004; Portes, 1998). Instead, social capital is a resource (Coleman, 1990) that usually presents itself as intellectual knowledge, skills, group norms, or opportunities (Farmer-Hinton, 2008a; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbush, 1995) that exist within a social network (Coleman, 1990).

Coleman's social capital theory is used as the theoretical framework for this study; however, definitions from researchers who have added clarity to Coleman's definition will be used. Coleman's definition was influenced by Loury's definition of social capital as "the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organizations" (Coleman, 1990, p. 300). Coleman, however, defines social capital as "a variety of entities with two elements in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain action of actors whether persons or corporate actors within the structure" (Coleman, 1990, p. 302). These resources or "variety of entities" are able to "benefit future outcomes" (Gofen, 2009, p. 107; Portes, 1998, p. 6; Stanton-Salazar, 1997) by providing a person with more resources or converting these resources into "behavioral norms," "educational performance," "physical capital," or "human capital" (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004, p. 252; Ream, 2005, pp. 29-30; Santon-Salzar & Dornbush, 1995, p. 116). Coleman describes how
individuals obtain social capital by interacting with family, community, school, churches, etc. However, in discussing school-based social capital, the social capital obtained through the school community is all that will be focused on.

In consideration of all of these components of social capital from various researchers, this study uses the following definition of social capital: the intellectual knowledge, skills, norms, or opportunities obtained from social interactions within the school community that may eventually be utilized to create actual capital or additional intellectual knowledge, skills, norms, or opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Farmer-Hinton, 2008a; Gofen, 2009; Ream, 2003; Ream, 2005; Runyan et al., 1998; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbush, 1995). While some descriptors of social capital focus on the benefits of a family or groups of individuals (Hanifan, 1916; Portes, 2000), this study will focus on the individual acquisition of social capital.

*First-generation College Students*

First-generation college students are lacking the social capital that many students whose parent did go to college have, because they have not obtained this social capital from their parents (Farmer-Hinton, 2008a; Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003; Pascarella et al., 2004; Strayhorn, 2006). Students who do not bring the social capital needed to succeed in college from high school will have trouble in college unless the college fills any unmet gaps. In order for first-generation Latino college student to succeed in college, they must be supported by their school communities both in high school and in college. High school staff members have a responsibility to provide the information necessary for students to access college (Reid, 2007) and prepare students for college, while colleges have a responsibility to support students when they arrive on campus.
College Life

Saunders and Serna (2004) categorized first-generation college students into three different types: students who created new social networks, students who only used existing social networks, and students who did not use any social networks. The results of the study indicate that students who established new social networks did better than those who used old social networks or did not use social networks at all.

Some of the literature describes first-generation college students' lack of utilization of their social networks to gain social capital, while other literature describes the social networks that are utilized. The four main social networks utilized or potentially utilizable by first-generation college freshman are: professors, staff members, peers, and on-campus organizations. These sources provide school-based social capital that will help students be successful in college.

Professors. Professors can provide a wealth of information in college. In fact, the sole purpose of many professors is to provide knowledge to their students. Whether or not the students actually obtain this knowledge from the professor varies from student to student.

In order to gain academic knowledge in college, it is very important for students to use their professors as a resource (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Pascarella, 1980; Tinto, 1987). If students do not feel comfortable speaking with their professors, they will not be able to access the school-based social capital provided by their professors. Overall, the research describes the importance of professors making students, especially Latino students, feel comfortable in the classroom in order for them to adjust academically to the college environment (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres, &
Latino students not only need to feel comfortable speaking with their professors, but they also need to feel encouraged and supported by their professors (Arbona & Nora, 2007).

Some studies such as the one conducted by Otero, Rivas, and Rivera (2007) found that student-faculty interaction does not affect the retention rate (p. 170); however, most of the studies describe student-faculty interaction as being important in students’ academic success. When students feel comfortable with their professors they will be more likely to obtain the school-based social capital offered by the professors. In most research articles, only one type of school-based social capital obtained from professors is described: academic knowledge. However, the benefits of student-faculty interaction often correlate with higher college retention rates (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1997; Tinto, 1997).

College staff members. Many of the studies describe how first-generation college students do not use or hardly ever use advisors or tutoring centers as support systems. Although the literature suggests that it is important to have these resources for students, it seems equally important to research why students are not utilizing these resources centers. More research on effective resource centers is needed.

Torres et al. (2006) concluded that first-generation college students did not utilize advisors until “they reached the point of cognitive dissonance” because they did not “automatically trust authority” (p. 68). In addition, Torres et al. (2006) concluded that students do not “seek an advisor for any of four reasons: they are waiting to be told information by an advisor, view seeking out an authority figure as a risk, do not wish to experience feelings of discomfort or looking foolish, or do not recognize advisors as
expert authorities” (p. 37). Understanding why students do not seek out advisors is important for educators because if they know what the obstacles might be, then they can help students overcome these obstacles. In addition, students should be told the different reasons why first-generation college students do not utilize resources. If students know how they might feel when they are having difficulty, then they may push themselves to seek help.

Many studies describe the importance of setting up systems for first-generation college students so they can access the support services needed for success, such as academic advising, financial advising, mentoring services, assistance in navigating the institutions, and instruction in study skills (Arbona and Nora, 2007; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Strayhorn, 2006). Torres et al. (2006) suggest that first-generation Latino college students may not access the services they need, so it is not only important to set these systems up, but it is also important to figure out how to help students access these support services and feel comfortable accessing these services.

College programs (and high school programs) must help students understand that “academic success is not attained through individual achievement alone, but through an axis of support” (Gullatt & Jan, 2003). Unfortunately, many first-generation college students do not utilize resource centers for various reasons; however, it is implied in the literature that students should utilize these resources centers and if students do utilize these resource centers then they are able to obtain the following types of school-based social capital necessary for college success: use of resources, academic knowledge, and study skills. Knowing where to go and who to talk to are all things that students need to
find out, so that even when they are the slightest bit confused about something, they can go to the appropriate resource right away without reservation.

**Peers.** Peers can provide school-based social capital to college students; however, sometimes peers can have a negative impact on student achievement. Torres et al. (2006) described the importance of peers in understanding how to use and find resources for first-generation Latino college students. Martinez and Klopott (2005) describes how relationships with peers prove to have a positive or negative impact on students’ academic achievement. Peers who support students’ academic goals provide a positive impact on academic achievement while peers who do not support academic goals provide a negative impact. In addition, “peer groups can support school success when students share a commitment to educational values” (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002, p.13). Having peers who can model appropriate study strategies and other academic behaviors helps first-generation students adopt those same skills so that they can succeed academically (Pascarella et al., 2004).

Peers can have a negative or positive effect on student achievement, however, the school-based social capital that students may obtain from their peers includes: finding resources, academic knowledge, study skills, and motivation. It is important for students to understand what their peers can offer and what distractions their peers may bring. In addition, it should be emphasized to students that peers who have “a commitment to educational values” are the peers who will provide a positive effect on achievement. Being prepared for these different circumstances may help students’ deal with the distractions of their first year of college experience effectively.
**On-campus organizations.** Similar to peers, extracurricular involvement or on-campus organizations can play a positive or negative role in student success. Pascarella et al. (2004) found that on-campus organizations had more of a positive impact on first-generation college students than on other students; specifically, they found that these organizations help first-generation college students with "critical thinking, degree plans, sense of control over (and responsibility for) their own academic success, and preference for higher-order cognitive tasks" (p. 278).

Many studies have identified involvement as an important element of college during the freshman year (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989), especially for Latino students because the organization provides a sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). In addition, Mayo, Murguia, and Padilla (1995) found that involvement was important to Mexican-Americans specifically. However, a student not being involved on-campus does not mean that he or she will be unsuccessful. Instead, many students do not get involved the first year because they want to focus on their academics (Hernandez, 2002).

Pascarella et al. (2004) found that not all extracurricular experiences were beneficial to the academic progress of first-generation college students: "volunteer, work, employment, and participation in intercollegiate athletics all tended to have a more negative impact" (p. 279). Knowledge of personal limits and effective time management skills are important qualities to have in college.

According to the literature, on-campus organizations can provide the following types of school-based social capital: academic knowledge and skills and motivation (sense of belonging). The literature describes that being a member of an on-campus organization does not necessarily directly relate to success; however, benefits for students
have been found if they are members of an on-campus organization. Students should reflect often on their experiences in these on-campus organizations. If the organization is consuming too much of their time and not providing them with any academic benefits, then they should seriously reconsidered their membership in the organization.

Summary of college social networks. The literature describes the following social interactions as being important for first-generation college students at the college level: professors, staff members, peers, and on-campus organizations. The following types of school-based social capital that each of these social networks provide are: finding resources, use of resources, academic knowledge and skills, motivation, and study skills. Although the literature does provide some examples of these various types of school-based social capital more research is needed. If first-generation Latino college students understand that when they enter college they may not have the social capital necessary for college success and that they must utilize professors, staff members, peers, and on-campus organizations in order to obtain this social capital, then these students may be more inclined to use these people and organizations as resources. If students do not know that they are lacking something, then they may find themselves frustrated with the college experience and will be more likely to drop out.

High School Level

The K-12 system plays an important role in academically educating students. However, currently the system is not adequately preparing students for college. “Only 70% of all students in public high schools graduate, and only 32% of all students leave high school qualified to attend four-year colleges” (Greene & Forster, 2003, p. 3). Green and Forster (2003) discussed the fact that Hispanic and black students are
underrepresented in college admission because “these students are not acquiring college ready skills in the K-12 system, rather than inadequate financial aid or affirmative action policies” (p. 3).

Overall, the literature describes that first-generation students reported not feeling academically prepared and feeling that college was more difficult than high school (Keup, 2006; Hernandez, 2002; Hurtado et al., 2005). In addition to school-based social capital that prepares students academically, there must be school-based social capital that focuses on college preparation knowledge (Farmer-Hinton, 2008b; Stanton-Salazar, 1997) as well as school-based social capital that helps students articulate their motivation for college (Farmer-Hinton, 2008).

Throughout high school, students are influenced by various people. Although family, peers, and community members do play a vital role in students going to college and being successful while there (Reid, 2007), high school is the single most important place where first-generation college students access knowledge about college (Farmer-Hinton, 2008b; Gonzalez, 2003; Reid, 2007; Stanton-Salazar, 1997) and prepare academically for college (Greene & Forster, 2003). According to the literature, the social interactions in which students obtain the most school-based social capital are interactions with teachers and staff members.

*Teachers.* Teachers are instrumental in providing students with the academic knowledge and skills necessary to be prepared for college. Teachers play an important role in executing rigorous curricula that prepare students for the college curricula (Reid, 2007). In addition to rigorous curricula, it is important for teachers to create constructive learning activities (Gullatt & Jan, 2003, p. 23) and teach higher-order thinking skills
(Martinez & Klopott, 2004) so that students are prepared for the assignments they will receive in college. The subject areas of math and science were described by Reid (2007) as being a struggle for students in college, so making sure that high schools are providing rigorous math and science college prep courses is important.

Many teachers also provide instruction through various academic programs. The importance of quality academic programs has been described in various research studies. "High school curriculum reflects 41 percent of the academic resources students bring to higher education" (Adelman, 1999, p. 3). Types of academic programs that stand out in the literature as being important for college academic preparation include schoolwide programs that focus on standards-based curricula (Gullatt & Jan, 2002), advance placement (AP) courses (Adelman, 1999; Reid, 2007), programs that support students in completing the highest level of mathematics (Adelman, 1999), courses that prepare students to succeed in college (Gullatt & Jan, 2003), rigorous curricula (Haycock, 2001; Martinez & Klopott, 2004; Strayhorn, 2006), programs that provide college exposure (Gullatt & Jan, 2003; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002), and senior seminar classes that include a college planning component (Conley, 2007; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002).

According to the literature, teachers provide a significant amount of the academic knowledge and study skills needed to be successful in college. In addition, these teachers instruct through various academic programs that usually have a set curriculum that has been vertically articulated between high school and college. The curriculum taught in these academic programs usually provides the school-based social capital to students that colleges and teachers feel is important for college preparation.
Staff members. In addition to academic knowledge and skills provided by teachers, students need to be informed about how to access college. Counselors are among the most important staff members to provide college access knowledge to students (Gullatt & Jan, 2003; Farmer-Hinton, 2006; Reid, 2007). Staff members who assist students with applications, financial aid, and career goals are vital to first-generation students interested in college because such students do not have access to this knowledge through family members (Vargas, 2004).

Other skills or knowledge that first-generation students lack and that staff members at the school site can help provide include information on time management (Hernandez, 2002; Reid 2007), college finances and budget management (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996), and the ability to balance family and academic responsibilities (Richardson & Skinner, 1992). Farmer-Hinton (2008b) discussed the importance of an entire school, or classroom, or counseling session providing the expectation that the student will attend college, the encouragement to attend college, and the means to help articulate motivation to attend college. Helping students articulate the reasons for attending college and their goals for the future is important in helping motivate the students to accomplish their goals (Martinez & Klopott, 2004). In fact, “those who had higher aspirations reported higher GPAs” (Strayhorn, 2006, p 100).

Teachers are important in preparing students for college and staff members (mostly counselors) are crucially important in helping student access college knowledge. The school-based social capital that is provided by staff members includes college access information, use of resources, and motivation. Much of the research on high schools and
first-generation college students focuses on counselors as being vital in helping students apply for college.

*Summary of school-based social capital available from high school.* Although there are many influences in preparing students for college, high schools are particularly important in preparing first-generation college high school students academically and in preparing these students to access college (through applications, financial aid, etc). The main social interactions that provide the school-based social capital needed to get to college and succeed in college are those involving teachers and staff members. The main types of school-based social capital that can be obtained from these two types of social interactions include motivation, academic knowledge and skills, study skills, and information regarding college access. Since it is difficult for parents who have not been to college to help their children acquire everything needed for college, it is important for high schools to fill this unmet need. Teachers provide the academic knowledge and skills necessary for college, while staff members provide the assistance with getting into college. Without these people, students are unable to apply, attend, or be successful in college.

*School-based Social Capital Needed for First-generation College Freshmen*

The literature describes the following social interactions as being important for first-generation college students at the college level: professors, staff members, peers, and on-campus organizations. The following types of school-based social capital that each of these social interactions provide are: skills for finding resources, academic knowledge and skills, study skills, motivation, and ability to use resources.
The main social interactions in high school that provide the school-based social capital needed to get to college and succeed in college are between students and teachers and staff members. The main types of school-based social capital that are obtained from these social networks are: motivation, academic knowledge and skills, study skills, ability to use resources, and college access knowledge.

The following graphic illustrates the components of school-based social capital based on the literature. The graphic shows the two school environments (high school and college) where students can obtain school-based social capital, the social interactions within those school environments that provide school-based social capital, and the types of school-based social capital that each of those social interactions can offer to students. After students obtain these types of school-based social capital, they may enjoy potential future benefits either by obtaining more school-based social capital or by obtaining actual capital.

Figure 1. Components of school-based social capital from the literature.
The Case Against Social Capital

The "fathers" of social capital, Coleman, Putnam, and Bourdieu, left researchers wanting more clarity with respect to their own subject areas and the idea of social capital. This has created various definitions and various concept maps that attempt to dissect and understand social capital. There has been much criticism of the concept of social capital because there are so many different definitions.

Many researchers who are against the idea of social capital as a concept describe the need for clarity. For example, Durlauf (1999) believes that

new theoretical and empirical work is needed on (1) the meaning of social capital, (2) its net effect on societal welfare, with appropriate attention to the possibility of its generating negative outcomes, (3) its empirical significance in influencing individual decisions, and (4) a balanced assessment of intergroup as well as intragroup relations, so that the adverse effects of group identity. (p. 4)

Other researchers such as Pawar (2006) believe that the term "social capital" does not accurately describe the phenomenon that people think they are describing and that more discussion on the subject is needed. "Social capital is a contentious concept, probably because the way it has been phrased. The discourse has to go beyond the phrase and touch some of the ideological underpinnings on which the phrase is based" (Pawar, 2006, p. 223). Pawar's article also provides alternatives to the term social capital: "'social capacity,' 'community capacity,' 'social networks,' 'informal networks,' or 'communities' informal care welfare practices'" (p. 222). However, in his discussion, Pawar (2006) admits that even his argument against social capital may not be clearly defined: "the limitation of this paper is that the discourse presented is a problematic one and may not be as clear and resolved as it should be" (p. 223).
There are some researchers who are uncomfortable with the use of the term "capital" being used in "social capital." Some researchers feel that "social capital" is "difficult to measure" (Halpern, 2005, p. 31), while others feel that "the notion of capital brings with it a whole set of discourses and inevitably links it, in the current context, to capitalism" (Smith, 2009, para. 30).

Other researchers want to know how we know exactly that social capital is beneficial. For example, Scanion (2003) points out that "a more general problem with social capital is that no one has yet pinpointed why participating in informal social networks has the benefits that are claimed for it" (para.13). Scanion (2003) gives an example from the field of public health to prove his point:

While some speculate that participating in community activities increases one's awareness of the benefits of exercise, eating a varied diet and regular visits to the doctor, thereby creating health benefits, this has yet to be proven. As such, social capital is a poor basis for policy. (para.14).

Summary

Although there is much contention regarding social capital and its exact definition, an increasing number of researchers have identified the confusion and provided guidance. For example, Portes (1998) believes that "a systematic treatment of the concept must distinguish among (a) the possessors of social capital (those making claims); (b) the sources of social capital (those agreeing to these demands); (c) the resources themselves" (p. 6). In this study, the possessors of social capital are first-generation Latino college students; the sources of social capital are the social interactions they have within the school community; and the resources obtained are those that help students succeed in college. More specifically, the sources of social capital are professors, staff members, peers, and on-campus organizations at the college level and
teachers and staff members at the high school level. The resources students obtain include skills in finding resources, ability to use resources, relevant academic knowledge, motivation, and study skills at the college level and motivation, academic knowledge and skills, study skills, and information on college access at the high school level.

This literature review has listed various types of school-based social capital that are important for student success. Much of the research lists the school-based social capital that students lack. If students understand what they may be lacking when they go to college and what reactions they may have when they are confused or struggling, then they may be more prone to seek out sources of school-based social capital on their own. If they do not know that they may be lacking school-based social capital, then they may be more likely to feel that they do not belong on the college campus and eventually drop out. This is why it is imperative to research the important social interactions that provide school-based social capital at the high school level and the college level, as well as the specific types of school-based social capital that needs to be obtained by students. Students who know what school-based social capital they need, and their options for obtaining school-based social capital, can utilize these options to set themselves up for success.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Statement of the Problem

As a first-generation college student and the assistant principal of CPHS, I am devoted to ensuring that our students, and all students like ours, succeed in college. The probability of the first-generation Latino college freshman going to college is low and the likelihood of such a student dropping out of college is high (Choy 2001; Ishitani 2006; NCES, 2005; Pascarella et al., 2004). Identifying useful school-based social capital obtained by students during high school and college, as well as identifying the important sources of school-based social capital, will be helpful in assisting educators to prioritize their efforts in encouraging first-generation Latino college students to attend and graduate from college.

This study is a qualitative phenomenological study. The phenomenon being studied is that of the experience of first-generation college students obtaining school-based social capital in high school and in college. From this study I hope to answer the following two questions: What social interactions in high school and college provide school-based social capital to first-generation Latino students? What school-based social capital is obtained by first-generation Latino students in high school and college?

Description of the Sample

Six students were chosen for this study. The following are the selection criteria for this study: (1) alumni from CPHS, class of 2008, (2) attended CPHS for all four years, (3) enrolled in a four-year university during the Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 semesters, (4) a first-generation college student, and (5) a Hispanic/Latino Student.
There were 21 students available that fit this selection criterion. Of the graduating class who had gone on to attend a four-year university, seven (33.3%) of the students enrolled in a school other than the local university and 14 (66.7%) enrolled at the local university. The students chosen for this study reflected these percentages. Of the six students chosen for this study, two of the students interviewed, one male and one female, attended another four-year university (33% of the total). Four of the students interviewed, two female and two male, attended the local four-year college (66.7% of the total).

Students were chosen so that the perspectives they provided would vary as much as possible. I knew each of these students personally. I looked at the list of all students who met the above criteria and chose the students with whom I felt I had the closest relationship and those who would be the most open about their college experiences.

The first student was a Latina attending a prestigious college about a 1½-hour drive from her home, the second student was a Latino attending a college about a 1½-hour drive from his home, the third student was a Latina attending a unique program at the local college who lived in the dorms, the fourth student was a Latina attending the local college who lived at home, the fifth student was a Latino attending the local college who lived in the dorms, and the sixth student was a Latino attending the local college who lived at home. After looking at the selection criterion and students' names, I called, e-mailed, and texted students individually and asked them whether or not they would like to take part in the study. Luckily, they all wanted to be involved. Students signed consent forms prior to meeting with me.
Measurement

The data for this study were collected from six college freshmen who had graduated from College Prep High School (CPHS) in 2008. These college freshmen were interviewed individually after their freshman year of college in June 2009 for approximately one to two hours each. The "Interview Guide approach" (Johnson & Christensen 2008, p. 208) was used while interviewing these students. In this approach, the topics and issues covered are specified in advanced, in outline form; however, the interviewer decides on the sequence and wording of questions during the course of the interview (p. 208). In developing the questions for these interviews, I first identified the areas of importance by reviewing the literature and finding major themes. The interview questions were then reviewed by five experts in the field, my committee members, and a staff member at a research company. I adjusted the questions based on feedback obtained from all these people. In this study, I asked each student the same exact questions with the same wording; however, follow-up questions were different for each student. Follow-up questions were asked if students did not completely answer the question, or if students alluded to something that seemed to be unclear, or began describing something the literature described as being important.

Procedures

This study is a qualitative phenomenological study. The phenomenon being studied is that of the experience of first-generation college students obtaining school-based social capital in high school and in college. I interviewed each student asking preset questions and I asked exactly the same questions each time, although I asked different follow-up questions when appropriate throughout the interviews. I recorded all
of our conversations. I took notes during the interviews. I had these interviews transcribed (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). I then coded (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) these transcriptions based on concepts described in the literature and any categories that emerged from the data (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). I refined the diagram presented in the literature review (Figure 1) to help me interpret and analyze the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

**Procedures for Data Analysis**

After coding the data, I looked at the codes that related to sources of school-based social capital and the codes that related to actual school-based social capital obtained. I then looked at which codes provided the most student quotes and determined which codes I would focus on in my analysis. Codes related to sources of school-based social capital at the college level that were identified focus areas were: professors, college staff members, peers, on-campus organizations, and librarians. Codes related to sources of school-based social capital at the high school level that were identified focus areas were: teachers and staff members. Codes related to actual school-based social capital obtained at the college level that were identified focus areas were: networking, finding resources, academic knowledge and skills, study skills, research skills, use of resources, and motivation. Codes related to actual school-based social capital obtained at the high school level that were identified focus areas were: motivation, academic knowledge and skills, study skills, use of resources, college entrance knowledge, and networking. I used student quotes in the findings section to validate the literature and to describe emergent categories. I revised the diagram in Figure 1 to help me interpret the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).
Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

After interviewing the students and analyzing their responses, it was found that much of the data validated the literature; however, there were some categories that emerged as being important. As indicated in the literature, it was found that there were two school environments where students obtained school-based social capital: college and high school. In these two environments, students obtained school-based social capital by socially interacting with members of each school community. At the college level, social interactions with professors, staff members, librarians, peers, and on-campus organizations provided the following types of school-based social capital: networking, the ability to find resources, academic knowledge, study skills, research skills, ability to use resources, and motivation. Librarians as a source of school-based social capital were not mentioned in the literature. In addition, research skills, networking, and motivation were types of school-based social capital that did not appear explicitly in the literature.

As indicated in the literature, this study found that at the high school level, the social interactions that provided school-based social capital to students were teachers and staff members. These social interactions provided the following types of school-based social capital: motivation, academic knowledge, use of resources, study skills, college entrance knowledge, and networking. Networking was the only type of school-based social capital that was not described in the literature. As described in the definition of school-based social capital, each type of school-based social capital obtained by the student will eventually benefit the student's future.
The concept map below (Figure 2) illustrates these ideas. This concept map builds on Figure 1: Components of School-Based Social Capital from the Literature from chapter two and includes "emergent categories" that were found in this research. The blue circles are categories that were identified in the literature as being important and are also validated by this study. The green circles are categories that emerged from the data collection process that should be explored further in future research studies. This graphic provides the structure for chapter four.

Figure 2. Components of school-based social capital for this study.

The Students

The following is a brief description of the six students who were interviewed. The students were selected using the selection criteria described in chapter three. All of them were alumni of CPHS, attended CPHS for all four years, had been enrolled in a four-year university during the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009, were first-generation...
college students, and were Latino. The students were chosen because they had a close relationship to the interviewer and it was felt that they would provide the most honest answers.

*Rosa.* Rosa grew up in a household where she was the "second mother" in a fatherless home. She was the oldest child and had one younger sibling. She considered herself Mexican-American. The highest level of education achieved by her mother was third grade. In her elementary years, Rosa did not think she would be successful. However, after she came to the CPHS school district she began changing her mind. She believed that coming to the CPHS district was the best move she had ever made because it was in this district that she realized her potential. Rosa decided she wanted to go to college during her freshman year of high school when CPHS had its first schoolwide meeting and each student had to state his or her future goals. During this meeting she said, "I want to graduate from college." Although she did not really understand what this meant at the time, it was the first time she had made this commitment.

Rosa went to a prestigious college about a 1-½ hour drive from CPHS. She lived on-campus and worked approximately 18 hours per week. She decided not to get involved in a lot of organizations during her first year because she wanted to focus on school. Her favorite aspects of college was meeting new people, agreeing to disagree, and the freedom that college provided.

*Angel.* Angel was the oldest of three siblings. Angel considered himself Mexican-American. The highest level of education achieved by his mother was tenth grade, and the highest achieved by his father was ninth grade. Angel went to a diverse college about a 1-½ hour drive from CPHS. He wanted to become a doctor. He completed 31 units
during his first year of college and his cumulative GPA at the end of his first year of
college was 3.31. His major was biology and he wanted to minor in business. He wanted
to go to medical school eventually and understood that he needed to improve his GPA in
order to get into medical school. Angel worked approximately 18 hours per week and
lived on campus. Angel said that he decided in sixth grade that he wanted to go to college
because “I realized I had no talent.”

Lupe. Lupe was also an oldest child and had two younger siblings. The highest
level of education that both her parents completed was high school. Lupe went to the
local university. She was enrolled in a unique seminar-style program where there was one
professor, 12-14 students, and each class offered 12 units per semester. She completed 28
units during her first year of college. She worked an average of 30 hours a week and
went to school full time. She lived on campus and her roommate was a former high
school classmate. Her favorite aspect of college was the freedom offered by college life
and she loved how college forced her to be open-minded.

Liliana. Liliana classified herself as Mexican-American. The highest level of
education completed by her mother was high school in the United States and her father
completed some elementary school in Mexico. However, Liliana lived with her
grandmother for most of her life. She went to the local university and was part of EOP
(Educational Opportunity Program). Her cumulative GPA was 2.056 for her first year in
college. Liliana lived off campus with her grandmother. She joined a sorority, but quit
towards the end of her freshman year. She was majoring in political science and she
wanted to be a lawyer. Her favorite part of college was the freedom college offered.
Liliana knew she wanted to be a lawyer when her middle school teacher (a teacher who was in the same district as CPHS) took the class on a field trip to see a judge.

**Pablo.** Pablo was a Latino male, the oldest of two in his household. He went to a local college and was enrolled in EOP. Pablo had several family responsibilities that included sometimes driving his sister to high school (CPHS) for his mother. The highest level of education completed by his mother was some high school and his dad had completed some elementary school. He was raised by single mother who worked two jobs to pay all the bills. Pablo worked 15 to 20 hours per week. Pablo lived on campus with a former high school classmate. His favorite part of college was the freedom. Pablo realized that he had aspirations to attend college during his junior year of high school when he saw the suffering of his family. At this time he decided that he wanted to make a better life for himself and his family.

**Eduardo.** Eduardo classified himself as Mexican. Eduardo was the oldest sibling of four. The highest level of education completed by both his parents was sixth grade in Mexico. Eduardo went to a local university and lived off campus with his family. He joined a fraternity, but quit towards the end of his freshman year. His cumulative GPA at the end of his first semester was 3.5 and at the end of the second semester was 2.55. Eduardo worked 20 to 30 hours per week towards the end of his second semester. Eduardo realized that he had aspirations to attend college during his junior year of high school when he realized that he wanted to make a better life for himself and his family. Eduardo believed that he would not have gone to college if he had not attended CPHS.
College Life

The students described college as the most exciting time in their lives. Freedom was a key component of this excitement. Students could decide whether or not they went to class, which classes to take, and which professors to choose. College was also a place where they could make mistakes and learn from these mistakes. For many students it was an important “rite of passage” during which they were making their own decisions and no adults (teachers or family members) were telling them what to do.

The students described the following as the social interactions that provided school-based social capital during their time at college: professors, staff members, librarians, peers, and on campus organizations. The various types of school-based social capital that was obtained from these social interactions were that of: networking, finding resources, academic knowledge, study skills, research skills, use of resources, and motivation.

Professors. According to the students interviewed in this study, professors were incredibly important providers of school-based social capital. All of the students referred to some of their professors as being important in helping them academically; however, there were some professors from whom students had a hard time learning. Professors provided the following types of school-based social capital to students: networking, finding resources, academic knowledge, and study skills.

Many of the students described how professors helped them network and find resources. Rosa’s professor helped her find a job on campus and Angel’s RAZA (a multicultural class) teacher helped him find opportunities in the community that related to his field of interest (medical internships and club memberships). Nearly all of the
students described how they learned about various resources on campus (tutoring centers, library workshops, etc.) from their professors. Rosa described why relationships with the professors are important to being a successful college student:

They grade your stuff so that is part of the success. Another part of it is I became close to one of my professors and she and I can just talk and joke around. I did not get the best grade in her class because that's just depending on the work. But I got a lot of other opportunities. She offered me a job when I needed one in her office I helped her with a conference and I think she has another job lined up for me when I come back to school. It is not always about the grade, it is about establishing that relationship with the person. Becoming friends first is what you want to go for and then if you are not happy about your grade, then you can talk to that friend. Then you are not just searching for an A, you are searching for bigger opportunities.

Rosa realizes the importance of networking. Throughout high school, her networking skills provided several important opportunities and awards. She is finding in college that networking continues to lead to more opportunities.

Professors also provided academic knowledge important to each student's success. While being interviewed, Lupe began glowing as she described the professor from whom she took a twelve-unit course during her second semester: that professor "was tough in a good way. He asked a lot of out me and I am proud of what I turned in."

Lupe also described her appreciation for her first semester professor:

At the beginning of the semester he would comment on my writing, "Oh good job on this" or "Good job on that." Later I noticed that I was not doing the same quality as the beginning, so we talked about that. He said he hadn't noticed it, but he gave me feedback to help improve it.

Lupe's very personalized relationship with her two teachers (one professor each semester for her twelve-unit class) helped her learn about herself and her writing. These professors' guidance, support, and encouragement pushed Lupe to continuously analyze her writing and pushed her to want to do the best she could in school. Several students
really liked their remedial English professors and felt proud of the portfolios that they had put together at the end of the semester.

Some of the academic knowledge obtained by the student from their professors was provided during office hours. All of the students knew that office hours were available to them and thought they were a good idea; however, a few of them hardly ever went. Although it was not explicitly stated, students appeared not to go see professors with whom they did not feel comfortable during their office hours, and did go to see the professors with whom they did feel comfortable during their office hours. For example, Pablo described how his English teachers was “really really helpful” during office hours, but then described that he could not go to the office hours of his math professor because Pablo had to work. Eduardo also discussed how he was unable to see the professors during their office hours because he had to work, but described seeing another professor during that professor’s office hours. Pablo described how he tried to e-mail his math professor once and it took the professor two days to respond, which was too late to help him with his homework. Rosa utilized her professors’ office hours often. She said that from her professor she learned about the university in general and more importantly, she learned where to get help. Lupe described the office hour with her math professor as being “very helpful”; this professor explained the importance of how to “read the math book” and helped her understand some of her homework assignments. When he went to see his English teacher during office hours, Pablo said that “it was intimidating at first, but ended up being really helpful.” All of the students described at least one situation where their professor helped them with understanding the concepts of the class either through office hours, through discussions in class, or through e-mail.
Throughout the interviews, it became very apparent that students had positive and negative interactions with professors. The positive interactions appeared to provide more school-based social capital than the negative interactions.

Students were excited to discuss positive interactions they had had with their professors. For example, Angel helped his teacher with his Blackberry, and so for the rest of the semester he had a connection with this teacher and did better in this class. When a professor found out Pablo and Liliana were from CPHS and the professor showed that he was excited about this school, the students discussed how it felt good that this professor wanted to help them and the school. One of Lupe’s professors was Latino and had experienced many of the same struggles Lupe faced; this was very important to her. “I could relate to him. . . . He knew what I was capable of doing and pushed me . . . if he did it, I can do it too!” These positive interactions brought smiles to the students’ faces and it was clear that students felt very comfortable with these professors.

Many of the students had unfavorable experiences in their mathematics classes. Angel in particular described his remedial mathematics experience in detail:

Our teacher should not be allowed to teach, he was horrible. So we actually got up as a class and went to the administration office and petitioned [to get him removed]. We worked it out and kept him around. . . . I think the administration put him in place to set us up to fail. . . . Even though it is credit/no credit everyone was failing the class, completely, like everyone was failing, even me at one point. That’s because I didn’t understand, we literally needed a translator because he only spoke Japanese. But I pulled up my grade because I decided to show up to class. I would usually show up to all my classes except that one because I thought it was a joke. I thought I could just show up for the final and pass it, which I probably could have. I showed up and started doing my tests and got an A and so that pulled up my grades and I was one of the highest ones. I would usually show up to all my classes just not that one. It was basically a waste of time because you needed to learn it on your own anyways.
Angel's experience with his math teacher was alarming and demonstrated that when students are not engaged in the material or feel that it is a waste of time, they will not go to class, and will not access the school-based social capital being provided. On the other hand, if the class does not feel like a waste of time, students will be more inclined to attend class and access the school-based social capital being provided. The fact that a student feels that the school's "administration put him [the professor] in place to set us up to fail" was incredibly disconcerting. How many students feel this way, but are unable to articulate it and so decide to leave school because they feel unwelcome?

Lupe described how her remedial math book was hard to read because it was "professional sounding" and contained some things of which she had never heard before. Liliana described her remedial math teacher as a "teacher who only taught by power point" and Liliana felt she knew more than the professor. Eduardo described his non-remedial math professor as one who never explained the concepts about which she was lecturing. He also described how he was taught different ways of solving a problem, but he was unable to "translate" that process to what the professor was teaching. Lupe talked about the difficulty of learning from her non-remedial math teacher because "English was the second language for both of us." Unfortunately, Eduardo was thinking about not going into engineering after taking his non-remedial math course. Mathematics, especially remedial mathematics, at the college level is something to be further explored through research.

The findings validate the literature in that it is clear that students benefit from feeling comfortable with professors and that they were able to obtain academic information (assignment clarifications, guidance on how to read textbooks, help with
math problems) from their professors. However, the findings additionally suggest that positive social interactions with professors created the following types of school-based social capital: networking (leading to jobs on campus and internships within the medical field) and finding resources (such as library workshops and tutoring centers). For many of the students, professors provided more school-based social capital than any other source of school-based social capital. In addition, the findings suggest that mathematics education at the college level is problematic for many first-generation Latino college students and ways to improve the mathematics program should be explored.

College staff members. College staff members provide a significant amount of school-based social capital; however, some students did not take advantage of the opportunities to access this social capital. A majority of the discussions in the students' interviews were focused on staff members at on-campus tutoring centers, although some students did describe their resident assistants (RAs) and EOP advisors as being helpful. Students understood the importance of on-campus tutoring centers; however, many students admitted that they did not take advantage of these resources as much as they could have. When students did go to these college staff members, the following types of school-based social capital were obtained: academic knowledge and use of resources.

After meeting with college staff members, students obtain academic knowledge. All of the remedial English students at the local university were required to go the writing center. All of the students described going to the writing center as helpful in learning about how to improve their writing; however, many of the students admitted that when it was not required they did not go as often. Pablo described his experience with the writing center “The writing center was really, really helpful. First semester I would have
to go once a week, but I would sometimes go twice. . . . Second semester I didn’t go because it was not required.” Many of the students admitted that their grades on their papers would have been better if they had gone to the writing center. “I didn’t use it one time and that ended up being my lowest grade that I have gotten, so it really helps,” Rosa said after reflecting on the writing center at her school. Rosa then went on to describe how much she liked the tutoring process:

I go to the [tutoring center] a lot because they have good tutors there. They are student tutors so they know what you are writing about and what you are going through. It is not professors teaching at you, it is more student tutors asking questions about your own paper. So they are not telling you what to write, you are telling yourself what to write by answering the questions.

Many of the students described feeling uncomfortable going to the tutoring lab on campus. Pablo decided to work with his math teacher from CPHS instead of going to the tutoring center. Eduardo said he had scheduling conflicts so he was never able to go to the math tutoring lab. Instead of utilizing the tutoring center, Angel found the graduate floor to be much more useful in learning the academic knowledge necessary to complete an assignment:

If you don’t want to go to the tutoring center there is a floor on one of the buildings, it is a floor full of math graduates, so whenever I had math problems I would just step in the room and say “Hey do you want to help me with this?” And they were like really good teachers. I was like “Wow, you guys should be teachers” . . . . Then when I needed help with English I would go to one of the other buildings where I knew there was a graduate floor, they were really nice too; they would edit your papers.

Angel’s practice of finding other people on campus to help him was impressive and unusual for a college freshman. Lupe also found alternatives to her school’s tutoring center. She felt that the math tutoring lab was too small, too serious, and too intimidating, so she and her friend decided to go to the local junior college tutoring
center. In her interview she described why she liked the junior college tutoring center better:

I think because it wasn't just students who were tutoring you, there were teachers too ... it was mixed ... they were really, really friendly. [At my school] they were more strict level, no not strict, more serious level ... I guess we would only talk about how to do the math problem and then move on, in the JC one we would talk about why that person was a tutor or why is he tutoring. But then we got caught so we couldn't go anymore.

Lupe's creativity in finding alternative places to obtain the school-based social capital she desperately needed was also impressive. More research on effective college tutoring centers is needed so that more students utilize these free services.

After the internet and his roommate, Angel used his RA and the main office or administration as a resource: "And if [my roommate] doesn't know (because it is his business to know everything about the school), then I go to my RA because she knows everything ... then when she didn't know I would go to the main office or administration." Liliana stated in her interview that her advisor was really helpful, but that she often had to "blow up the phones" in order to get answers.

The findings validate the literature in that many students did not utilize the college staff members as much as they could have, but when they did utilize the college staff members they obtained the following types of school-based social capital: academic knowledge (leading to improved homework completion and test grades, and enhanced writing skills), and use of resources (writing center, graduate students, junior college tutoring lab). Positive experiences were more beneficial to students; however, the negative experience caused some students to find other ways to obtain necessary information, such as graduate students and other tutoring labs.
Librarians. The idea that librarians are providers of school-based social capital was not discussed thoroughly in the literature; however, in this study almost all the students described the importance of the library and librarians. Students who used the library and the librarians obtained the following type of school-based social capital: research skills.

Many of the students discussed the importance of the library in helping them deal with distractions. When Pablo finally “found the library,” towards the end of the semester, he realized that he was able to get his work done because there were no distractions. Angel was very enthusiastic when describing his discovery of the library two months into the second semester:

I was in there every night and I was like, "Wow this is helping me get done so much work, there is no distractions, it is quiet, I caught up weeks ahead of time, so now, I actually have free time." And for a moment I did not know what to do with my free time because I never had it!

One of Eduardo’s classes went to the library for a class period. Here he learned about the workshops that were offered at the library and he ended up attending a couple of these workshops. Lupe also found out about the library workshops through her professor and went to the workshops that seemed important to her. These workshops focused on research skills. These two students understood how to use the computer to find what they were looking for because they had attended these workshops. Lupe said that the librarian was extremely helpful in assisting with her research projects. She said, “At first, the library was confusing, like how the books were arranged, so I would ask the person at the desk, ‘Which way is that way?’” Rosa also used the library and librarians often for the research projects she needed to complete or papers she needed to write. Rosa taught many of her peers how to use the library “Many of them [her peers] don’t know
how to use it, I taught several of them how to use the library. It is kinda tricky, but I
learned by asking librarians.” Rosa was very concerned about the lack of diversity in the
library: “I was kinda disappointed whenever I walked into the library when a lot of
students of color were not using that resource and it is one of the world’s biggest
libraries.”

The lack of social interactions with peers at the library provided the following
realization to students: the library is a quiet place, free of distractions, where one can
finish one's work for class. For some students, interactions with the librarian provided
the following school-based social capital: research skills. All students described their
interactions with librarians as positive and many of the students spoke very highly of the
workshops provided at the library.

Peers. The literature describes peers as having positive and negative impacts on
students' academic achievement. In this study, many students described their peers as a
distraction. Several of the students said that they preferred talking with their professors
rather than their peers for help academically. For example, Pablo said, “Academically,
yeah [peers] helped, but there is nothing like a professor.” For some of the students, the
following school-based social capital was obtained from their peers: use of resources,
motivation, study skills, and academic knowledge.

Although some of them preferred their professors’ help academically, students did
utilize their peer networks as a resource. Students who were involved with EOP
(Educational Opportunity Program) enjoyed the fact that they saw people in their classes
that they recognized from Summer Bridge. “These people come in handy when you need
them most.” Pablo said in reference to a time that he had lost a syllabus and needed to
know when an assignment was due. Through Pablo’s soccer intramural team, he was able to borrow a book from a teammate who was in his class and he felt that using these people as a resource was extremely helpful.

Some of the students used peer networks to obtain or give motivation. “You better do it,” Liliana would tell her sorority sisters and vice-versa. Liliana would also sometimes want to compete for good grades with her friends in some of her classes. Other students were unmotivated by friends: “Hey, do you want to go to class . . . no . . . okay” would be conversations Pablo would have with his roommate. Pablo also discussed the phenomenon of “If they do it then I am gonna do it, too,” referring to his homework, and said that “when peers go to class then it motivates you to go to class.” Rosa described how she had to find friends that would “influence her the right way” because her roommates did not hold the same values that she did.

Some of the students used their peers to obtain or practice study skills. Pablo had study groups with his peers in his dorm or in other peers’ dorms. They would study together. He would show them study strategies that he had learned in high school, mostly note card strategy and comparing notes. He said that he learned a few new study strategies from his peers. He would also go over to a friend’s house to get help on his English assignments: “I would just go over to my friend’s house, she would pretty much break it down for me like ‘Okay, you need to do this, and this and include that’ and so on . . . yeah mostly [I used friends] because the faculty wouldn’t respond to the e-mails as fast as you would like.” Interestingly, this contradicted his previous statement of “there’s nothing like a professor.”
Some students used their peers to obtain academic knowledge. Pablo would also ask his roommate questions about what he was learning and found his roommate to be helpful at times. Angel discussed how his roommate was a "super genius" and that he often sought advice from him. In fact, Angel described how “one time [my roommate] helped one of my friends [who was at another university] on the webcam for one of her English assignments and she did really well on it! So she owes that one to him.” Besides his roommate, Angel used other peers. He usually got help from peers that were older or more mature than he. He described his strategy for getting help from peers in his classes as the following: “I always go to the front of the class because that is where all the good kids are at, I feel people out and see which one will seem more responsible and smart . . . I just sit next to them and get their number and e-mail, and sometimes Facebook.” Lupe sometimes used the students with whom she went to high school as a resource, but she mostly just got together with students from her class before class to discuss the material. Sometimes Lupe’s roommate, a high school friend, would read her readings to her at night, which was something she enjoyed.

However, peers, especially those in the same age group, often proved to be more distracting than helpful. Eduardo said that sometimes having friends in class was distracting: “I wasn’t listening because I had [Ricky] in that class” and sometimes “we were messing around in class.” Rosa felt that her peers did not support her goals and she would have to limit her socializing time so that she could work on her homework. “Rosa comes first!” she would have to repeat to herself throughout the year. Rosa liked to study for finals by herself and she would use peers only as a last resort. During the second semester, Rosa decided to find different types of friends: “The people I lived with were
my primary friends but they weren't the best friends. So I wanted to find someone who
would influence me the right way. Who would go out with me to the library when I asked
them.” Lupe felt that peers often hindered her progress on her homework. Her peers
would want to go off campus and pressure her into drinking or not going to class. Angel’s
friends stopped calling him and asking him if he wanted to go out because he was never
available; he was either at work, at school, or studying. Pablo described how his friends
would hinder his success:

Definitely living with your closest friends you go off on a tangent. You
say you’re gonna study for a certain class and next thing you know, ”Let’s
go to 7-11.” You go to 7-11, 20 minutes there, get your stuff, chillin’ in
the living, finish your stuff. Alright, ”Let’s get to work.” Hold on, ”Go
with me to my house.” Since I had a car I would drive him to his house . . .
we definitely hindered each other. . . . If I had lived at home I probably
would have gone to class more.

However, Pablo’s other roommate helped him to “realize his potential” because this
particular roommate was not interested in staying in school. This made Pablo realize that
he did care about school and about his future and that “if you don’t care, that is on you; I
care so, if you don’t want to care, do your own thing, just don’t bother me while I am
doing something.” All of these circumstances represent the number of distractions
students have during their first semesters of college. Dealing with distractions is a skill
that all of the students would like to have had more help with while preparing for college.

Angel, Rosa, and Pablo all felt that the older peer group was much more helpful
than their own peer group. Rosa described the older peer group as “wiser” and Angel
described his own peer group as “immature,” which is why he liked talking to the older
peer group. Angel found that the students in his peer group were using a lot more drugs
and were less responsible, attributes that did not appeal to him as a student who wanted to get into medical school eventually.

This study validates the literature's description of peers as having both a positive and negative impact on students' academic achievement and demonstrated that the social interaction of peer networks created the following school-based social capital: use of resources (books, syllabus) when the student did not have access to them, motivation (to go to class, or to do the work, or to do well), study skills (study groups, discussion of the reading prior to class, study strategies), and academic knowledge (asking questions, having their friends read to them). Even though students did obtain school-based social capital through their peers, they all described how distracting their peers could be as well. Use of older peers who "know the system" and have "been through what I have been through" is an interesting topic that should be researched further. In addition, the idea of associating with students who have similar "educational values" is also something to explore further.

On-campus organizations. On-campus organizations provided school-based social capital to students. Being involved with various activities was beneficial for some students, while other students were not involved with on-campus organizations. The on-campus organizations provided the following school-based social capital to the students who utilized them: networking, finding resources, and motivation.

Networking is a very important component of on-campus organizations. Angel was involved with the most extracurricular activities (internships, mentoring high school students for college, volunteering at a marathon, volunteering at a medical center, membership in various health care clubs on-campus). One of Angel's internships
focused on “helping kids out and mentoring them about college.” He felt that being
involved with these organizations helped him network so that he would be able to find
better opportunities in the future:

Networking, was a big thing too. You don’t have to join a fraternity or
sorority to be a good networker. The internship for sure [provided
networking opportunities] because that was basically what it was. It was
not only helping San Francisco and their community, but also to get you in
touch with people that are in your area of interest and can help you out
through the years to come in school and just to help you out with your
classes.

In addition to networking, these on-campus organizations often provided a way to
find resources. Many people involved in these organizations were older students who
had learned about the various resources on campus through their own experience. Rosa
described how the organizations she was involved in “taught me how to use all the
systems, the staffing and how it is organized, campus career centers, basically anything
that was on campus I learned from these organizations.” She did not get as involved
during her first year of college as she did in high school because she wanted to focus on
school work, which was something that was discussed in the literature:

I didn’t do very much because I wanted to take a break. In high school I
did way too much and it almost broke me down. So I wanted to take a
break from that and just focus on academics. I wanted to see if I could
handle the academic first before anything else and I did, I could. But the
thing is I managed my time so well that sometimes I had a lot of free time
and those were the times when I wished I was doing some type of sports,
doing some kind of club, planning a trip, but I stuck to academics.

Some of the on-campus organizations provide the motivation necessary to stick
with school and to succeed. Liliana was involved in a sorority up until April. She liked
the sorority and the motivation that the members gave to each other; however, she felt it
was taking too much of her time and so she dropped out of the sorority. Eduardo was
part of a fraternity and he said that it taught him to “try hard and to not give up.” He also
liked that “their goal for us is to have really good grades and not to drop out [of school].” However, he was spending too much time at night with the fraternity and his parents asked him to quit. Many of the students involved with on-campus organizations seemed to be excited about being around people that had similar interests and about being a part of a club with a purpose.

The findings describe how most of the students had a positive experience with on-campus organizations, with the exception of students who had to quit their sorority or fraternity because it was taking up too much time. The findings validated the literature in that the social interactions with on-campus organizations provided motivation. Although the literature contained extensive information on the subject, the students in this study spoke little about any academic knowledge or skills obtained from these on-campus organizations. Students described the following school-based social capital that was not discussed in the literature as being obtained from on-campus organizations: networking (finding more opportunities), and finding resources (campus career center).

*High School Life*

All of the students attended CPHS for all four years of high school and graduated in 2008. All of the students were enrolled in A-G courses at this high school and all students met the requirements for admission into college. Students spoke very highly of the small learning environment at CPHS, the programs that were provided at CPHS, the teachers that had taught most of their classes, and the staff members who helped them get to college. The students obtained school-based social capital from teachers and staff. The various types of school-based social capital that was obtained from these social
interactions were academic knowledge, study skills, networking, and college entrance knowledge.

Teachers. Students had the closest relationships with their teachers and spoke very highly of them. Overall, these students had very positive interactions with their teachers. Nearly all of the students discussed their teachers in a manner similar to Angel's:

My teachers were always there for me, for whatever, no matter what I needed, they were definitely part of my success, a big part of my success. I felt like they wanted to see me succeed and they cared enough to help me with whatever I did. Not only the subject they taught, but in other subjects. All around they helped you the best they could. And I appreciate that.

Rosa described how the small student-teacher ratio helped prepare her for college. Angel stated that “having great teachers who cared was essential” and “whoever is running this place is doing a fabulous job.” Teachers provided the following types of school-based social capital that helped prepare students for college: academic knowledge and skills, use of resources, and study skills.

High school teachers were the main source of the necessary academic knowledge to succeed in college. Lupe remembered learning the unit circle and trigonometry identities in her mathematics class and about the U.S. Constitution in her AP government class. “Maybe I forgot how to do them, but I had knowledge about them so it was easier.” Angel described that his teachers taught him how to stay focused, to manage his time, and to take “copious notes” which he felt “leads to success.” Eduardo described how teachers at CPHS spent four years talking about being prepared, having a notebook and pencil out, and going to class; and he continued to do this in college. Angel was very thankful that he “got pressured” by his teachers in high school: “In high school I was
under a lot of pressure, I felt stressed all the time. I now know how to handle work and how to handle stress. The experience from high school was a good root to start from.”

Teachers also helped some of these students realize the importance of utilizing resources. Rosa stated that CPHS taught her that building relationships with professors and using professors as an important resource is key: “The teachers made it easier to establish relationships [with professors]. Where you can approach them without being nervous because they were friendly, the teachers would also tell you that talking with professors was a success factor when you go to college.” The students’ positive relationships with their teachers allowed them to seek out positive relationships with their professors. According to the literature, first-generation college students only obtained academic knowledge from their professors, while the students interviewed in this study obtained academic knowledge, networking opportunities, and knowledge of where and how to utilize resources from their professors. This was partially a result of having such close relationships with their teachers in high school.

Some of the students described how their high school teachers taught them to utilize after-school hours with teachers in order to learn the material. Angel still used his “agenda,” a time management skill that he learned from all his teachers during his freshman year. Rosa described how she often looked for encouragement and motivation from her teachers. All of the students described at least one teacher that they talked with most about their academic aspirations. Many of the students continued to stay in contact with their teachers through Facebook or e-mail. They liked that the teachers were concerned about them and would continue to help them in college if needed. The students knew that they could utilize their high school teachers as a resource in college.
Many of the students appeared to only use this particular resource for motivation or emotional support as opposed to academic support. Pablo was the only student who used his high school mathematics teachers for tutoring in college.

Teachers provided students with study strategies to use in college. "[My] study skills I learned from the great little high school that I went to," Angel said in the interview with a huge smile. He went on to describe the different types of study skills he learned (reviewing notes, reading, Cornell notes, time management skills) and the fact that he was "well prepared for college. No, I was overprepared for college. . . . Some of those students, I don’t know how they made it into college!" Pablo shared many study strategies that he learned from his CPHS teachers with his suite mates during study groups throughout the semester. He often used the note card study strategy and note-taking strategies that he had learned from his English teacher in high school. Some of the students retyped their notes and/or reviewed their notes, a strategy that they had learned from their Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) teachers. Rosa learned that she was more of an independent worker in high school, so she knew that studying by herself in college was what she needed to do.

The teachers who taught specific programs also helped students obtain school-based social capital. The specific programs that students described as being important in their preparation for college were: AVID, the advanced placement program, and the school-wide portfolio requirement. The teachers who were involved in implementing the AVID, AP, and portfolio programs at CPHS provided the following school-based social capital to students: academic knowledge, academic skills, study skills, and networking.
The school-based social capital obtained by being members of the AVID program included academic skills and study skills. Students enrolled in the AVID program stated that this program helped with their preparation for college. "Everyone should take an AVID class," Angel said in response to the question "What advice would you give to all students at the high school you attended?" According to the students, the AVID program promoted higher education, pushed them to do well in school, and taught them how to review notes, create good questions, be prepared, and participate in study groups. Lupe, Angel, and Liliana discussed how the Cornell note system used in the AVID classroom and in most of their classes at CPHS was extremely helpful in college, although many of them admitted to not writing questions in the left-hand side. However, students would go back and review their notes because "that was what I was taught to do." In addition, Liliana discussed the importance of guest speakers who were college students in helping to understand the different aspects of the college experience. Rosa described the importance of AVID tutorials because they mirrored the tutoring sessions she experienced in college: "The tutor would only be able to ask the students questions instead of answering questions . . . the students would answer their own questions in the discussion."

The school-based social capital obtained from the advanced placement program included academic knowledge and skills. Angel was thankful for his AP English course: \[I\text{ still have my notes from my English AP course. I am so happy that I kept them because I am doing marvelous in my [college] English classes . . . I did not pass the AP, but that [using notes in the college English class] was the bright side to that [not passing the AP exam]. I still have my list of fancy words to use to impress my professors.\]
Lupe learned in her AP English class how to take active reading notes and then to write a paper from these notes. Lupe believed that all students should take AP classes in order to be prepared for college. Both Eduardo and Lupe spoke highly of the AP program and the work ethic that these classes taught them. Eduardo almost dropped his AP classes because they were too hard, but was grateful that he did not drop these classes because the experience showed him how hard college classes would be and that he needed “to try harder.”

The portfolio assignment at CPHS provided the following type of school-based social capital: academic knowledge and skills and networking. Several students commented on the usefulness of the CPHS portfolio that they had to do each year. Many of their college classes required them to do a portfolio and it was helpful that they already understood what to do for these assignments. During the portfolio presentation at CPHS, students are required to present their portfolio orally to a panel of five teachers, parents, and community members. In addition to this presentation, many students also present in front of their peers, community members, parents, and non-high school students at various school events. Angel was very appreciative of the public speaking skills he learned at CPHS:

Being able to talk in public was a big plus because a lot of people got C’s and B’s in their oral comm. class, which everyone [in his college] has to take, I got an A because it was easy to address a room full of people without being nervous and I think speaking in high school in front of people helped.

In addition to academic knowledge, the portfolio assignment and presentation provided students with networking opportunities. Rosa commented on the fact that people who attended portfolio day were very supportive of each of the students. In fact, when
she came back to her hometown she ran into someone who had been on her portfolio panel: “It is such a great feeling [having people come up to you] when you come back, and you feel like you are alone because my family is all gone and I don’t really talk to them anymore, and really feeling like the community is my family.” In Rosa’s case the networking opportunities created in high school, specifically through the portfolio, provided her with a pseudo-family. In addition to the presentation, students at CPHS are required to complete community service hours as part of the portfolio assignment. Liliana’s community service requirement helped provide a networking opportunity as her community service turned into a job at a law office, a job she continued to have in college.

Angel described how CPHS prepared him for college and gave him the motivation for college because it was “geared towards promoting higher education” and that “it is what pushed me.” Some of the students expressed that CPHS should “make the classes harder” and other students felt that the classes were hard enough. Students also expressed that they felt CPHS should help promote more independence within the student community, especially the seniors. Eduardo described how CPHS could gradually take away help each year: “Freshman year, a lot of help, then sophomore year take some help away, and so on.” Again, the findings validated the literature. Teachers are very important to students’ academic development and the positive social interaction between students and teachers created the following school-based social capital: academic knowledge/skills (unit circle, trig identities, knowledge of the U.S Constitution, preparation, note taking), study skills (being prepared, study groups, note cards), and motivation (“it is what pushed me”). In addition, the social interaction between groups of
teachers in the AVID program, AP program, and when completing the portfolio created
the following school-based social capital: academic knowledge (active note taking, how
to do a portfolio), academic skills (rigorous curriculum), study skills (note-taking skills),
and networking (jobs, pseudo-family).

Staff members. Students also spoke very highly of the staff members at CPHS and
did not describe any negative social interactions with them. Rosa described how the
administration at her school had a belief that all students could go to college: “My
principals really encouraged all of us, equally, to go to college and they gave us a lot of
resources and good contacts.” This provided the motivation needed for many students to
pursue college. The staff members at CPHS helped students obtain the following school­
based social capital: accessing college entrance knowledge and use of resources.

Of all the people who worked at CPHS, the college counselor and assistant
principal were the most important in helping student access college entrance knowledge.
Students described how they learned how to get to college through guidance from their
college counselor and assistant principal. This guidance included making sure they
would work to receive grades of C or above, sign up for the SAT, know how to apply to
college, know how to write a personal statement, review the personal statement, know
how to find scholarships, know what was needed for the Free Application for Federal
Student Aid (FAFSA), know how to apply for a pin number for the FAFSA, know when
to apply for the FAFSA, understand what the financial aid packaged meant, know when
to turn in their enrollment deposits, know when and how to turn in orientation fees,
obtain counseling on what college to choose, and be aware of how and when to turn in
housing forms. Guidance was an important aspect of the experience at CPHS for all of
these students. For many of these students, CPHS was the only place that provided them with assistance for preparing for college. None of their parents had attended college and many of their parents had not graduated from high school.

In addition to guidance, the students appreciated going on college visits with the college counselor and the assistant principal. The students felt that these experiences provided them with an idea of what college would be like even if they did not decide to go to the college they were visiting. Lupe recalled visiting a very large college that was about a 1½ hour drive from CPHS. She liked seeing all the people on campus and realized that college was a real thing that she could attend. Angel described how the field trip to his current college campus had been “very helpful because [when I got here] I knew things other people didn’t. I knew the right people to talk to.”

Staff members also helped students learn how to use resources. Eduardo said that he learned how to ask for guidance from college staff members from his high school counselor. This included asking for help on what classes he needed to take, where to find the career center to look for a job, and how to apply for his university’s scholarship program. Pablo described how CPHS prepared him for college, appreciating “the confidence that the school gave me to confront professors if I ever had a question.” Pablo also discussed that he learned the importance of talking with staff members at the college level about his schedule from his high school college counselor. Many of the students also described their gratitude for the staff members’ use of community members as a resource to help the students of CPHS financially and emotionally. Rosa realized the importance of community members’ support for CPHS and this is why she made sure that she “plugs” CPHS whenever possible. “I have contacted a winery owner and I have
asked him to come by. I have that power now. I can say, "The school really helped me get here [to college], I know you are interested in mentoring or education, [so] swing by and check it out."

In addition to community members, parents, teachers, and staff, the alumni have become advocates for the success of CPHS and understand that community members are an important resource for the success of the school.

The findings validated the literature in that staff members were the single most important persons in helping students obtain college access knowledge and that the social interaction between students and staff members at CPHS created the following school-based social capital: college entrance knowledge (application, personal statement, FAFSA, SATs) and use of resources (talking with professors, talking with staff members, utilizing community members as a resource).
Chapter 5

Conclusion

The probability of a first-generation Latino college freshman going to college is low and the probability of such a person dropping out of college is high (Choy, 2001; Ishitani, 2006; NCES, 2005; Pascarella et al., 2004). Identifying useful school-based social capital obtained by students during high school and college as well as identifying the important sources of school-based social capital is helpful to educators because educators can prioritize their efforts in assisting first-generation Latino college students to attend and graduate from college. From this study, I answered the following two questions: What social interactions in high school and college provide school-based social capital to first-generation Latino students? What school-based social capital is obtained by first-generation Latino students in high school and college?

This qualitative study provided insight into the college experience of six first-year, first-generation Latino college students at three universities. This study explored the school-based social capital obtained by students from people or groups of people at the college level and at the high school level. Most of the data validated the literature. There were some emergent categories that were not discussed in depth in the literature, but were important in this study. Figure 3 below illustrates the essential components of school-based social capital found in this study and is similar to the figure explained in chapter four (Figure 2). The difference between Figure 3 and Figure 2 is that Figure 3 provides examples of each kind of school-based social capital provided by educators at the college level and high school level.
The students described the following as the social interactions important in obtaining necessary school-based social capital at the college level: professors, staff members, librarians, peers, and on-campus organizations. Positive social interactions of meeting with professors created the following types of school-based social capital: networking (jobs on-campus, internships with medical field), finding resources (library workshops, tutoring centers), and academic knowledge (office hour discussions, clarifying an assignment, math problems, how to read a text book). Positive social interactions of going to tutoring centers (or graduate students) created the following types of school-based social capital: academic knowledge (improved homework completion, writing skills), and use of resources (writing center, graduate students, junior college...
tutoring lab). For some students, interactions with the librarian provided the following school-based social capital: research skills (how to find information). The positive social interaction of peer networks created the following school-based social capital: use of resources (books, syllabus) when the student did not have access to them, motivation (to go to class, or to do the work, or to do well), study skills (study groups, discussion of the reading prior to class, study strategies), and academic knowledge (ask questions, having peers read to them). However, although students did obtain school-based social capital through their peers, they also discussed how distracting their peers could be as well. The positive social interactions with on-campus organizations provided the following school-based social capital: networking (finding more opportunities), finding resources (campus career center), and motivation.

The students described the following social interactions as being important in obtaining school-based social capital in high school: teachers and staff. The positive social interaction between students and teachers created the following school-based social capital: academic knowledge (unit circle, trig identities, knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, “fancy words”), academic skills (preparation, “always have a notebook and pencil”), and study skills (study groups, note cards, review of notes). The positive social interaction between groups of teachers in the AVID program, AP program, and when completing the portfolio created the following school-based social capital: academic knowledge (active note taking, how to create a portfolio), academic skills (rigorous curriculum), study skills (note-taking skills), and networking (jobs, pseudo-family). The positive social interaction between students and staff members at CPHS created the following school-based social capital: college entrance knowledge (application, personal
statement, FAFSA, SAT's, college visits) and use of resources (talking with professors, talking with staff members, utilizing community members as a resource).

Summary of the Findings

Overall, this study found that at the college level, professors, staff, librarians, peers, and on-campus organizations provided school-based social capital to students. These positive social interactions provided the following school-based social capital: networking, finding resources, academic knowledge and skills, study skills, research skills, use of resources and motivation. At the high school level, the social interactions that provided school-based social capital to students were teachers and staff members. These positive social interactions provided the following school-based social capital: motivation, academic knowledge, use of resources, study skills, college entrance knowledge, and networking.

Many of the findings of this study validated the literature; however, there were a few elements of social capital that were not described in detail in the literature. For example, librarians at the college level provided school-based social capital. Nearly all of the students discussed the importance of the library and librarians as important resources on campus. Additional school-based social capital that was found to be important in this study and that was not described in detail in the literature included networking, research skills, and motivation. Professors and on-campus organizations provided networking opportunities at the college level in that students were able to find jobs, find internships, and/or find more opportunities. Staff members at the high school level provided students with networking opportunities in that students were able to find jobs and establish “pseudo-families” within these newly created networks. From librarians at the college
level, students were able to obtain research skills needed to complete assignments. Students either learned about these skills in workshops the librarians facilitated or by asking a librarian for help. In this study, on-campus organizations and peers provided motivation to students at the college level. The motivation provided was motivation to go to class, to do well, and to refrain from giving up.

Students admitted that they could have utilized more sources of school-based social capital in order to obtain more school-based social capital. In addition, the findings suggest that providers of school-based social capital can provide a more positive experience in helping students obtain school-based social capital in college and providers of school-based social capital in high school must understand the importance of their roles in preparing students for college.

Key Findings

The key component of obtaining school-based capital is that the experience with the source must be positive. Throughout the interviews, it was apparent that more school-based social capital was gained when students obtained it through positive social interactions. When there was a negative social interaction (e.g., an intimidating professor, a feeling of discomfort in a tutor lab, inability to understand the professor) many students seemed to “shut down” and did not want to pursue these social capital sources. If students do not feel comfortable, then they will not engage with the person who is offering the school-based social capital and may not obtain the social capital needed. However, in some cases students’ negative social interactions led students to find a place that provided the same school-based social capital in a more positive environment.
The importance of professors providing school-based social capital cannot be understated. Professors are incredibly important in leading students to appropriate resources, inspiring students to do well, and providing a quality education that students appreciate. It is important for professors to understand their importance in student success and it is important for students to understand the importance of professors as a resource. In order to access the various types of school-based social capital, students need to know that interacting with professors is encouraged and that building relationships with professors is beneficial to them. They need to know that if they are intimidated by their professors, they should talk to the professors anyway or seek out other resources that can provide them with the school-based social capital they need.

Peer interactions have both positive and negative implications. Peers may provide negative social interactions because they may influence students to choose not to go to class or to party instead of doing homework, thus missing out on important academic knowledge. However, students who motivate and model good student behaviors provide positive social interactions and are beneficial to students. Older students who have learned how to overcome distractions may be the best example of this, as discussed by two of the interviewees.

Students need to be comfortable with finding and utilizing resources on campus, especially tutoring centers. If they do not use these resources, then they will have a difficult time improving their academic weaknesses. When required to do so, many students went to the writing center and found it very helpful. Unfortunately, when it was not required, students did not go as often. Tutoring centers seem to be intimidating for many of the students who went to the local university.
Social interactions that happen in high schools are extremely important in providing school-based social capital. The staff and teachers are crucial to student success in college. Staff members need to provide students with college access knowledge and teachers need to provide rigorous curriculum to students that prepares them for the expectations of college. Several of the students commented that CPHS should increase rigor in some of their classes, all students should be required to take an AP class, and all students should enroll in AVID.

Recommendations

One of the purposes of this study was to use this study as a tool to improve CPHS so that we are able to increase the number of Latino students attending college and graduating from college. Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommendations for teachers and staff members of CPHS.

Continue to foster positive relationships with students. The importance of positive relationships between students and their teachers and students and the staff members was clearly articulated in the data. Students appreciated all of the encouragement, support, and help that teachers and staff members provided to them. It is important that teachers and staff members maintain high expectations for all students and to provide rigorous curriculum to students so that students are prepared for college. In addition, as a teacher and staff member at the high school it is important to realize that students remember “the little things” and sometimes just one thing that was said will be remembered by students forever.

Continue, enhance, and expand the AVID program, the portfolio assignment, and the Advanced Placement program. Many students spoke very highly of these programs
and of the skills that they obtained from them. In addition, student commented on the
effectiveness of these programs in preparing them for college. Some of the students
requested that all students should take at least one AP course and all students should be
enrolled in AVID. Specifically, students discussed how the tutorials, note taking
strategies, and study strategies taught in the AVID program were incredible helpful in
college; how the AP programs rigorous curriculum mirrored college courses; and how the
portfolio helped them with assignments in college as well as with public speaking.

Many students faced many distractions during their first semester. Several of the
students were very excited to “find” the library because it was free of distractions. It is
important for graduates of CPHS to know that when they are feeling distracted they
should go to the library. In addition, graduates of CPHS should know that a vast amount
of resources exist in a library and should be utilized. Experiences where students explore
and learn about college libraries may be helpful to a student’s understanding of how to
navigate a college library.

Many students had a difficult time with time management and dealing with
distractions. Having experiences in high school that help students develop these skills
would be beneficial to students. Exploring ways to “teach” time management skills,
discuss time management strategies, or provide workshops on time management skills
should be a detailed school-wide discussion at the school site.

In addition to all of these recommendations it is important to share with students
the concept map presented on school-based social capital. If students understand what
they may be lacking when they go to college and what reactions they may have when
they are confused or struggling, then they may be more prone to seek out sources of
school-based social capital on their own. If they do not know that they may be lacking school-based social capital, then they may be more likely to feel that they do not belong on the college campus and eventually drop out.

*Potential Benefits of Social Capital*

A key component of social capital is it will benefit future outcomes and will lead to additional social capital or actual capital. While reflecting on my own experience after being graduated from college and the experiences of those around me, I have come up with the following discussion and concept map of potential benefits and actual capital that students may obtain after acquiring the school-based social capital at the high school and college level.

It is important for first-generation college students to see this concept map and to read this discussion so that they understand the knowledge or skills (or social capital) that they should obtain in high school and college and from whom they can obtain such knowledge or skills. In addition, it is important for students to see how certain types of knowledge will help them eventually to obtain actual capital.

The concept map on the next page builds on the concept maps previously provided in this study. However, this concept map expands on the potential future benefits that students may obtain after obtaining the various types of school-based social capital.
**Figure 4.** Additional components of school-based social capital for this study.

After students access different types of school-based social capital from high school and college, the potential benefits they may experience include the following:
discerning what qualities are needed to be successful in high school and college so that the student can become a college graduate, obtaining internships (which may lead to better jobs), obtaining jobs, and developing qualities needed to find better jobs. All of these potential benefits lead to obtaining a well-paying job, which leads to actual capital (money, real estate, cars, stocks, bonds, etc.).

Modifying this concept map with student-friendly wording and then sharing this concept map with students may be helpful to students in their preparation for college. The keys ideas that students would need to know from this concept map are that in high school: (1) you must use your teachers and staff members for help and support, (2) your high school career should provide you with substantial motivation for college, academic knowledge in all subject areas, study skills, networking abilities, college entrance knowledge, and an understanding of how to use your resources, (3) if you do not obtain these skills in high school then college is going to be more difficult. In college, students could learn the following from this concept map: (1) if you are confused or struggling in college, seek help from professors, staff, librarians, peers, on-campus organizations, (2) through these people's assistance you should learn how to network, find and use resources, gain academic knowledge and skills, gain study skills and research skills, and improve your motivation, (3) if you are not able to gain what you need, you should find someone else to help you, (4) by understanding what you need and how to get it and then getting it, you will obtain the qualities necessary to make money and support yourself and your family in the future.
Summary

This qualitative study provided insight into the college experience of six first-year, first-generation Latino college students at three universities. This study explored how school-based social capital is obtained from professors, staff members, librarians, peers, and on-campus organizations at the college level, and from teachers and staff members at the high school level. The types of school-based social capital obtained from these sources included networking, finding resources, academic knowledge and skills, study skills, research skills, use of resources, motivation, and college entrance knowledge.

The importance of positive social interactions as a means to provide school-based social capital is one of the most importance concepts from this study. It is important for all educators to understand how important they are in providing school-based social capital to first-generation Latino college students. In addition, it is important for first-generation Latino college students to be informed of the types of school-based social capital that they should obtain from various sources and what future outcomes they can expect from acquiring different types of school-based capital.

Message to Future Students of CPHS

Some advice from the graduating class of 2008 of CPHS: Go to class, read the material, have a good relationship with the professor, attend school events, learn how to manage your time, take remedial courses at the junior college, realize that making mistakes is part of growing up. You have come too far to give up; you want to be lazy but you have to put your part into it too: take advantage of all the resources available to you, don’t be so dependent on your teachers, be prepared, motivate each other to succeed,
Suggestions for Future Research

As I listened during student interviews and reflected on their responses, I continuously thought of research studies that could be done in the future. Many of the students described horrible experiences in their remedial mathematics classes and I would like to see research done on how professors are chosen for remedial classes. It seems that many professors do not like to teach these classes and the ones who end up teaching them may not be the best professors. As high school teachers and administrators, we are constantly focused on how to improve our pedagogy to meet the needs of the students. Many of the students discussed how bad some of their college math professors were. Being a math teacher who completed a mathematics degree at a university, I am very interested in how mathematics is being taught at the college level to non-math majors. This led me to think about a research study that examines how professors can improve their teaching to meet the needs of the students and whether or not professors are interested in learning about improving their instructional strategies. Additionally, research on specific characteristics of professors who have inspired students would be an interesting study.

Many of the students knew the importance of the tutoring lab; however, they were uncomfortable going there for various reasons. One student even went to the junior college tutoring lab instead of the one at her four-year college. As a college student, I never went to the tutoring lab. From these discussions, I believe that research on effective tutoring centers (a four-year colleges and junior colleges) would be important in
improving the tutoring services provided to students. Many of the students in this study had been required to go to the writing center each week. I would like to see research on the effectiveness of making it a requirement for students to go to the writing center and tutoring labs and how many students utilize these services when it is not a requirement.

Many of the students had epiphanies about the library and its importance in providing a quiet place to study. I would like to see research on the relationship between using the library and college success relate. In addition to the library many students realized that their older peers were very helpful to their success. I would like to see more research on older peers influence on college retention and success.

Many of the students discussed the importance of learning time management skills and how to deal with distractions prior to attending college. I would like to research the best strategies for learning time management and dealing with distractions for high school students. Many of the students discussed how they loved their sociology classes and many of the students wanted to pursue a career that helps change their local communities. I would like to research how important the feeling of being an “agent of social change” is for Latino students. The Latino males interviewed seemed to encounter more distractions (at school and at home) than the Latina females and did not seem to do as well academically. I feel that a focused study on the Latino male's experience in college would be important research. Although only a few students discussed being members of a minority on campus, this has to have a significant impact on their experience on campus. I would like to see further research on how being the minority on campus affects a student’s relationships with peers and faculty members.
Although many students did not talk about their families’ influence on their college experiences, I wonder what students see as their parents’ role in their educations. Students described peers as both a help and a hindrance in their academic pursuits; more research should be done on whether or not peers are more of a help or hindrance in the academic pursuits of first-generation college students. Some students described their advisors as being somewhat helpful; I wonder how important advisors are to first-generation college students. Students living on campus talked about how helpful their resident assistant (RA’s) were; I wonder if there is an assigned person that a student who lives off campus can go to for help and if so, how do these students find out about this person?

In this study, the students who went away to college appeared to be doing well compared to the same students who stayed locally. I wonder how students who go away for college do compared to students who attend the local university. Many of these students were the oldest siblings in their families. As time goes on, their experience in college will serve as a model to their siblings. I would be very interested in a longitudinal research study that tracked how college knowledge is “transferred” to siblings.

There is much research to be done on the topic of Latino first-generation college students. In completing this study, I find that I have developed more questions about first-generation Latino college students than I had when I went into it.
Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What is the highest level of formal education obtained by your parents?

2. What is the highest level of formal education obtained by your siblings?

3. What is your primary ethnicity? Are there any other ethnicities that you identify with?

4. What is your declared major? If your major is undeclared what major are you thinking about going into?

5. Describe your first year college experience.

6. What challenges have you faced during your first year of college?

7. What has been your biggest concern this year?

8. What do you like about college?

9. Describe what you think is needed in order for a first-year freshman to be successful in his or her classes. How did you learn that these things were important to your success?

10. Describe what you do or where you go when you have questions about a course (where to go, what to do, who to talk to, how to do a math problem, how to write a better essay, etc.)? How did you learn how to do this?

11. Describe your interaction with your peers in college.

12. Discuss how your peers have helped contribute to your success.

13. Discuss how your peers have hindered your success.

14. Describe your involvement on-campus (not including going to classes).

15. How do you think this involvement has contributed to your experience as a first-time freshman?

16. What resources did you find that helped contribute to your success? How did you find these resources?

17. What aspects of the high school you attended prepared you for college?
18. What aspects of the high school you attended did not prepare you for college?

19. What aspects of college, that you did not experience in high school, have prepared you to become a better college student?

20. What advice would you give to seniors at the high school you attended?

21. What advice would you give to all students at the high school you attended?

22. Do you see yourself graduating from college with a degree in four years? Why or Why not?

23. How did your peers in high school influence your academic success?

24. How did your relationship with your high school teachers influence your academic success?

25. How did your relationship with other staff members (coaches, office manager, principals and assistance principals) influence your academic success?

26. When did you realize that you wanted to go to college? Did any aspect of your high school education help you to formulate this dream?

27. To whom in your high school setting did you talk the most about your academic aspirations?

28. How connected did you feel to the board members and community members whom you met through your school?

29. Did you know any of these community members personally? Did they provide any emotional or financial support?
Appendix B

Human Subjects Protocol

**Protocol Summary Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If requesting Exemption or Expedited Review, specify category (see <a href="http://www.sonoma.edu/aas.org/human_subjects.shtml">http://www.sonoma.edu/aas.org/human_subjects.shtml</a> for Appendix B: Research Activities Eligible for Exemption or Expedited Review):</th>
<th>Title of Project:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Brief description of purpose of project:

- New project
  - Modification
  - Sub-study
  - Previous study

- Date Starting Interaction with Human Subjects:

- End Date:

- Funding Source (if any):

**Subjects**

- Number: 
- Population:

**Source/How contacted:**

**Instruments**

Check all that apply: 
- Test
- Questionnaires
- Interview guide
- Other:

Attach one copy of each instrument used. If not yet developed, provide draft, sample, and/or outline.

**How administered:**

- Telephone
- Mail or email
- In person

Length and frequency of procedure:

**Setting:**

**Data**

Check all that apply. Data will be recorded by:

- [ ] written notes
- [ ] audio tape
- [ ] video tape
- [ ] photography
- [ ] film
- [ ] other:

Data will include:

- [ ] information which can identify the subject (e.g., name, social security number, other unique identifiers) specify:  
  - [ ] codes linked to subjects name by separate code key
  - [ ] codes not linked to subjects names

**For items checked above, circle box of those related to data that will be reported**

**Data will be used for:**

- [ ] publication
- [ ] evaluation
- [ ] needs assessment
- [ ] thesis
- [ ] other:  

**Informed Consent**

- [ ] written (attach copy of consent form, see http://www.sonoma.edu/aas.org/human_subjects.shtml for Appendix A: Informed Consent Guidance)
- [ ] oral (attach text of statement and request for waiver of written informed consent, see http://www.sonoma.edu/aas.org/human_subjects.shtml for Appendix A: Informed Consent Guidance)

**THIS SPACE FOR IRB USE ONLY**

- [ ] is exempt under category A:
- [ ] is eligible for expedited review under category B:
- [ ] requires IRB review

**Human Subjects Administrator**

**Date**

**Chair, IRB**

**Date**

**Comments:**
Protocol Requirements

As a separate attachment, submit a comprehensive protocol of your study with particular respect to methodology and plan of action. Address each of the following questions. Use as many pages as necessary to fully respond, most protocols can be covered in five pages or less.

1. What are your research objectives?

The primary purpose of this research project is to identify the social capital needed for first-generation college students to succeed in college.

2. Discuss the significance and scientific merit of the study.

This research is significant because it addresses the need for social capital among first-generation college students, which is critical for their success.

3. In what manner and to what extent will human subjects be involved?

Human subjects will be involved through interviews and surveys. The consent form will be provided to all participants.

4. What procedures, instruments, etc. will be employed?

Interviews and surveys will be used to collect data. The data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics.

5. What existing data, if any, will be used?

No existing data will be used.

6. What will the subjects be told about their involvement in the study?

Subjects will be informed of the purpose of the study, potential risks, and their rights. They will be assured of confidentiality and the option to withdraw at any time.

7. Describe the procedures for obtaining and recording the informed consent of subjects. Attach a copy of the consent form if written consent is planned. If oral consent is planned, attach a copy of the text of the statement and a request for waiver of written consent.

Informed consent will be obtained from all participants. A consent form will be provided to all participants.

8. Describe any potential risks to the subjects, including psychological stress and physical hazards. How will these risks be minimized or controlled?

Potential risks include psychological stress. These risks will be minimized through the use of trained interviewers and debriefing sessions.

9. Describe any interventions or manipulations of subjects or their environments.

Intervention will include debriefing sessions and counseling if needed.

10. What measures will be taken to safeguard the welfare of subjects, their right to privacy and confidentiality of information?

Subjects will be reassured of their right to confidentiality and privacy. All data will be stored in a secure location.

11. Are school-age children or other minors to be involved? If so, please describe the subject population.

No school-age children or other minors will be involved.

12. Are psychological tests to be used? If so, please name them.

No psychological tests will be used.

13. Describe the debriefing of subjects. What steps will be taken to deal with the after-effects of emotional stress resulting from the research procedure?

Subjects will be provided with a phone number in case they need to discuss any emotional stress.

14. What procedures will be taken to ensure prompt reporting of (a) proposed changes in the activity, (b) any unanticipated problems involving risks to the subjects or others, (c) any injury to subjects, and (d) any non-compliance with policies and procedures?

Written in 72 hours reporting of proposed changes in the activity, unanticipated problems involving risks to the subjects or others, injury to subjects, and any non-compliance with policies and procedures.

15. What type of remuneration, if any, will be offered to subjects for their participation in the research?

No remuneration will be offered to subjects for their participation in the research.
References


