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Transforming Educational Experiences in Low-Income Communities: A Qualitative Case Study of Social Capital in a Full-Service Community School

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Full-service community schools aim to reduce educational inequality by addressing the multifaceted needs of low-income children and youth. Critical to this task is the ability of these schools to generate sufficient social capital to provide students, families, and teachers with essential resources. Using data from a qualitative case study, this article explores how social capital was manifested in an urban full-service community elementary school. Findings show that the principal, teachers, and staff were important sources

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of school-based social capital, which enabled the provision of services to students and families. However, resource scarcity and interethnic tensions threatened the expansion of social capital and the school's transformative potential. We discuss implications of these findings for the theory, research, and practice of full-service community schools.

KEYWORDS: full-service community schools, racial/ethnic tensions, social capital, threats to social capital

As we approach the second decade of the 21st century, full-service community schools have reemerged as models to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of underserved students. The transformative potential of these schools lies in their ability to provide services that address students' complex and multifaceted needs while also empowering their families to generate lasting and consequential changes in their educational opportunities and communities. As we discuss in this article, the fulfillment of this potential is related, at least partially, to the ability of full-service community schools to generate and maximize social capital, defined as the network of connections between people that facilitates mutually advantageous social cooperation. Thus, questions regarding the sources of social capital at full-service community schools, the use of social capital to advance student outcomes, as well as specific threats to social capital are of theoretical and practical importance.

Drawing on data from a qualitative case study, this article examines how social capital is manifested in a full-service community school with a significant concentration of low-income students in an urban district in the Eastern United States. While we examine how one full-service community school has mobilized social capital to provide a holistic educational experience for its students, we also acknowledge factors that challenged its effectiveness. Specifically, we explore how social capital can expand the resources available to children and families as well as the conflicts that can emerge in ethnically diverse settings when the pool of resources is, nonetheless, limited.

Literature Review

First implemented in the 19th century (Richardson, 2009), the primary underlying assumptions of full-service community schools are that learning is affected by different dimensions of children's well-being and that basic needs must be satisfied before children can excel (Dryfoos, 2000). Thus, full-service community schools seek to remove barriers to students' learning through optimizing the resources of their surroundings (Sanders & Hembrick-Roberts, 2013).

Defining features of present-day full-service community schools include: (1) extended learning opportunities; (2) health, mental health, and social

services; (3) family engagement; and (4) community-centered activities (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003). While these elements provide distinguishing features of full-service community schools, configurations vary from one organization to the next. This variation allows schools to address the complex needs and build on the unique assets of students, families, and communities (Cummings, Dyson, & Todd, 2011).

Family engagement is a particularly salient feature of full-service community schools. Families are viewed not only as vital for students' cognitive, emotional, and physical health but also for community and school improvement (Epstein, 2010). In fact, across historical iterations of full-service community schools, the focus has been on constructivist, community-based approaches to learning in which students, parents, and community members are active and visible (Johanek & Puckett, 2007; Roderick, 2001). By creating inclusive climates, providing direct services, and expanding the social capital available to families, full-service community schools have sought to build stronger ties among key stakeholders.

As interest in full-service community schools has increased, so too has interest in their impact. Overall, findings from international and national studies are encouraging (Sanders, 2015). Full-service community schools have been linked to greater access to coordinated services for families, lower family stress, increased family engagement, and lower chronic student absenteeism (Arimura & Corter, 2010; Hancock, Cooper, & Bahn, 2009; Olson, 2014; Zetlin, Ramos, & Chee, 2001). Full-service community schools have also shown positive direct effects on student achievement (Adams, 2010), although these findings are less definitive. For example, while demonstrating improved academic outcomes for the most economically disadvantaged students, Cummings and colleagues (2011) were unable to demonstrate an overall improvement in achievement for the majority of students attending full-service community schools.

Thus, while empirical studies on full-service community schools underscore their potential benefits, more research is needed to better understand the conditions that facilitate or hinder these schools' effectiveness. Accordingly, this article uses social capital as a theoretical lens to explore the interrelationships between school personnel, families, and community partners within an urban full-service community school.

Social Capital as a Key Theoretical Construct

Social capital is a complex but highly useful construct for understanding the role of relationships in various domains. Since Coleman's (1988) influential paper nearly three decades ago, the theory of social capital has evolved and spread across the social sciences. This evolution has led to a typology of social capital that highlights common structural and conceptual features, including its components and functions (Halpern, 2005). One distinct

component of social capital is an intentionally constituted network of individuals (Bourdieu, 1986). The size of the network; its structure in terms of positions, hierarchies, and types of relations; and the amount of resources possessed by its members have important implications for the opportunities it offers (Lin, 2001). Another component is shared norms, values, and expectations as well as sanctions that help to maintain social network functioning by reinforcing cohesiveness and trust and reducing negative behaviors (Coleman, 1988).

The functions of social capital have been categorized as bonding, bridging, and linking. Bonding social capital refers to exclusive ties formed among members of homogenous networks or organizations (Putnam, 2001). Its function is to create strong ties to build group cohesion. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, involves ties between people from different networks. Its function is to build connections with different organizations and communities to expand access to useful resources. Linking social capital is a form of bridging capital that intentionally connects individuals or organizations across asymmetrical lines of power (Halpern, 2005).

Further, Orr (1999) argued that there is a racial/ethnic dimension to the functions of social capital. Based on his ethnographic study of school reform in Baltimore, Maryland, he concluded that when communities are constituted by different racial/ethnic groups, it is important to distinguish between intergroup and intragroup social capital. Orr conceptualized intragroup social capital as a type of ethnic bonding where relations and organizations within a given ethnic group protect members' interests and expand their access to opportunities. In contrast, he defined intergroup social capital, a form of bridging social capital, as relations and networks across racial/ethnic groups that are embodied in alliances and coalitions (Orr, 1999). Thus, intergroup social capital is especially important in reducing isolation among communities and facilitating the exchange and dispersion of goods.

Schools as Sources of Social Capital

Schools are viewed as potential sources of social capital for students and families because of the information and resources that can be exchanged within and between networks of teachers, administrators, and parents. Within schools, parents can be sources of social capital if they develop a sense of community, mutually share information, monitor each other's children, and respond collectively to resolve issues (Coleman, 1988; Crosnoe, 2004). Teachers and administrators can also provide support to students and parents by sharing information, resources, and opportunities that can help them navigate the educational system (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). In addition, teachers can be sources of professional information and advice and to the extent that they build trustworthy relations, can also serve as important sources of social capital for each other (Pil & Leana, 2009).

Nonetheless, some researchers question the value of school social capital as a mechanism to improve educational opportunities for low-income children. Rather, social capital can possibly reproduce societal inequalities because its benefits largely depend on the size of the group, its assets and resources, and its recognition within society (Bourdieu, 1986). Similarly, others have argued that the social capital possessed by economically disadvantaged families is not equally rewarded by schools (Lin, 2001).

Yet, much of the research on social capital in schools focuses on family-based social capital and the advantages commonly found among the (primarily White) middle class (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003). These studies have not examined the effects of school-based bonding, bridging, and linking social capital on underserved students within the unique contexts of full-service community schools.

Full-Service Community Schools as Sources of Social Capital

Central to the effectiveness of full-service community schools as sources of social capital is their ability to produce, expand, and capitalize on the resources of their surroundings. As Smith (2000) argues, a complex network of connections with groups from different socioeconomic backgrounds and access to diverse social capital could help these schools access a stronger pool of resources to support children and families. Also, through a combination of strong and weak ties, full-service community schools could expand their access to assets that would be unavailable if they relied solely on strong ties (Granovetter, 1983). Capitalizing on diverse networks and resources could be particularly important for schools that are trying to empower low-income families to become agents of change in their schools and communities (Noguera, 2005).

Thus, full-service community schools have the potential to be important sources of social capital. However, these schools' effectiveness may depend on their ability to expand, redistribute, and minimize threats to this capital. Interrelated threats to social capital that are relevant for this study are racial/ethnic tensions, resource competition, and historical and contemporary differences in diverse groups' school experiences and outcomes.

Potential Threats to Social Capital Within Full-Service Community Schools

Although racial/ethnic tension in the United States is not a new phenomenon, the steady increase of Latino immigrants along with the economic adversity experienced by many African Americans have increased distrust and even conflict among these groups (Gay, 2006; Oliver & Wong, 2003). The few studies that focus on Latino immigrants have shown that many have negative stereotypes about African Americans that can intensify interethnic conflict (McClain et al., 2006; Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodriquez, 2003). Moreover, the Pew Research Center (2006) found that an important

proportion of African Americans consider Latino immigrants as partially responsible for their increasingly limited job opportunities. Without ameliorating measures, feelings of prejudice often deepen among low-income groups during periods of scarcity because they view each other competitively (Bobo & Hutchings, 1996). Thus, interethnic tensions, heightened by macro-level economic disparities, restricted social mobility, and competition for limited resources, may threaten social capital in racially/ethnically diverse settings.

Another potential threat to social capital in diverse schools is the history of oppression and discrimination experienced by some racial/ethnic groups, which has resulted in lower academic success and a mistrust of mainstream institutions. Specifically, Ogbu (1987) argued that *involuntary minorities*, "people who were originally brought into the United States society involuntarily through slavery, conquest, or colonization" (p. 321; e.g., African Americans, Native Americans, and Native Hawaiians), are less likely to experience school success than *voluntary minorities*, immigrant minorities who have come to the country for better opportunities. According to Ogbu, some involuntary minorities compare their educational and labor experiences to those of Whites and attribute their limited progress to differential opportunities and discriminatory practices. Thus, these minority groups may feel alienated from and marginalized by schools (Leistyna, 2002). On the other hand, voluntary immigrants, who have a different frame of reference, compare their experiences and opportunities to the ones "back home" and have greater trust in schools and more positive educational outcomes (Ogbu, 1987). These differences in turn can reinforce and exacerbate interethnic divisions.

While Ogbu's (1987) theory provides one perspective from which to understand differential schooling experiences among racial/ethnic groups, it has been critiqued as decentering the relevance of structural oppression and institutional racism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In contrast, critical race theorists contend that nondominant students' school experiences reflect a hegemonic racial hierarchy constructed to maintain White supremacy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). While factors such as socioeconomic background, gender, religion, immigration status, language, and phenotypic features including skin color and hair texture intersect to impact one's position in this hierarchy, at the most simplified level, Whites are at the top and Blacks are at the bottom (Bell, 1992; Lynn, 2009). Black and Brown students' academic outcomes are the result of their racial positioning and limited access to the educational goods needed for success, including visibility in the school curriculum, curricular rigor, equitable school resources, culturally responsive instruction, and highly qualified teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Thus, these students are arguably always struggling for resources within schools with Whites as well as other racial/ethnic groups who may also be marginalized (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2002). Both of these theoretical perspectives provide insights into how historical and contemporary experiences

with mainstream institutions can affect interethnic relations and consequently, bonding and bridging social capital. If not addressed, these threats to social capital could diminish the transformative power of full-service community schools.

In this article, we explore how social capital is manifested in an urban full-service community school's efforts to provide equitable educational opportunities for its racially/ethnically diverse students. We focus on the school as a source of social capital with bonding, bridging, and linking functions as well as threats to this capital. The overarching question this article seeks to answer is:

Research Question: What role does social capital play in achieving the transformative goals of full-service community schools for underserved students and families?

Methods

Research Design

This article features one of three schools that participated in a multiple case study on full-service community schools. The study was designed to understand the effectiveness of community schools offering integrated services from the viewpoints of those involved in their implementation. The three schools were purposefully selected to provide both a range and depth of insights (Lichtman, 2006). The schools shared a common coordinating agency, had principals considered highly effective within the school district, and served primarily low-income students. However, the schools differed in size, program maturity, grade levels, and racial/ethnic student composition.

Setting

The school featured in this article, Hope Academy (pseudonym), was the site selected for the most intensive data collection based on the breadth, quality, and duration of its integrated services program. It thus represented the richest case for analysis of program effectiveness and outcomes. Hope Academy, located in a large urban school district serving approximately 84,000 students (85.5% African American, 8.0% White, 4.5% Hispanic/Latino, 1% Asian, and 1% Native American, Native Hawaiian, or two or more races), has been a full-service elementary community school since 2006. It is a small school serving approximately 200 students in grades pre-K–5. Most of these students are poor, with 90% qualifying for free and reduced-price meals. Slightly over one-half are English learners, and nearly one-fourth receive special education services. The majority of the students (71%) have Hispanic/Latino origins, while 13% are White, 11% are African American, and 5% are Native American or Asian. The school has two

Table 1
Student Characteristics and Outcomes, School Year 2011–2012 (Based on 191 Students, in Percentages)

Student Characteristics	School Year 2011–2012 Percentages
Racial/ethnic composition	
African American	11
Hispanic/Latino	71
Native American	3
Asian	2
White	13
Students eligible for free and reduced-price meal (FARM)	90
English learners (ELs)	52
Students receiving special education services	24
Student outcomes	
Attendance	>95
Absent 5 days or less	53
Overall mobility (withdrawals)	14 (6)
Proficient or advanced on state assessment, reading/math	
Grade 3	83/75
Grade 4	81/86
Grade 5	>95/91

kindergarten and first-grade classrooms and one classroom each for Grades 2 through 5. The teaching staff also includes three English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers and two special educators. The school faculty and administrators are White. At the close of the study, all teachers were ‘‘highly qualified,’’ as established by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, with standard or advanced professional certification. The school has been a showcase in the district because of its high academic outcomes (see Table 1 for a description of student characteristics and outcomes).

Data Collection

Data collection began in July 2011 and continued through December 2012. Extended data collection allowed the researchers to build rapport with participants, facilitating an in-depth understanding of the site. The school received an honorarium of $1,500, and interview participants, other than the principal and community school coordinator, received $20 Target gift cards. The gift cards were given at the beginning of the interviews, and participants were informed that they could skip questions or end the interview at any point without penalty. These steps were taken to minimize any effects that the incentives might have on participants' responses.

A total of 28 semi-structured individual interviews, lasting between 30 and 40 minutes, were conducted. The principal was interviewed twice, at the beginning and end of the study, and the community school coordinator was interviewed three times. Two additional staff members (one White and one African American), two community partners, and five teachers (three classroom teachers, one ESOL, and one special educator) identified by the community school coordinator as the most engaged were also interviewed. In addition, 14 parents were interviewed. Twelve of these parents accepted our invitations for interviews after the school's morning meetings and after-school program. The two remaining parents held leadership positions in the parent-teacher organization and the school-family council. Nine of the parents interviewed were Hispanic/Latino, three were White, one was Native American, and one was African American. Interviews with Hispanic/Latino parents were conducted in Spanish, which was their preferred language. Interviews conducted in Spanish were transcribed in that language and translated into English by the first author, who is fluent in both languages. The two versions were compared, and inconsistencies were corrected in the English versions. The semi-structured interviews, eliciting participants' perceptions of the school's climate, services, and effectiveness, were conducted using protocols developed to ensure the comparability of data across schools (see Sanders, 2015).

Nonparticipant school observations were also conducted to supplement the interviews and gain a better sense of how students, teachers, parents, and community partners interacted without disrupting the regular school schedule. To capture a diverse range of interactions in different grade levels and subject areas, observations lasting between 15 and 30 minutes were conducted of kindergarten, ESOL, third-grade science, and physical education classes. Also, observations of after-school and summer program activities, breakfast and lunch periods, morning meetings, school-family council meetings, and the end-of-year spring festival were conducted. Handwritten notes were taken during these observations to (a) capture general impressions of the exchanges occurring and (b) document specific exchanges and events that reflected these impressions. Multiple school visits and interactions with key participants provided opportunities for informal member checking throughout the data collection period, adding to the study's credibility. That is, regular visits to Hope Academy allowed the researchers to test and triangulate emergent findings through follow-up interviews, conversations, and observations.

Document review was a third data collection method. Reviewed documents included school mission and policy statements, communications to families and community members (e.g., newsletters, activity calendars, and flyers), website postings, handouts from school meetings, and coordinating agency brochures and newsletters. Triangulation of data sources (i.e., school personnel, parents, and community partners) and methods (i.e., interviews,

observations, and document review) over time helped to generate a richer and more nuanced account of the school's practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

All data, including interviews, were collected by the first two authors, who are Latina and African American. While we can never fully know the influence of our race and gender on the study's outcomes, we were warmly welcomed and able to establish an easy rapport with parents and school personnel. It is possible that our dual status as women of color and members of academia aided us, simultaneously allowing the low-income ethnically diverse parents and the White middle-class educators to view us as social allies.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an iterative process that began with data collection. After each interview and observation, researchers recorded their thoughts and impressions and identified individuals and areas for future inquiry. Formal interview recordings and handwritten observations were later typed into Word files and imported as memos into Ethnograph 6.0, a qualitative data analysis software package, for coding and analysis.

Coding proceeded using first deductive and then inductive strategies (Hatch, 2002). A total of 64 codes were generated for the larger study. These codes were then organized into 11 primary codes and 53 secondary codes. Social capital emerged as a primary code with five related secondary codes (linking capital, bonding capital, bridging capital, relationships, and threats to social capital).

For this article, the authors reread all data with a particular focus on understanding social capital and its secondary codes from the perspectives of the study's diverse participants. The authors then met to discuss their impressions, which were summarized in the form of tables, figures, and narrative text. Exploration of the literature on full-service community schools and social capital further informed analysis as the researchers collaboratively examined existing theories and concepts that provided an organizing narrative. The following account of how social capital influenced the transformative potential of the case school is the result of this collective and iterative process.

Findings

School-Based Social Capital

School-based social capital at Hope Academy aided the flow of services, information, and resources between the school and external organizations. As explained by the community school coordinator:

> We are the bridge, generally, between them [parents] and the larger society. . . . [B]ecause they are so isolated, there is no other place where their children can access any enrichment programs so we provide it here or connect them with it. A lot of our community school has been filling in enrichment holes, health holes, and social service holes.

To fill these "holes," the school partnered with 23 local organizations to provide services that ranged from mental health counseling to an after-school program offering tutoring and homework help. Specifically, Hope Academy offered a summer learning program; dental screenings, education, and referrals; a physical education program; a string instruments program; and adult Spanish and English literacy classes. The community school coordinator, a licensed social worker, also helped nearly 100 families to secure nutrition assistance through federal and local programs, obtained eyeglasses and clothing for students, and ran a food pantry, in coordination with a food bank, for community members (see Table 2 for a description of services and programs).

Volunteers were central to the school's efforts. They painted the brightly colored walls and built storage cabinets and cubbies for students' books, coats, and bags. A local university also donated a set of microscopes to aid science instruction, and volunteers from the same university assisted students with their award-winning science fair projects.

Community engagement was also important for integrating service learning into the curriculum. One teacher described how a nutrition class was the basis of a project to feed the homeless. Students identified healthy lunch items for bag lunches, families and community members and partners donated these items, and then students packed the lunches, which were delivered to homeless shelters in the city.

These activities and services were favorably viewed by families, who talked about Hope Academy as being a different kind of school—one where they and their children were provided with the support they needed to thrive. When describing the school's impact, one parent shared, "They also have classes for the parents, English classes. . . . I come and the classes are very good. They're helping us to better ourselves and to help our children."

The after-school program was especially valued by working parents and those who needed assistance with providing their children academic support and supervised activities outside of school. We observed children, faculty, staff, and volunteers actively engaged in homework completion, soccer matches, chess competitions, and community gardening. When comparing these after-school activities to when she attended Hope Academy, a current parent and alumna explained:

> See, it was never like that before. It keeps children involved. Most of the children that are out doing wrong, it's because they don't have anything to do. They have too much time on their hands; of course, kids are going to be kids. I was one of those kids, so I can honestly say that.

Table 2
Hope Academy School Services and Activities Based on 2011–2012 Data (23 Community Partners)

	Number of Students and/or Parents Served
Mental health and counseling services	50
Summer learning program	90
After-school program offering tutoring and homework help	85
Dental services and referrals	160
Physical education program, Playworks, which provides structured athletic activities and health information during the regular school day, after-school program, and summer learning program	95
Adult literacy classes in Spanish and English	30
Christmas gift giveaway (gifts, books, and clothing)	130
Food pantry	150
String instruments program	35

> So with them having things to do, it keeps your children occupied and it makes them excited about it; it makes them feel good, "Mom I did this, or I played this, or I'm playing chess, or I'm doing soccer."

Thus, through its networks of connections that included a variety of community partners, Hope Academy provided extensive services and activities that enhanced students' learning and well-being. The school's expanded social capital had a variety of sources and functions.

Sources and Functions of Social Capital

Social capital at Hope Academy was derived from a variety of sources, specifically the principal, faculty, and staff. Charismatic, well connected (the son of a former state superintendent), and respected within the district, the principal set the tone for the school. He was viewed as a competent leader, "friendly," and a "good man." According to one parent, "He seems to like children. He's not just here for a paycheck. He engages in a lot of the activities here and all that kind of stuff." All interviewed parents described the principal in positive terms, as did community partners. For example, the neighborhood association representative described him as the reason for the organization's deep engagement with the school. She observed:

> [A] lot of principals were very territorial and didn't want a lot of people from the neighborhoods snooping around or you know, getting in their business. But [names principal] has been a very open and embracing principal, not only with the children here—and you can

> see he has a very good relationship with them—but with the community as well.

Teachers in the building commented on the principal's extensive connections that generated public notice and resources for the school. According to one teacher:

> Probably at least once a month, you will hear him walking by doing a tour of the school with somebody. It could be someone higher up in administration, be it people who are interested in what we are doing and want to know more or even people who are looking at trying to help support our school in something.

Thus, the principal was a key source of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital at the school. Through his friendly and welcoming demeanor, he fostered relationships between stakeholders within the building, strengthening the school's bonding social capital. He also utilized his deeply rooted connections within the district and city to build partnerships that expanded the resources available to Hope Academy's children and families, further enhancing the school's bridging and linking social capital as well.

Teachers were also sources of bonding social capital as they were a close-knit faculty, committed to students' academic success and well-being, and responsive to parents' concerns. As such, they supported families' ties to the school. One parent explained how teacher accessibility also facilitated families' engagement in their children's learning at home:

> Anything that the parents have that they don't understand—like the homework—they can go and ask them. And they [the teachers] help you. Because sometimes, as a Hispanic [person], we don't all speak English, right? And sometimes the homework assignments confuse us, so then the teachers have always let us know that we can come see them.

Teachers were also sources of bridging social capital as some of them had their own connections with the community that generated resources for the school. The neighborhood association representative described the organization's initial connection with the school as having stemmed from a personal relationship with a teacher:

> We were looking for a way to support the school, those of us on the committee that were interested in the education issue, and one of the teachers here was friends with us and she suggested a teacher wish-list project, which has sort of been our signature project.

School staff, specifically the community school coordinator and the director of extended learning, were also sources of bridging capital. Both worked diligently to secure resources for the school and were generally

described by parents as helpful. When describing the community school coordinator, for example, one parent stated, "Whatever someone might need, she's always there to help us." In addition to writing grants for program funding, both used their relationships with community members to maintain or enhance the school's many activities. For example, when foundation support fell short, the community school coordinator drew on her relationships with local businesses to raise the matching funds for the school's string instruments program. Similarly, the director of extended learning asked local artists that she knew to decorate the school's outdoor classroom.

Overall, Hope Academy's principal, teachers, and staff were important sources of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Through their connections within the school and with city, district, and neighborhood leaders, they were instrumental in expanding access to instructional, extracurricular, health, and mental health resources for students, parents, and members of the larger community. In this regard, the school achieved a goal central to the effectiveness of full-service community schools—expanding the social capital available to students and families.

Threats to Social Capital

Yet, with all the school's success in providing meaningful services and resources to children and families, perceptions of cultural invisibility and marginalization, unequal access to benefits, and racial/ethnic tensions presented threats to Hope Academy's social capital. These threats were most pronounced for the school's intergroup social capital and its associated benefits.

Cultural Invisibility and Marginalization

As demographics in the community have changed and the school's Hispanic/Latino student population has increased to over 70%, some non-Latino parents of color expressed feelings of cultural invisibility and marginalization. As one parent reported, "I feel like they [Latinos] get babiefied [receive special attention] more than what our children get because it's only maybe 10 American children in this whole school." Some staff and teachers also voiced concerns about the invisibility and marginalization of non-Latino students and cultures. For example, a staff member commented:

> I feel as if this school does not have enough diversity in regards to learning how other people live. . . . [O]n like Taco Day, or whatever it was . . . I heard one Black student say, "Well everything is geared toward the Mexican kids." I certainly shouldn't hear that from children.

A particularly concerned teacher added:

> It's no diversity anymore because I think that it has gone so much toward including Hispanic culture. . . . When I have had discussions

> with the administration about this, I mean my own stepchild is Hispanic so I get that, but on the other side of it, I don't feel that there is enough about other cultures. Like, Black History is not taught and I think that it is really, really important because you have two marginalized groups competing for jobs in this city. There is a lot of racial tension and I think that we do a really bad job of having that conversation.

Unequal Access to Resources

Some non-Latino parents of color also believed that the Latino population was given preference for services. One parent felt that her son was not accepted into the after-school program because of this preferential treatment. She had attempted to enroll him in the program for two years but was told that space was not available. The first year, she did not contest the decision, but the second year she did, and her son was accepted. She explained:

> And then when I talked to the teacher a couple of months later, she was like you need to go talk to them because it was a kid that just came to the school that got into that program. . . . So I think it was a little favoritism toward the Latinos.

Moreover, the school's emphasis on reaching out to Latino parents was viewed as further marginalizing others, especially non-Latino families of color. One teacher commented:

> I know that a lot of parents feel frustrated because they come to parent meetings and everything takes twice as long because everything is translated. You have African American parents that feel disenfranchised. On our PTA we have one White lady who is really involved and the rest are Hispanic parents.

Corroborating this statement, some non-Latino parents of color mentioned that meetings were too long because of the simultaneous use of English and Spanish. For example, an African American parent mentioned that she had stopped participating in these meetings because she had multiple responsibilities and could not dedicate the time required. Observations of several school activities and events including morning meetings, school-family council meetings, and the spring festival confirmed limited participation by non-Latino families.

Racial/Ethnic Conflict

Along with perceptions of invisibility, marginalization, and unequal access to services and programing, parents recognized tensions between Latino and non-Latino groups of color, which threatened bonding and intergroup social capital. When discussing the tension between these groups, one non-Latino parent of color stated:

> It is more so the [Latino] parents that enforce the negativity, and I don't want my children to be racist to anybody. I figure we all bleed the same; we all get in our pants the same way, so if that's the case they should've never come to America. That's just how I feel.

Another non-Latino parent stated that the tensions were not generalized but existed at the individual level, "And it's certain ones. It's not all of them. In my opinion, most of them for the most part are . . . pretty decent."

Some Latino parents also recognized the tension between racial/ethnic groups, although it was not clear the extent to which these perceptions reflected more racial tensions at the societal level than actual conflicts experienced in the school: "Well, there are always problems between the other color [African American] and us, because we're Latinos and they're supposedly from here. And that's why they don't like us but I personally, no, I've never had problems with anyone."

Further exploration of the data suggested that interethnic conflict, especially between adults, was exacerbated by communication difficulties. As illustrated in the following excerpt, one non-Latino parent of color at the school expressed frustration at not being able to speak candidly with Latino parents about what she perceived as a lack of respect for "Americans." She stated, "They act like they don't want to understand us. I can't speak Spanish a lot; I can't break it down to the other parents and . . . I would say 70-85% of the parents that are here do not understand English."

The communication gap was experienced differently by Latino parents, some of whom felt as though some staff members at Hope Academy resented their inability to speak English. In the following excerpt, a parent described one incident with an interpreter at the school:

> What happens is that sometimes, for example, you have a question, and they answer you in bad form. Or, they get annoyed because you want to ask them something, and they answer you in a way like, rudely; like they don't have time [for you] or something. So then, I say [to myself], "If that's what they do with you, a parent, what do you they do with the kids?"

In sum, these interviews revealed undercurrents of nativism and racial/ethnic prejudices that were not directly addressed by school personnel. While perhaps limited in scope, such feelings diminished the school's potential to expand families' social capital by building stronger cross-cultural ties among racial/ethnic groups. At the same time, the diversity of the school population was considered an asset by most parents and school personnel interviewed. However, the need to nurture these relationships and build bridges among racial/ethnic groups was identified as critical by those expressing concerns about intergroup tensions. Sharing this sentiment, a staff member mentioned that not building such bridges "was a disservice to the

students because when they get to the real world, they need to learn to interact with everybody."

Limited School Response

As previously described, some Hope Academy personnel were aware of how tensions among racial/ethnic groups were limiting the transformative power of the school. The principal also acknowledged the limited engagement of non-Latino families of color but attributed it to historical experiences of discrimination and consequent skepticism about the "American Dream" than to lack of school outreach. He stated, "The hopelessness doesn't come so much from the current situation as the sort of generational poverty." He contended that the school strived to ameliorate this hopelessness by empowering students and families to believe that they could do "something about things." He also thought it was important to create stronger ties among the school's diverse student population:

> I think one nice thing about this school is that we have three distinct populations so it isn't an "us/them." . . . Not that there aren't tensions, but we can learn about each other. . . . If we don't get that right, then we're all screwed.

Yet, at the close of the study, no formal activities to promote cross-cultural understanding were planned or implemented. While the principal and some parents noted friendships across racial/ethnic groups, other parents and teachers voiced concerns. One parent noted that her child was teased when her father performed a traditional Native American dance at the spring festival. A Latino parent noted concern about "fights among children of different races." While an African American parent was pleased that her son attended a diverse school and learned about Latino culture, she also noted that he had learned little about African American culture. These experiences illustrate how the school's limited response to interethnic tensions affected both families and students.

Discussion

Current interventions to improve educational opportunities for students in low-income urban settings are struggling to show fruitful results (Anyon, 2005; Payne, 2008). Given the increasing educational disparities of economically disadvantaged children, it is imperative to identify interventions that may level the playing field and increase their future well-being and opportunities for upward mobility. While recognizing the importance of social policies to address the devastating influence of macro-level structural inequality and poverty on student outcomes, we nevertheless argue that full-service community schools can be an effective model to improve educational

opportunities for underserved students. Full-service community schools, by capitalizing on the resources of their surroundings and coordinating delivery of programs and services to remove barriers to learning, can improve students' educational experiences. Concurrently, these schools can be important sources of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital that build families' capacities to facilitate consequential changes in their communities. This is particularly true if schools recognize and respond to the needs of all their students.

From a theoretical standpoint, social capital, including its sources and functions, frames the philosophical mission and daily responsibilities of full-service community schools. In theory, successful full-service community schools utilize their connections and networks to improve educational opportunities and expand access to resources. In this article, we describe how social capital is embedded in the case school's efforts to provide holistic services, discuss the different sources and functions of social capital, and identify threats to social capital. Three main findings emerged from the study.

First, Hope Academy successfully provided its students with meaningful educational opportunities. It also provided coordinated services that benefitted several families, such as Spanish and English literacy classes and housing and nutrition assistance. The school's success was evident in its excellent average student outcomes and active family engagement, which are significantly higher than district averages. The school also expanded the social capital of many of its families, especially its Latino families, who were mostly immigrants settling in new destinations and whose access to social capital was limited because of their recent arrival, unfamiliarity with the country, and limited neighborhood ties (Larsen et al., 2004; Massey & Capoferro, 2008). By providing spaces for parents to come together as well as engage with teachers and community partners, the school facilitated bonding and bridging social capital, and among Latino parents, intragroup social capital as well.

Second, Hope Academy was able to capitalize on its multiple sources of social capital in a recessionary economic period. School personnel were able to establish, maximize, and sustain connections with over 20 community partners that generated valued resources and services. Nevertheless, funding limitations created service gaps, restricting the school's effective transfer of social capital to all families. This was evident in the fact that the demand for services was greater than the supply. Consequently, the support provided to students was not universal, and perceptions of unequal access to needed programs created tensions within the school.

Third, despite Hope Academy's successes, perceptions of cultural invisibility and marginalization, inequity in the distribution of social capital, and racial/ethnic tensions threatened the school's potential to foster intergroup social capital and limited the benefits that the school could provide to some of its students and parents. Specifically, some non-Latino parents of

color felt that the school's programming was directed mainly toward Latinos and that some activities became too tedious because of the accommodations provided to Latino parents (e.g., parent meetings in both English and Spanish). As a result, some non-Latino parents were less engaged at the school and felt themselves in unfair competition over its resources. Some Latino parents also perceived racial/ethnic tensions in the school, although it was not clear whether these tensions were related to dynamics observed in the school or in the society at large.

Ogbu (1987) argued that differences in historical experiences with mainstream institutions influence how racial/ethnic groups interact with these institutions. The principal at Hope Academy voiced a similar perspective. Yet, critical race theory offers an alternative framing from which to understand the racial/ethnic tensions observed at Hope Academy. Native American and African American parents' feelings of marginalization could have resulted from the school's lack of outreach, the limited presence of their cultures in curricular and extracurricular activities, and the absence of deep connections to their communities. Hope Academy's largely positive student outcomes and these families' limited power and low position in the racial hierarchy in the United States may have reduced the school's sense of urgency in responding to their concerns.

Interracial/ethnic tensions like those observed among parents at Hope Academy could be problematic in several ways, diminishing the transformative potential of full-service community schools serving diverse populations. First, these tensions could trickle down to affect the interactions among students and damage the school climate. As Sinclair, Dunn, and Lowery (2005) found, children's racial prejudices are related to parents' racial/ethnic attitudes, especially for those children who strongly identify with their parents. Racial/ethnic tensions in school may also inhibit the educational experiences of children by limiting their appreciation for and learning of cultural diversity, which is highly important when we consider the multicultural nature of society (Banks & Banks, 2012).

Moreover, these tensions and their negative impact on participation in school activities and sense of community could restrict the expansion of parents' social capital. Connections with other parents are important given that they can be mutual sources of information, monitor each other's children, and collectively respond to student and school needs (Horvat et al., 2003). If parents have minimal or mistrustful contact with other parents, they cannot function as sources of social capital for each other.

Furthermore, the importance of high levels of social cohesion and interaction (bonding social capital) has also been recognized in the neighborhood literature, which argues that communities with high levels of social capital have better mental and physical health as well as fewer safety concerns than those with low levels of this capital (Swaroop & Morenoff,

2006). Such communities also show higher levels of civic action in spite of concentrated poverty and lack of material and economic resources (Larsen et al., 2004). Even more, Mosser (1996) argues that poor communities with strong cohesion and civic engagement are better prepared to collectively address issues and concerns related to poverty. Thus, this study suggests that if full-service community schools are to realize their transformative potential for underserved students, threats to social capital must be addressed.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this case study provides empirical support for the theoretical connection between social capital and effective full-service community schools, its limitations must also be acknowledged. First, while we were able to interview a diverse group of parents, they cannot be viewed as representative of all parents in the school. By only interviewing parents participating in the school's morning meetings and after-school program, we were able to gather data from some of the most engaged families, who arguably were most knowledgeable about the school's practices. However, this selection approach did not allow us to incorporate the perspectives of those parents who were not able to come to the school or who were less engaged.

Second, the school examined is a relatively small elementary school that has been a showcase in the district because of its high academic outcomes. Because of the nature and characteristics of the school, racial/ethnic tensions and other threats to social capital may be manifested in ways that are not pertinent (or applicable) to other full-service community schools. Future studies examining full-service community schools serving students at different grade levels and with similar and different racial/ethnic compositions are therefore needed to better understand threats to social capital and school effectiveness.

Third, this study focuses primarily on the relationships among students and families of color. While White parents were interviewed, they did not express any difficulties with other racial/ethnic groups in the school. Likewise, Native American, African American, and Latino parents did not mention tensions with White families. Given that we did not interview a representative sample of parents in the school, we cannot explain this seemingly neutral positioning of Whiteness vis-à-vis other racial/ethnic groups. Nonetheless, a more in-depth analysis of Whiteness would advance our understanding of the possibilities and limitations of intergroup social capital within culturally diverse full-service community schools. This is an important area for future research.

Conclusion

Much of the research on full-service community schools to date has addressed issues related to funding or interagency collaboration (McMahon, Ward, Pruett, Davidson, & Griffith, 2000). Such studies clearly

demonstrate that these issues must be addressed if full-service community schools are to realize their goals and objectives. This study suggests that issues related to social capital expansion and access should also be addressed. It describes how one full-service community school in a large urban district in the Eastern United States was able to serve as a source of social capital, providing important services and educational opportunities to students and families.

However, racial/ethnic tensions and perceptions of unequal distribution of the school's expansive yet limited resources restricted bonding and bridging social capital and threatened the school's transformative potential. This study thus highlights the need for greater attention to the role of intergroup social capital in full-service community schools. That is, if these schools are to realize their social justice goals for students in diverse communities, then greater attention must be paid to interethnic divisions, factors that intensify them, as well as strategies to bridge them.

While we cannot be certain about the exact causes of the racial/ethnic tensions observed at the case school, we suspect that macro-level factors (institutional discrimination, retrenchment of economic resources, and implicit and explicit biases) play a key role in limiting the development of intergroup social capital. Despite the persistence of these macro-level factors, research suggests that schools can serve as organizations that ameliorate racial/ethnic tensions, facilitate open channels of communication, and build students' cultural competence (Banks & Banks, 2012). This study suggests that doing so will help 21st-century full-service community schools realize their transformative potential and move the nation closer to the goal of educational equity for low-income, ethnically diverse students.

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