

David Rangel (2016). Parental Relationships and Social Capital in the School-Community Context: A Multiple Method Study with Under-Resourced Mexican-Origin Families.

Abstract:

Educational inequality is a serious and persistent social problem in the United States. Patterns are particularly troubling for the Mexican-origin population, which consistently has the lowest levels of educational attainment of all racial/ethnic sub-groups. Scholars argue that *social capital* is a promising point of intervention into educational inequalities for Latinos. Yet, our empirical knowledge on how social capital develops and effects of social capital remains limited.

To address these issues, I take a multi-method approach drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from a cluster-randomized controlled field trial in under-resourced, Latino school-communities. In the first empirical chapter, using multilevel growth curve modeling, I ask, how effective is a family engagement program in enhancing the size and quality of school-based social capital for Mexican-origin parents, and are program effects fleeting or sustained over time as children transition from first to third grade? I find short-term positive programmatic impacts on both the size and quality of parental social relationships, but long-term impacts only on the quality of these relationships.

In the second empirical chapter, I also draw on experimental data to explore social capital effects by asking, what are the effects of social capital on Mexican-origin children's socio-emotional development, and how do these effects vary by parental language dominance and children's English language proficiency? I find positive social capital effects for Latino children with English dominant-parents, but a negative effect of social capital on non-ELL students with Spanish-dominant parents.

In the final empirical chapter, I examine interview data to explore how parents build social capital and what factors impede its development? I find that school-based social ties form through limited interaction and most often around a target child. I also find that children play a central role, not only in connecting parents, but also motivate parents to establish deeper more trusting relationships with other parents. As such, social capital develops in school-based parental social relationships through frequent interaction and when parents' demonstrate their trustworthiness. Finally, I find that exposure to violence, both sexual and physical, and restrictive immigration policy disrupts and impinges upon the establishment of school-based parental social relationships.