Abstract (Summary)

This qualitative study compares and analyzes the social network experiences of two working-class Chinese students from immigrant families (Sally, Alex) to those of one working-class Latina student from an immigrant family (Elizabeth). Theory holds that these students would have difficulty obtaining educational resources and support (i.e., social capital) to hurdle educational discrimination (Biddle, 2001). They would also have difficulty devising post-secondary education plans. As is argued throughout, it is Chinese students' presence in the more resource-full networks and organizations that facilitate their acquisition of social capital. This bears on their greater educational trajectories. The Latina student's experience contrasts theirs. Her limited social capital complicates her ability to hurdle educational discrimination. This reduces her high school opportunities and her post-secondary educational opportunities.

Full Text

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[Headnote]

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Introduction

In this article I study the educational advocacy and support that is available to three students from immigrant families, Sally and Alex (Chinese) and Elizabeth (Latina). To do so I weigh the impact of the normative support, the material resources, and networking on these three students' ability to hurdle discriminatory school policy and practice that would otherwise complicate students' educational success. Data obtained through interviews and observation is shared in this article. This study extends existing applications of the social capital concept as it roots itself in structural analyses of social reproduction. Along the way I wrest the concept of social capital away from that
scholarship that would reduce its use to investigations of normative control. I disclose the ways in which families' institutional expertise and teachers' academic support matter in these students' educational trajectories. This is the new knowledge that this article represents.

Social Capital, Social Mobility, and Social Reproduction

The scholarship of James Coleman (1988; James S. Coleman, 1961; James Samuel Coleman et al., 1966; J. S. Coleman & Azrael, 1965), which is grounded in Durkheimian notions of social integration, is the basis for a large portion of the contemporary sociology of education (Bankston & Zhou, 2002; Brittain, 2002; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Zhou, 2003; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). It is this tradition's almost exclusive attention to those invisible resources within social networks and organizations - i.e., shared expectations, trust, and normative control - that for its adherents constitute the basis of social capital. Proponents of this tradition assert that collectively shared objectives such as enrollment in rigorous academic courses, graduation from high school, enrollment in college, etc., are possible to the extent that students are situated within a set of relationships where individuals trust one another and where they are monitored by concerned adults. Min Zhou and Carl Bankston's (1998) study of Vietnamese American students in New Orleans is representative of this tradition. In their study, Zhou and Bankston document and analyze the different ways in which a community of Vietnamese immigrants in New Orleans commit its youth to the social and educational mobility aspirations of adults.

Absent in Coleman-ian applications of social capital such as Zhou and Bankston's, however, is an extended discussion of the presence of these relationships within a broader "field" marked by fundamental social and economic differences (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). How is it, for instance, that the opportunities for certain individuals and groups to profit from trust-bearing relationships is facilitated while for others it is constrained? And, how is it that the same words of advice and obligations are conducive for mobility for some and not for others? Certainly, the Vietnamese American community in Zhou and Bankston's important study do not have the market on shared expectations, trust, and normative control cornered. There is, after all, ample evidence of the existence of such relationships within various working class communities (Bell Kaplan, 1997; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; G. R. Lopez, 2001; M. L. Lopez & Stack, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Evident in these studies is the impact of class-based factors on individuals' social and institutional mobility.

Social Reproduction and Social Capital

Contrasted to Coleman-ian applications and analyses of social capital, Bourdieu's discussion of social resources as social capital is situated within a larger discussion of the social and institutional order. In his case, Bourdieu paid important attention to the social and institutional mechanisms through which individuals reproduce social inequalities (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu made it clear that social forces - e.g., cultural distinctions, the capitalist economy, etc. - not only set the context within which individuals interact but are basic to the relationships themselves, in other words, the selective flow and exchange of resources within social networks is more than a process of granting compliant individuals institutional access and mobility. It is also a process of reproduction that corresponds to parallel systems of inequality in other institutional fields. It is the ability of select individuals to procure social network resources and to use these within competitive and exclusionary institutional contexts that facilitates their preferential access to guarded and resource-full institutional space.
These network resources (i.e., social capital) include both "virtual" and "actual" resources (Bourdieu, 1986) that are obtained from knowledgeable and experienced "institutional agents" (R. D. Stanton-Salazar, 1997) and are used to procure subsequent sets of institutional resources.

The exchange of virtual resources is characterized by the transmission of knowledge concerning acceptable standards of institutional behavior or knowledge of institutional policy and practice. The exchange of actual resources, that in the context of schools include such things as money, schoolbooks, and credentials, is positively linked to greater access to guarded and resource-full institutional space. Both virtual and actual resources are derived through membership in exclusive social networks and organizations. The transmission of each type of support is pivotal for students who seek greater institutional gains (e.g., access to honors and advanced placement (AP) math and English classes, devising attainable post-secondary education plans, etc.). According to Lin (2001), access to such resources depends on the ability of individuals to extract them from advocates or advocates' ability to relay them from third parties. The first is an instance of obtaining "personal resources". The second is an instance of obtaining "positional resources". In each case this depends on the location of advocates within various social and institutional hierarchies. The greater advocates' standing in the social hierarchy, or the greater advocates' ties to resource-full individuals and organizations, the greater are the prospects for obtaining particular social and institutional resources (i.e., social capital).

The "Unremarked Revolution"

Bourdieu's notions of actual and virtual resources and Lin's notions of personal and positional resources are brought to bear on the more specific language of institutional/educational inequality that is articulated by Sam Lucas (1999) and Ricardo Stanton-Salazar (2001; 1997). In this way I bring Stanton-Salazar's work on institutional agency and institutional support to bear on Sam Lucas's concept of the "unremarked revolution". With it I examine and analyze the ways in which visible and invisible practices of exclusion factor in the educational trajectories of three students at VHS. In this section I detail the basic components of Lucas's discussion of the unremarked revolution. This is followed by a framework that is tied to critical social capital scholarship and that provides the parameters for the comparison and analysis of the schooling of the three students.

Sam Lucas states that the contemporary form of tracking, which is characterized by the unequal placement in honors and AP courses, is often due to the strategies of institutionally expert youth and their advocates who make knowledgeable demands on the school. This contrasts with historical forms of educational tracking, in other words, in the past "overarching systems" of student tracking were essentially forms of grouping students from junior high school on through high school on the basis of curricular and vocational objectives that were determined by school professionals. In this way, students from higher status backgrounds were typically funneled through courses that prepared them for college enrollment. Students from largely working class and racial minority backgrounds, on the other hand, were generally channeled through basic and remedial tracks that provided vocational training (Cicourel & Kitsuse, 1963).

Civil rights activists in the 1960s struggled to dismantle these forms of educational tracking. Since then, schools have instituted what Lucas terms as the "unremarked revolution" in response to the demands of civil rights activists. Under this design students are now grouped in a heterogeneous manner and all are provided "college
"prep" courses. This seemingly more egalitarian curricular arrangement allows for the maintenance of different outcomes by race and class in spite of civil rights demands, hi this case, higher-status families, who traditionally have not had to depend on clearly identified curricular demarcations, have been able to provide their children with targeted support to help them gain access to the honors and AP courses." These courses, and particularly the honors and AP math and English sequence, provide higher status youth with greater college eligibility than do the classes in the conventional college prep track. Lacking the "college-knowledge" (Tornatzky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002) to make these distinctions, lower-status students - i.e., working class and racial minority students and their families have been unable to gain equitable access to such courses. Thus, what are the particular strategies and opportunities of participating working class Chinese students at VHS? And, how does this compare to the strategies and opportunities of participating working class Latino students? I draw from a set of terms that is based in the work of Ricardo Stanton-Salazar, Pierre Bourdieu and Nan Lin for answers to these questions. These terms are outlined in the following section.

The Forms of Support

Three interrelated forms of social support (i.e., social capital) impact on the educational trajectories of the students in this research. They are: 1) ideational support (i.e., the inculcation and transmission of social and institutional values, cultural norms and information) (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987; Bankston & Zhou, 2002; J. Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998; Tornatzky et al., 2002; Zhou, 1997; Zhou & Bankston, 1994), 2) material support (i.e., the flow and exchange of tangible forms of support such as letters of recommendation, credentials, tuition, etc.) (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986; Lareau, 1987; R. D. Stanton-Salazar, 1997), and 3) bridging support (i.e., the mediated relationship between two parties by a third party) (Burt, 1980, 2001; Lin, 2001; McNeal, 1999; R. Stanton-Salazar, 2004). These are detailed below.

Ideational support. This most often recognized category of support encourages an ascription to pro-academic cultural norms and regulations (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987; J. Coleman, 1988; Ianni, 1989; Putnam, 2000; R. Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). It includes the selective distribution of advice and information concerning appropriate behavioral patterns that impact on school performance and institutional/educational opportunities. Support such as this provides recipients with critical information to navigate institutional/educational contexts, reduce uncertainty, and heighten perception of control. In the process, ideational support helps recipients gain subsequent levels of support that impact on their continued institutional/educational mobility.

Material support. Due, in part, to the predominance of psycho-social theorizations (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987; J. Coleman, 1988; Ianni, 1989; Putnam, 2000; R. Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). It includes the selective distribution of advice and information concerning appropriate behavioral patterns that impact on school performance and institutional/educational opportunities. Support such as this provides recipients with critical information to navigate institutional/educational contexts, reduce uncertainty, and heighten perception of control. In the process, ideational support helps recipients gain subsequent levels of support that impact on their continued institutional/educational mobility.
counselors in high schools with a higher proportion of racial minority students. Thus, White high school students possessed greater support concerning post-secondary education by comparison to racial minority students.

Bridging support. But what is the link between ideational and material forms of support and the mobility gains that students experience within competitive institutional/educational contexts? Consider that, in both Coleman-ian and Bourdieu-ian theoretical applications of social capital, the value given to the role of others in the formation of social capital is primary (Bourdieu, 1986; Burt, 2001; J. Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001; R. Stanton-Salazar, 2004; R. D. Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

Bridging support, then, is that brokerage that takes place between two or more parties and that serves as a conduit for the transmission of material and ideational support. This might include, for example, the intervention of parents who link their children to professionals in and around the school so that their children can gain the necessary advocacy for navigating the competitive and exclusionary school context.

Review of Methods

Existing work in the sociology of education provides a valuable model for explicating the specific ways that institutional advocacy and support matter for students (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau, 2000; Useem, 1992; Yonezawa, Wells, & Serna, 2002). Useem's work is particularly salient. She compares the mitigating role of parents' school expertise on students' educational trajectories. This allows me to investigate the ways in which parents' institutional/educational expertise provides their children with an initial set of resources to disentangle alienating school policy and practice and thereby obtain expert institutional support, integrate the more resource-full and exclusive honors and AP math and English classes and devise elite post-secondary educational plans, hi this way I engage that scholarship (Jencks, Grouse, & Mueser, 1983; Sewell & Hauser, 1980) that does not recognize that economic standing, and in particular immigrant parents' economic standing, is not always an accurate indicator of the quantity and quality of the advocacy and support that their children can receive. Further, this approach sheds important light on the limited analytic scope of model minority theses. Such work abounds in both academic and popular literature and reduces the greater academic performance of one group of students over others to an ascription to mainstream institutional/educational values (Bankston & Zhou, 2002; Brittain, 2002; Fong, 2003; Lee, 1996; L. Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; S. Steinberg, 1981). I turn now to a discussion of the methods of this study. This is the analytic strategy with which I gathered data from my study and from which information and analysis of three particular students are provided.

Interview Schedule. I obtained the initial set of twenty-four student interviews from clustered samples of randomly selected groups of Chinese-origin and Latino sophomores and juniors from the 2002-2003 academic year at VHS. Two basic criteria set the parameters for initial and subsequent student participation. First, students were selected based on their presence in one of the four English and math course combinations: 1) honors/AP math and honors/AP English, 2) honors/AP math and college prep English, 3) honors/AP English and college prep math and 4) college prep math and college prep English. Once students were grouped in their respective track categories by ethnicity I invited them to participate in a presentation of the study goals and objectives. Those students who attended the presentation and agreed to participate in the first phase of the interview schedule, where they provided answers to a standard social network survey, and whose parents it was later discovered possessed low occupational status in
the US (i.e., working-class employment) were selected for semi-structured and unstructured interviews and observations in subsequent phases of the data collection process. The more particular sets of questions for semi-structured and unstructured interviews of students were developed on the basis of students' responses to the standard social network survey and my observation of their presence and participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities. It was within the scope of this approach that I initiated a study of the ways in which individuals from students' family networks and curricular networks advocated on their behalf. If, for example, they identified their teachers as individuals to whom they would turn for assistance with their math and English class placement, I inquired about such assistance.

Parents and school staff comprised the second category of interviewees. My aim here was twofold: First, it was to identify the social capital that was available to parents and that was instrumental for advocating on their children's behalf. This was premised on students' answers to the structured social network survey. My second intent in this subsequent set of interviews was to expand on the information gained from students' interviews and observations. To what extent, for instance, did parents' social capital facilitate their ability to advocate on their children's behalf? Additionally, how were the limits of parents' institutional expertise hurdled, given the presence and cooperation of supportive and resource-full third party advocates?

Observations. Observations were conducted in neutral fashion. I sat in classrooms or outdoor campus settings where students congregated (e.g., cafeterias, gymnasiums, school patios, etc.). From each of these locations I mapped the location of students in relation to the institutional resources in various institutional settings (e.g., distance between and among students, distance between students and school officials, proximity of students to classroom computers, video presentations, etc.). I also observed unfolding social interaction that involved participating students, their peers and their teachers or organization moderators. At times I was the only adult in the room or the only adult among students in out-door campus settings. I gathered data on students' use of space, the quantity and the quality of resources at their disposal and the generation of institutional resources (e.g., information about navigating the school's track structure, tangible resources for successfully completing academic courses, opportunities to connect with resource-full and knowledgeable adults in and around the campus community, etc.)

All together I spent approximately twelve months collecting data. This included collecting textual data (e.g., official student data, school district data, programmatic policy, etc.), interview data and observational data. Each individual interview lasted at least one hour although a number of interviews lasted two hours or more. Parents were all interviewed by phone and all but two participated in extended person-to-person interviews at the local library or in their homes. My interviews of Chinese parents were each accompanied by an interpreter. I conducted interviews in Spanish with Latino parents. In the next section I share data on three of the eight students who participated beyond the initial stages of the data collection process.

Findings

At VHS there was - and continues to be - an insufficient number of high school counselors to meet the great assortment of student needs. During the time of my data collection, individual counselors' case loads included over 500 students. Consequently, counselors provided insufficient information to the general student population concerning auricular and extra-curricular involvement. Still, some of the counselors
interviewed did offer extensive support and information to those students who they believed merited such help. One counselor provided the following rationale when asked to respond to one Latino student's experiences concerning unfair academic support:

If they've been in so-called regular English classes, in 9th and 10th grade and suddenly they want to go to honors and AP it's very difficult because they haven't covered the same material, they don't have the history and the background, and there's a lot of summer reading that they have not done that the honor's and AP students have done.

Getting in is very difficult for one big reason: we don't have enough sections to accommodate everybody. And again we're talking economics. If they open up more AP sections it just creates havoc with the regular schedule program.

Generally, students at VHS obtained information about different school-related issues at impersonal school-wide assemblies or in brief meetings that took place between counselors and students at the close of the academic year when courses for the following year were scheduled. Thus, most students only obtained partial academic information during these events.

This inequitable distribution of information and support on the part of knowledgeable staff points to a very clear division at VHS. The near absence of a counseling staff that could bridge the information divides suffered by immigrant families and their children presented a very important institutional barrier. Indeed, this barrier continues to exclude students from the same space where information about the ways in which the alienating institutional/educational order functions could be obtained.

This division has further implications. Families' and students' inability to establish relations of trust and intimacy within school-based contexts reduce the possibility that alienated students will link to knowledgeable and resource-full school professionals. Consequently, a critical-or even mainstream student commitment to the institutional/educational order is obstructed. Thus, alienated students did not experience much affinity to institutional/educational processes that could have otherwise been instrumental to contest their alienation. These two realities represent one aspect of the exclusionary practices with which students and their families contend. Their varying ability to overcome these is described in the following section.

Parents' Support

Latino and Chinese parents in the study shared the general concern that their children obtain a university education so that their children could escape their low-economic status. The difference between both groups of parents, however, rested in their ability to obtain the necessary resources or to direct such resources to their children in order to make those concerns a reality. Where Latino parents urged their children to perform well academically, Chinese parents strategized to place their children in the honors and AP track. Thus, it is not that parents held inappropriate or inconsistent cultural aspirations as some scholars would assume (Moreno & Valencia, 2002; Moynihan, 1969). On the contrary, each of the parents with whom I spoke cared that their children comply with the highest academic standards. The difference, which is detailed in this section, rested on two levels. First, parents' possessed varying ability to directly provide the type of resources necessary for hurdling exclusionary school practice. Second, parents possessed varying ability to bridge the divides between knowledgeable and resource-full third party advocates and their children. In this section I compare the experiences of one Latina parent and one Chinese parent.

Elizabeth and her Mother (Latinas). Elizabeth's family was unable to effectively advocate on her behalf. In addition, the adults in the school who she identified as her principal...
sources of support were unable or unwilling to do the same, thus Elizabeth's only option was to contend with school policy on her own. For instance, when Elizabeth's uncle passed away, Elizabeth and her family were left without the primary source of information concerning Elizabeth's schooling. The following illustrates the significance of this loss:

Mother: Last year was a very difficult year for her and this year has not been very easy either because we have had lots of problems in the family. We lost my brother who we loved very much, I know that is something that devastated all of us.

Later when I asked her for information concerning the advocacy that her deceased brother provided she stated the following:

Mother: The one who had given me information about my children's schooling and about college was my brother. He was someone who read very much and who was well informed. He was my youngest brother and the one who most enjoyed studying. We would ask him: "What is involved in gaining admission to a university?" Or: "What programs and services exist in a university?" He was the one who provided us with all that information and advice. For example, he was Elizabeth's brother's mentor in that aspect. If Elizabeth's brother had a question I would say to him: "Go ask your uncle because he knows." He was the one who would bring them books and things like that.

Left without her brother's advocacy, Elizabeth's mother resorted to her son in order to gain information and make sense of Elizabeth's institutional/educational trajectory:

Mother: Last year she got very bad grades in math so I was upset and worried and I asked her brother: "Does she have to repeat that class?" And he said: "No, that class which she has taken is one she had already taken. That class was one that was not for her. She was too advanced for that class." And that is why he explained to me that she shouldn't have taken that class but she took it and that is why she did so poorly. "Still", he said, "she is at a good level".

Unfortunately the information her son provided was incomplete and left Elizabeth's mother without a thorough understanding of Elizabeth's situation. Why, for instance, had Elizabeth's mother allowed her to repeat a class she had already taken? In any case, Elizabeth's mother had no plan with which to proceed in her effort to advocate on Elizabeth's behalf and with which to help her obtain access to guarded and resource-full institutional space.

Despite challenges such as these, Elizabeth's mother continued to provide her daughter with ideational support. The following exchange is illustrative in this regard:

JP: Does your mom talk about her job with you?
E: Yeah. Every once in a while.

JP: What are some of the things that she says?
E: Like I hope you do better and go to college so you don't have to go through so much hard work.

Thus, Elizabeth's mother shared the perspective of all of the other parents in the study. Like the other Latino parents in particular, she believed that the sacrifices that they had endured were rooted in their lack of formal schooling. So Elizabeth's mother continually stressed the virtues of an education:

Mother: The most that I can do for Elizabeth and her brother is continue to nag them: "Do it, do it, do it". But I tell her: "I won't hold you by the hand to school." Instead I tell her: "Do it, do it, do it. I will show you where it is you will have to go out everyone has to be responsible for them self." And so I always tell her that if she has problems in math or in literature she has to find help on her own. There has to be help at school.
Without the necessary support from the counseling staff at VHS to adequately decipher the institutional maze, the direction that Elizabeth's mother provided was ultimately inadequate. All the while, other students' parents sought open avenues in and around the school community in order to obtain necessary information to overcome exclusionary school practice.

Sally and her mother (Chinese). Sally, who is the daughter of transplanted Taiwanese professionals, was among the most resource-full students in the study and at VHS in general. She received extensive and knowledgeable advice from her mother concerning her current and long term educational goals. Despite the sometimes scarce resources at VHS, Sally and her mother were able to procure critical advocacy and information that facilitated Sally's superior institutional/educational mobility. Sally and her mother obtained access to elite courses that were critical for Sally's continued institutional/educational mobility. Many of the classes in which Sally was enrolled, for instance, were either honors or AP courses. In the short-term, this provided her with the opportunity to interact with teachers who offered very specific and guarded information about the educational track structure. And, in the long-term, her enrollment in such courses increased the likelihood that she would graduate with greater college eligibility. Sally received an extensive quantity of ideational support from her mother. This support accompanied her as she made decisions about the classes in which she was enrolled, the extracurricular activities in which she participated and the plans for her life after high school. Consider Sally's mother's advice to each of her children: Mother: I say to them: "Don't lose your Chinese ways. " I sit and talk to them and they can disagree. It doesn't matter because they are individuals. They tell me how they feel about my criticism and I can tell them how I feel about their attitude... I told them you guys are grown up. I can't tell you what to do but I can give you my advice... I think most of the time I have very good connection with my children.

It was in this more egalitarian relationship that Sally had with her mother where she received information about the challenges she faced as a high school student and the plans that she harbored for her life after high school. The following exchange with Sally describes the academic information - as ideational support - that Sally was able to obtain from her mother:

JP: Why do you think you were thinking about college at such an early age?
S: I usually connected getting into a good college with having a good future. And when I first came here we had problems, mostly financial problems, and my mom did a really good job you know supporting us and everything. I think that a lot of stuff that I do - yeah I want to get into a good college, that's true, but I think what really motivates me is my mom who I think is awesome, who does a lot of stuff for herself on her own. Through the motivation that her mother inspired and in her relationship with her, Sally acquired information and advice about various universities in California as well as many outside of California. In this case, the sense of trust between them was crucial.

Important, too, was the impact that this information had on the decisions that Sally made about her life as a high school student and as a future college student. To the extent that Sally was able to rely on her mother in order to obtain critical support and information, she was also able to overcome the limited information and support at VHS. A surface-level of analysis of the previous discussion would rest the gains that Sally made to the values that she shared with her family - as in their "Chinese ways" - and to the faith and admiration that Sally had for her mother. Absent in limited analyses such as these, however, is any understanding of the resources that were available to Sally's
mother and that she relayed to Sally as she provided ideational support. Consider for instance that Sally's mother had an expertise concerning the educational system that she had acquired through her professional background in Taiwan and through her relationship with her co-workers:

Mother: I spent a lot of time visiting her teachers. I got involved with school PTA because I had time.

JP: For some people this is difficult for others it's easier. How about you?
Mother: It's easier for me because I understand the system because when I was a teacher in Taiwan we also have that kind of organization. We needed to connect [with] society and we needed to connect with parents and we needed to group the parents together in order to do some activities for school and programs and projects. So, I understand that. . . So when I joined the PTA I had no problem to try to understand what they try to say. But some other parents, especially in this city, most of them need a translator. So because I don't need the translator I can get first hand information... So most of the time I was there to acquire information to help other parents. Forme it's a lot of fun to do. I had a lot of fun.

Added to this expertise was the support and information that was available to her and that she transferred over to Sally from two very close friends of the family:

Mother: I don't know since when my two children started to call them Aunt Mary and Uncle Rob and they feel very honored. They think they are wonderful children.

JP: Can you share with me what the last time you obtained information from them was like?
Mother: Because Sally think about going to the east coast. And Rob wants her to go to the east coast directly for the undergraduate program. So he did some research. He found out that John Hopkins has a pre-med program. And also he has some relatives in Georgia so he said if Sally really wants to go then he can ask around.

Thus, the value of Sally's mother extended well beyond the cultural cues and dispositions that she was able to inculcate. It rested also on the training and professional socialization that she received in her country of origin and in the resources that she was able to procure from close family friends. More specifically, through her bridging support, Sally's mother served as a conduit of the support and information that was coupled to her ideational support. Sally's mother was able to relay additional forms of ideational support and material support as the bridge between Aunt Mary and Uncle Rob. This included information concerning east coast universities and lodging should Sally pursue the opportunity that her fictive kin made available to her.

A contrasting difference between Sally's mother and Elizabeth's mother was their different levels of institutional expertise. Though both Elizabeth and Sally's parents possessed working-class status, only Sally's mother had the institutional expertise - rooted in a Chinese professional and educational background - to successfully contest limited academic support. Where Elizabeth's mother challenged Elizabeth to obtain the institutional/educational resources that she herself could not obtain, Sally's mother effectively intervened to acquire it.

This difference had far reaching implications given the rapport that the parents were able to maintain and establish with their children. The facility with which Sally's mother was able to share the same institutional/educational space as her daughter allowed them to level the trust and communication between them. Elizabeth's mother's exclusion from Elizabeth's schooling, on the other hand, divorced any possibility for establishing or maintaining dialogue on issues that they could have otherwise experienced.
simultaneously. Thus, very tangible realities such as the presence or absence of resource-full third parties and the invitation or exclusion that each student and her mother experienced played a definite role in the ties that were forged between them. These different ties afforded greater institutional/educational mobility for one student over the other.

Teacher Support
The quality of educational support available to Elizabeth (Latina) from her teachers was demonstrably lower than it was for Alex (Chinese). In Elizabeth's class I witnessed personal admonishing and warning about the perils of not graduating. By contrast, Alex and his classmates received more interest-generating instruction, individual and collective praise, and perhaps most importantly, preparation and advice concerning post-secondary education. This is explained below.

Elizabeth. There was great irony in the lesson to which Elizabeth and her classmates were subjected on the first day of my observations in her class. Elizabeth's social studies teacher scheduled a lesson on educational segregation that was supplemented with a video documentary on the history of tracking and racial segregation in US schools. Elizabeth and her classmates were asked to compare the experience of the students in the video to their own.

Missing in the lesson, however, was the larger social analysis that was made in the documentary. Instead of focusing on the message of institutional racism and institutional inequality, the teacher urged students to comply with educational standards without also discussing the collective strategies to combat educational racism. In his estimation, compliance to school standards would provide Elizabeth and her classmates with academic success. This success would help them gain middle-class status as adults. As middle-class parents, he asserted, they would rear their own children appropriately and would have the wherewithal to escape discriminatory school districts.

At no point during the course of the lesson did the teacher make any connection between students' segregated experiences at VHS and the experiences of students in the video documentary. His students did, however. One student questioned the validity of standardized tests for channeling students in the regular college preparatory math classes as opposed to the honor and AP math classes. She asked: "What if students do not take tests seriously?" He responded: "What type of student would not take a test seriously? The lazy ones, right? They would automatically go down to the next level". It was this lesson, which was more about what Elizabeth's teacher perceived to be her students' shortcomings than about educational injustice, that clearly alienated Elizabeth and her peers. In this case, classroom discourse explicitly rejected Latino students' perspectives and the questions that were based on their day-to-day experiences. Latino students, who constituted the greater proportion of students in class, were not given the opportunity to investigate the source of their exclusion. Neither were they given the opportunity to initiate a challenge to the forces that facilitated their exclusion. Instead, students were asked to internalize their exclusion. When any opportunity for a critical investigation of their institutional experience was undermined by the classroom teacher, Elizabeth lost interest in classroom discourse. She lowered her head behind the student who sat in front of her. And, she noted changes in her day planner. This attitude and behavior contrasted the smile and visible physical interest that she demonstrated when her classroom peers recognized the contradictions in their schooling.

Alex. Opposite Elizabeth's classroom experience was that of Alex and his classmates. It was in the context of classroom interactions where teachers took an active interest in
students' concerns that teachers connected immediate curricular objectives (e.g., the attainment of particular writing skills, ability to solve complex mathematical equations, etc.) to the tasks that lay ahead for them as university students. This made it possible for teachers to shift the focus of classroom discourse around students' shortand long-term objectives. Consider my exchange with Alex's trigonometry teacher, the school professional who Alex identified as his principal source of advocacy and support:

Teacher: As part of the Academy we have a little over a hundred kids and there's nine teachers and so we become their counselors, their mentors, their moms, their dads. So we also keep close eye on their grades in all their classes and so we become like a secondary counselor to them.

Later I asked her to detail her relationship with Alex and his classmates:

JP: Suppose that one of your students approached you with the following question, how would you respond: "Should I take an Honors/AP English class or should I take a regular college prep English class?"

Teacher: I just had that question today... We talked about English AP versus regular [college prep] English and [college prep] government vs. government AP. I told students that it depends on where they want to go, what school they want to apply to and what they want to do with it.

Indeed, Alex and his classmates knew that they could approach her with questions concerning their institutional/educational mobility. In fact, in a preceding exchange she stated that she was more than willing to divert from the day's lesson to inform students about the various options:

Teacher: I feel that part of my job, as an academic teacher, is to give them as much information as they can get because we have six counselors and we have 3200 students... So, I see my responsibility as an 11th grade teacher - 10th and 11th grade because most of the kids in my trig honors class are 11th graders - is to give them as much information as I can about college, applying for colleges, what kind of colleges to go to. I emphasize things that may not have been pointed out to them or that they don't find out unless they actually go and talk to a counselor which they don't often do. I spend sometimes two or three days doing different things with them because they come up with off the wall questions that lead to other things.

In other words, while the curricular engagement of the general student population is constrained, the curricular engagement of select groups of students of which Alex is a member is facilitated in ways that extend the available ideational, material, and bridging support. At an opposite end, the sort of support and information that school staff provided to Elizabeth and her classmates, even within more informal parameters, was restricted to scheduled institutional/educational agendas - e.g., preparing students for graduation, etc. Overall, it limited the scope of how youth saw themselves as students and it certainly impacted what they imagined for their life after high school.

Alex's teacher illustrated one of the systematic ways in which the school has been organized to simultaneously limit support and information to the general student population all the while increasing the quality and range of available support to students such as Alex. In this case, the superior curricular engagement of students such as Alex has been facilitated to the extent that they are included in resource-full social network and organizational contexts. In the mean time, the curricular engagement of students such as Elizabeth is weakened. This situation is particularly unfortunate given the fact that the families of both students vie for a place in the school's hierarchical institutional order. Thus, certain students are able to secure the advocacy and support of an
additional number of school professionals while a remaining number of students and 
their parents struggle for the time and attention of their counselors.

Conclusion

In this article I have compared the range and quality of support available to working-
class students from immigrant families. Elizabeth, the Latina student, had difficulty 
receiving adequate - let alone wide-ranging - advocacy and support. By contrast, Sally 
and Alex received the kind of support needed to hurdle exclusionary 
institutional/educational policy and practice. They were also counseled to engage in 
corresponding activities that helped to extend the support they received in other 
institutional/educational realms. This finding is all the more significant given that each of 
these students was from immigrant working-class homes. In a sense, it could be argued 
that each of these students (and their advocates) were playing separate games at the 
same card table. Elizabeth and her mother played to stay at the table. Sally and Alex, on 
the other hand, as well as their advocates, played to make their way to the next card 
table. There the winnings would be greater.

Thus, participating Chinese students were able to successfully contest the educational 
practice that would have otherwise exploited their marginal working-class status while 
Elizabeth was unable to do the same. Among the numerous issues raised in this article is 
the direct and indirect ways that conventional institutional/educational policy and 
practice fosters or fractures bonds of support and trust within immigrant families. 
Immigrant families were able to engage in activities that strengthened their bonds of 
trust and reciprocity to the extent that they tapped resource-full institutional space. This 
strengthened the ability of select families to successfully confront exclusionary 
institutional hurdles. For example, where Elizabeth's mother was unable to make long-
lasting and productive ties with the educators in her daughter's life, Sally's mother was 
able to link with Sally's educators and together confront the challenges presented by the 
school system.

A marked difference that requires further discussion and investigation is the issue of 
what might tentatively be called "conformist" and "oppositional" classroom discourse. 
Consider that Alex's instructor focused on conformity to post-secondary educational 
goals and demands. Along the way Alex's teacher extended shared cultural and 
institutional dispositions. Contrast this to Elizabeth's and her classmate's experience 
which was disposed to a more oppositional take on their institutional experience. They 
were certainly interested in an intellectual exchange that would critique standards based 
testing and instruction. However, this was inconsistent with the outlook of Elizabeth's 
teacher. For instance, where his objective was to encourage submission to institutional 
standards, Elizabeth and her classmates were critical of this imposition. When the 
teacher humiliated students for questioning the validity of such standards Elizabeth and 
her classmates became despondent. Many of them - including Elizabeth - withdrew 
physically from classroom participation. This kind of intellectual alienation not only 
severed an intellectual analysis of their immediate experiences but it also widened the 
fractures between Elizabeth and teachers who could otherwise provide trust and 
support.

Thus, the nature of support, let alone the quality and range of this support, was 
demonstrably different for the students. In Alex and his classmates' case, it was rooted 
in shared dispositions and institutional goals. They obtained ideational support, 
strengthened their bond with their teacher and increased the likelihood of obtaining 
material and bridging support in the future. They were, in fact, building social capital.
Because Elizabeth’s instructor did not share their disposition and because he sought to
direct them down an avenue of which they were critical, there really was very little
opportunity to establish any sense of affinity between them. Much less was there the
possibility to challenge the cards that they had been dealt by the school.
The role that school officials played in extending the ethnic divides among the
participating students at VHS is critically important. Though Elizabeth, Sally, and Alex
contended with limited access to high school counselors, participating Chinese students'
teachers filled that counseling gap. They provided wide-ranging and high quality support
concerning the larger institutional/educational order while under similar circumstances
Elizabeth received warning about her academic shortcomings and those of her peers.
The value of the social capital construct rests in its ability to locate and disentangle the
processes of institutional alienation in the lives of individuals who are placed in
competition with each other. The first is the ability to contest institutional exclusion on
the basis of ideational support, the second on the basis of material support and the third
on the basis of bridging support. Policy analysts and educational professionals can
arguably demand that these support processes be increased in order to benefit typically
marginalized students and their parents. Missing in this understanding however, is the
call that the critics of the overarching programs made some forty years ago. The kind of
incorporation that alienated youth require cannot be framed within a conventional
integrationist/assimilationist model. To commit them to engaging general institutional
processes that bear on their lives, their preceding institutional experiences have to be
addressed. This requires a fundamental break with standard institutional processes that
have previously marginalized them.

[Footnote]
1 Urban schools were defined as central city schools, whereas non-urban schools consisted of schools th-
2 It is not the function of this article to detail the debate that surrounds the use and definition of social ca-
3 These demarcations constitute formal and informal institutional/educational policy and practice. These 
4 These demarcations constitute formal and informal institutional/educational policy and practice. These 
5 These demarcations constitute formal and informal institutional/educational policy and practice. These 
6 It is not the function of this article to detail the debate that surrounds the use and definition of social ca-

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