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## Youth Academic Success: It Starts in the Home

By  
Veronica Fay Ybarra<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** Academic Success of youth is critical for their future success as well as for the economic and social health of their communities. Using a mixed methods approach (the 2008-2013 “Social Capital and Children’s Development” survey and commentaries of eight education professionals), academic support in the home was found to be the most influential in promoting sociable and non-disruptive behaviors in the classroom and contributing to academic success of 1800 youth. The importance of a supportive home ecological environment (relative to the school and community ecologies of youth) lent support to the predictions of social and cultural capital theories in shaping the core academic self-concept of youth. Education professionals lent support for the importance of a supportive home environment in youth academics. These findings, while contributing to the scholarship in the field of early education, also pointed to new research directions on how schools and communities can support parents.

### INTRODUCTION

Academic success of youth is important because it lays the groundwork of our society’s future. Youth who are academically successful are more likely to make positive contributions to society in their adulthood. Family Facts noted that a child’s likeliness to attend college is dependent on their parent’s relationship, as in whether it is a two-parent or single parent household (familyfacts.org. 2017). Youth with a supportive family life are more likely to succeed in their future by gaining an education that can lead to better paying jobs.

Youth engage in two broad forms of behavior that may affect their overall academic success. They form relationships with one another and engage in sociable behaviors. On the other hand, youth can also be disruptive, in the classroom, in the home, or in other environments. Whether youth are sociable or disruptive, these actions do impact how well they do academically. But, youth do not live in a vacuum. They are surrounded by several different communities that support their academic success and social interactions. Teachers and the school environment play a major role. Teachers socialize

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youth in the classroom and guide them toward academic success. Schools are expected to create a nurturing learning environment for their students. However, learning first begins in the home. Parents start the learning process by setting expectations for the youth, as well as creating conducive learning environments. If we agree that youth are the future of our society and their early academic success prepare them to be leaders in adulthood, research on ways to help them succeed is critical.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The extant scholarship on academic success of youth starts with the premise that it sets a foundation for later success (Rivkin, 2003). Academic success is part of the holistic development of youth. As youth grow up, they learn not only the basics of academics but also to behave in socially acceptable ways while at the same time refraining from disruptive behaviors. There is general agreement that the family, school, and the community of youth are three of the most important contexts in which a child's overall development happens (Eccles et al., 1993). Community adults support children in their academics and overall development. But, they could also pose risks for youth.

### **Classroom Learning: Academic and Non Academic**

Academic success within a school context is influenced by both a child's disruptive behaviors in a classroom and how sociable a child is in a classroom with peers (Xia et al. 2016: 442). Students who were less disruptive and were more persistent with their schooling tended to succeed more (Rivkin, 2003). Rivkin, who studied the way that basic student achievement occurs, in grades 4 and 5, concluded that it is a combination of positive experiences that lead to student achievement. It was hard to narrow down one specific reason why students succeed; for example, Rivkin found no direct correlation between specific teacher actions and their students' academic success. Both academic and nonacademic forces contributed to a child's overall classroom experience and their success. Holistically, the child who experiences positive school and family support would do better in the classroom.

### **Pro-social Behaviors: Sociable and Disruptive**

Youth run into many social settings during their adolescence. These social situations and how they deal with them are a big determinant of their psychological development (Salakhova 2016). Starting early, youth social attitudes are conditioned by understanding to value sociability and the ways they can use it to their benefit (Asmolov 1977). Learning to behave sociably is important because it allows youth to grow in their ability to converse, understand social behaviors, and excel in social settings. And as they learn to value themselves, youth will be less prone to engage in behavior that may be aggressive or upsetting to another. It is important for youth to understand, at an early age, the meaning of why they should engage in social behaviors. Research on the

adaptive ability that comes from early socialization has shown that self-socialization is important to develop an appropriate self-consciousness (Efimova, Oschepkov & Salahova, 2015); these scholars, in their study of technology in a classroom, found that when youth were able to successfully adapt in social situations, they were able to adapt more easily in classroom environments and do better academically.

At the same time, youth are also known to be disruptive. According to “Yellow Dyno” almost one out of every two grade schoolers has physically harmed another person (2016). Many times students act out in the classroom because they believe that they cannot relate with their teachers, sometimes because the teachers might be of a different race than the student (Buchanan, 2016:142). Buchanan’s grade school students, in North Carolina, felt as if the teachers were not teaching them information they find meaningful to their education. Many expressed their feelings of disconnectedness from their teachers in physical misbehaviors within the classroom.

Sometimes students act disruptively because of the academic environment in which they are learning (Trussel, 2016:264). In Trussel’s study of high school youth in the classroom, when children were spoken to, they were heavily instructed and given directions for the majority of the time. This form of directive teaching gave students fewer opportunities to misbehave. Teacher curriculums can also heavily shape the way youth interact in academic settings. Some teachers, in the 2015 Fitzsimmons study of elementary youth, tried to ensure that they adapted their teaching strategies so that their students became comfortable in their environments (p.40). When teachers prepared their curriculum with the students in mind, students felt safe enough to be pro-social, had the opportunity to flourish and performed better academically. They had higher test scores and reacted better in a classroom. In short, students behaved and performed better in the classroom when teachers were more supportive and showed the students that they cared.

Scholars, such as Tobin and Sprague (200), in their analyses of children in Oregon, have also identified research-based alternatives that would aid in reducing youth disruptive behaviors. Some of these initiatives included keeping a low ratio of students to teachers, having highly structured classrooms, and adult mentors at school. Elliott and Turco (1986) believed that misbehaving youth (in their sample of 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> graders) would continue to misbehave unless someone else intervened in a positive way; they also found that students who misbehaved tended to not want to be reprimanded in the classroom.

### **Support in the Home**

Even before a child gets to school, it is well known that parents can holistically support a child’s overall social and academic growth. Many parents integrate social lessons into the way that they raise a child which overall allows for the child to succeed in the classroom. These students are able to learn from their parents and understand what their experiences in the educational system.

Students who had a parent who went through the educational system had an upper hand because they can learn from their parent's journey. However, some parents are not able to help their children with their academics because of their own limited education (Coleman, 2006). Coleman studied how parents of children in three different grade cohorts in Tennessee, can negatively impact their child because they lack the experience necessary to provide needed support to their child. It was important for parents to understand what the child was experiencing in school. Parents then are able to support the holistic development of their children, in their academics and in their social relationships.

### **School Protection and Risks**

It is not just the classroom environment that can potentially improve youth academic success; the school environment is also critical. Some schools are more privileged than others. More privileged schools can offer their students opportunities to flourish as students. For example, a school whose students come from wealthy families would not have to worry about having to pay for school materials, as much as a lower socioeconomic-based school would. Privilege means that youth that attend the school excel in the classroom because they are able to mainly focus on school (Curtin, 2016:3). Many underprivileged students, rather than focusing on their school, are often worried about how hungry they are and their next meal. The schools across the United States that Curtin was referring to were very low income. Their teachers had to invest more time with their students because of multiple risk factors that came with poverty. On the other hand, Chiu and Khoo (2005:1) studied a wealthier school in Hong Kong. The parents at this school who had more socioeconomic power were able to easily gain more monetary support for their child's school over another poorer school.

It is important to note that often a school's privilege is dependent on the majority of parents' financial standing. Alba, Sloan, and Sperling (2001) argued that when children of low-income families attended wealthy schools, these students might be able to lessen their wage gap in the future. Many schools try to welcome those of low incomes in order to show that all are welcome. Yet, in reality, children of low income backgrounds tended to lag behind in 2011, from those who were from higher income families (Alba et al, 2011:395). But with school support and privilege, students are more likely to academically succeed; they have the needed foundation taught in the school and support throughout their academic lives.

### **Community Protection and Risks**

Like the home and the school environments, the broader community in which the child grows up can be both protective and risky. It has been shown that when families home school all of their children, the children suffer from not having a wider community of peers (Comer, 1984). Home-schooled children are not exposed to other parents and

families who have diverse norms and cultures. Instead, the children are only shown the way that their family acts as a community. Homeschooled adolescents were unsure of the positive and negative ways that this community can affect their academic success. Often times it is perceived that the stronger the local community, the better a student will be in school. Yet this false sense of community can actually detract their attention from the truths that are instilled in the wider world.

### **Summary and Suggestions for Future Research**

Previous research reviewed above has documented the following: (1). Parents and the home play a positive role in encouraging youth academic success, wholesome sociable behaviors, and reducing disruptive behaviors; (2). Students excel in their academic pursuits when teachers and schools provide a healthy environment in which students can learn; (3). A supportive community also contributes to a more wholesome academic success.

My research will evaluate the comparative roles that the family, schools, and communities played in the holistic development of youth. Unlike previous research that focused on the environments of youth separately, I will simultaneously consider how the different communities shaped youth holistic development. Identifying the critical systems in a youth's life will offer educators and parents some guidance on the best way to approach their children's academic success.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

Academic success of youth is the central question explored in this research. More specifically, how do resources in the home, schools, and in the community in which youth live help them develop pro-social behaviors (reduce disruptive behaviors, encourage sociable behaviors), and ultimately improve their academic success. Parents and the support they provide their children in the home is arguably the starting point of how well youth do both in and outside the home. Once in school, teachers and the school resources can boost or discourage youth in their academics. Resources available in their communities are yet another source of support for youth.

Youth academic success is closely linked to their social behaviors in school. Hence, a secondary set of questions that were addressed revolved around youth sociable and disruptive behaviors that might impact their academic success. Specific attention was paid to sociable and disruptive youth behaviors and how these behaviors, that have academic consequences, were shaped by the environments in which youth lived.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Following Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 37) several ecologies relevant to youth were identified for consideration in understanding the academic success of youth. The systems ranged from the communities (exo-system), the school (meso-system), and home (micro-system) in which the youth are located. The social and cultural capital that these systems offered theoretically illustrated the processes involved in how they shaped youth. In the final analyses, these ecological systems were conceptualized as shaping the academic self-concept of youth.

### Social and Cultural Capital Theories

The Social and Cultural Capital theories gave special importance to the family system since this is where youth, through the close and personal relationships within the family, first learn the social obligations and mutual understandings necessary to succeed in life (Bourdieu, 1986: 242). For example, when parents take more interest in their child's lives, they performed better in the academic setting (Coleman 1990b: 36). Cultural capital, specific cultural beliefs, traditions, and norms that youth learn in the home and in environments outside the home, also lay an important foundation for youth development (Bourdieu, 1986: 248). Children typically relied on reciprocity as a norm, as well as social networks and relationships. Positive social relationships are important not only in childhood but also in adulthood (Schaefer and McDaniel, 2004). In addition to lessons learnt in the home, privileged school and community environments often reinforce these social and capital resources; together they shape the self-concept of youth and their future trajectories.

### Core and Flexible Self Concepts

Succeeding academically was theorized as a critical element of youth self-concept. A strong academic self-concept is often formed early (Iowa School's Core self-concept; Blumer, 1969) in the home that offers supportive academic and other socio-cultural capital resources. But, youth academic self-concept might shift and become more flexible (Chicago School of Self-Concept; Blumer, 1969) as it is reshaped by their experiences and resources outside the home, as in their schools and in the broader communities. The flexible self-concept is rooted in the Chicago School of Self-Concept. According to this school of self-concept, individuals are more likely to change their beliefs and their actions throughout their life rather than staying complacent with their core self-concepts from early childhood (Pugh, 2017).

Drawing on these theoretical traditions, two predictions were tested. Per the Iowa core self-concept perspective, the academic success of youth was expected to be the most influenced by the academic support and related resources available in the home than in the school or in the community (**Hypothesis #1**). On the other hand, if youth self-

concept is flexible, the resources available in the school and in the community were predicted to foster academic success more than the home (**Hypothesis #2**).

## **METHODOLOGY**

A mixed methods approach was used to estimate the relative effects of different ecological systems on the academic success of youth. The secondary survey source used was “Social Capital and Children’s Development: 2008-2013” (Gamoran, 2015). Qualitative interviews conducted for this research with education professionals were used to elaborate on the survey findings.

### **Secondary Survey Data**

The “Social Capital and Children’s Development” survey was conducted with 3,084 students, their families, and over 200 teachers in 52 schools in Phoenix and San Antonio during 2008-2013<sup>2</sup>. Children who were from low-income Latino families were a special focus of the study. These children were in elementary school, aged 5-12.

Approximately, 3,084 students were included in this analysis. Female and Male students were equally represented in this sample. But, only 13.7% of the student body identified as White. The rest of the sample was made up of ethnic minorities (Appendix A). Gender and race will be controlled for to identify the unique effects of ecologies on youth development. Scholars have documented that students who identify with different genders and races learn differently and have different speeds due to a variety of reasons including bias, privilege, among others (Dee, 2004).

### **Qualitative Interviews**

In order to gain ground-level perspectives on how the different ecological systems influenced youth, qualitative interviews were conducted with eight education professionals. They included: a school counselor, three school administrators, and four school teachers from eight public schools. These educators were selected for their impartial and well-rounded views of youth behavior in different settings. The Interview Protocol and Consent Forms are available in Appendix B.

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<sup>2</sup> The original collector of the data, or ICPSR, or the relevant funding agencies bear no responsibility for use of the data or for the interpretations of inferences based on such uses.



## DATA ANALYSES

Three different types of analyses were conducted for this research. First, the univariate analyses were used to build a profile of the youth sample based on their academic success, pro-social behaviors, and environments. The preliminary associations between academic success and the way it was impacted by the communities were explored using bivariate analysis. These associations were re-tested using multiple regression analyses, which offered evidence for the theoretically grounded hypotheses. Insights from the qualitative interviews were useful to illustrate the multivariate analysis findings as well as to offer suggestions for future research.

### Operationalization and Descriptive Analyses

#### Academic Success

Academic success of youth was measured using four different indicators which centered on the performance and skills that students demonstrated in the classroom. These assessments were based on regular testing and assessments that teachers conducted of the students in the classroom (Table 1.A).

**TABLE 1.A. Academic Success (Teacher Perspectives)**  
Social Capital and Children's Development, 2008-2013 (n= 3071)

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators	Values/Responses	Statistics
Academic Success	Performance	A5A Overall Academic Performance	1 = Lowest 10%	9.9%
			2 = Next lowest 20%	11.1
			3 = Middle 40%	30.4
			4 = Next highest 20%	23.0
			5 = Highest 10%	25.5
	Skills	A5B Reading Skills	1= Lowest 10%	11.2%
			2= Next lowest 20%	13.5
			3= Middle 40%	26.4
			4= Next highest 20%	22.4
			5= Highest 10%	26.5
		A5C Mathematics Skill	1= Lowest 10%	7.5%
			2= Next lowest 20%	10.2
			3= Middle 40%	32.6
			4= Next highest 20%	25.6
			5= Highest 10%	24.1
	Motivation	A5D Overall Motivation	1= Lowest 10%	5.6%
2= Next lowest 20%			11.6	
3= Middle 40%			28.9	
4= Next highest 20%			23.8	
5= Highest 10%			30.1	
	Index of Academic Success <sup>1</sup>		Mean (sd)	13.9 (4.55)
			Min-Max	4-20

<sup>1</sup>Index of Academic Success= a5a+a5b+a5c+a5d; correlations among the variables ranged from .715<sup>\*\*\*</sup> to .928<sup>\*\*\*</sup>; <sup>\*\*\*</sup>p≤.001.

As seen in Table 1.A, the children in the Social Capital and Children's Development Survey were successful in their academics. Teachers rated close to half the students as being in the top 30% of the class (48.5%) in their overall academic performance. Another third (30.4) fell in the middle 40% of the class. As for their reading skills, again half was deemed to be the highest 30% (48.9), while the middle 40% had another third (26.4). Similar patterns were found in Mathematics Skill ratings: almost 50% was in the top 30% (49.7), while more than a third was in the middle 40% (32.6). In overall motivation, more than 50% were rated to be in the highest 30% (53.9), the middle 40% had less than a third (28.9) of the students. That the sample was moderately successful in their academics was represented in their Academic Success index scores; the mean was 13.9 on a range of 4-20.

### Pro-social Behaviors

Pro-social Behaviors were operationalized to include both positive and negative behaviors. A student was considered to be pro-social if they exhibited more sociable behavior and fewer disruptive behaviors in the classroom.

Youth Sociable Behaviors. Sociable behavior, an indicator of their holistic development, was measured using four different assessments offered by the teachers. Together they indicated how sociable children were in their interactions with other children in the school setting (Table 1.B).

**TABLE 1.B. Sociable Behavior (Teacher Perspective)**  
Social Capital and Children's Development, 2008-2013 (n= 3071)

Concept	Dimension	Indicators	Values/Responses	Statistics
Sociable Behaviors	Teacher Assessment	A4i Student's behavior: Helpful if someone is hurt	1= Not true	7.9%
			2= Somewhat true	35.2
			3= Certainly true	56.9
		A4n Student's behavior: Liked by other children	1= Not true	4.2%
			2= Somewhat true	27.6
			3= Certainly true	68.2
		A4q Student's behavior: Kind to younger children	1= Not true	4.5%
			2= Somewhat true	33.7
			3= Certainly true	61.8
		A4a Student's behavior: Considerate of other people's feeling	1= Not true	6.8%
			2= Somewhat true	33.4
			3= Certainly true	59.8
Index of Sociable Behavior <sup>1</sup>			Mean (sd)	10.2 (1.9)
			Min-Max	4-12

<sup>1</sup> Index of Sociable Peer Relation= a4i+a4n+a4q+a4a; correlations among the variables ranged from .459\*\*\* to .570\*\*; \*\*\*p≤.001.

As per the teachers' assessments (Table 1.B), Children in the Social Capital and Children's Development Survey typically were well-behaved in their interactions with their school peers. According to their teachers, if someone was hurt it was certainly true

that about 56.9% of the children would help. The teachers also reported that the children were liked by others (68.2%), were kind to younger children (61.8%), and considerate of other people's feelings (59.8%). That the children were generally sociable was evident in the high mean score of 10.2 on the summative index which ranged from 4-12. A majority of the students fell in the higher ranks on the sociable index range; that is, according to their teachers, the youth exhibited positive sociable behaviors.

**Disruptive Behaviors.** Disruptive behavior, another dimension of holistic development, was indicated by four questions (similar to the measurement of sociable behaviors). But, unlike sociable behaviors, both parents and teachers offered assessments of disruptive behaviors in the home and in the classroom, respectively.

**TABLE 1.C. Disruptive Behavior**

Social Capital and Children's Development, 2008-2013 (n= 3084)					
Concept	Dimensions	Indicators	Values/Responses	Statistics	
Disruptive Behaviors By Youth	Teacher Assessment	Q3a Child's behavior: Considerate of other people's feeling (reversed)	1= Certainly True 2= Somewhat True 3= Not True	69.0% 29.3 1.7	
		Q3e Child's Behavior: Often loses temper	1= Not true 2= Somewhat true 3= Certainly true	60.9% 31.8 7.3	
		Parent Assessment	Q3v Child's behavior: Steals from home, school, or elsewhere	1= Not true 2= Somewhat true 3= Certainly true	61.3% 2.8 1.0
		Q3x Child's Behavior: Has many fears or easily scared	1= Not true 2= Somewhat true 3= Certainly true	58.8% 32.3 8.9	
		Index of Disruptive Behaviors <sup>1</sup>		Mean (sd) Min-Max	5.33 (1.3) 4-11

<sup>1</sup> Index of Disruptive Behavior by Youth = Q3a +q3e+ q3v +q3x; correlations among the variables ranged from .070\*\* to .173\*\*\*; \*\*\* p≤.001

Children in the Social Capital and Children's Development Survey were generally not disruptive (Table 1.C). According to their parents, the majority of children did not steal (61%), nor did they have many fears (59%). And for the most part the children interacted and behaved well with one another in the classrooms as well, reported their teachers. For example, teachers said that the children very considerate of their classmates' feelings (69%) and did not lose their temper (60.9%). In short, a majority of youth avoided disruptive misconduct; the mean summative score on the index score of disruptive behaviors was 5.33 on a range of 4-11. There was very little disruptive behavior that occurred among students in this sample.

## Academic Support in the Home

Success in education often starts at home. Educational support in the home, as measured in this study, tapped into whether children were supported at home, as per their teachers, in their pursuits of educational success.

**TABLE 1.D. Home Support Social Capital and Children's Development,  
Social Capital and Children's Development, 2008-2013 (n= 3071)**

Concept	Dimension	Indicators	Values/Responses	Statistics
Home Support for Education	Teacher Assessment	A3i Educational environment at home is high risk	1= Strongly agree	5.9%
			2= Somewhat agree	13.0
			3= Neither agree nor disagree	19.2
			4= Somewhat disagree	12.9
			5= Strongly disagree	49.0
		A3g Child has shared home experiences that negatively impact schooling	1= Strongly agree	6.2%
			2= Somewhat agree	12.5
			3= Neither agree nor disagree	17.9
			4= Somewhat disagree	11.9
			5= Strongly disagree	51.4
		A3e Child has reading experiences at home	1= Strongly disagree	3.7%
			2= Somewhat disagree	8.8
			3= Neither agree nor disagree	12.0
			4= Somewhat agree	28.2
			5= Strongly agree	47.3
A3d Parent has not been involved in child's education	1= Strongly agree	8.7%		
	2= Somewhat agree	11.5		
	3= Neither agree nor disagree	9.5		
	4= Somewhat disagree	15.8		
	5= Strongly disagree	54.7		
Index of Home Support for Education <sup>1</sup>			Mean (sd)	15.7 (3.9)
			Min-Max	4-20

<sup>1</sup> Index of Home Support for Education= A3I+A3G+A3E+A3D; \* correlations among the variables ranged from .312<sup>\*\*\*</sup> to .580<sup>\*\*\*</sup>; \*\*\*p<sub>≤</sub>.001.

According to the teachers, the relationships between the parents and the students in the home were highly supportive of the youth's education (Table 1.D). Almost half the students did not have risky educational environments (49%) at home or home experiences that negatively impacted their schooling (51.4%). Their reading experiences at home were also positive; about half had enough reading experiences in the home (47.3%). Also, a majority of students had parents who were involved in their education (54.7%). In short, there was a strong bond around academics between the parents and students at home. The majority of teachers believed that the children were supported in their education in a home setting. The mean home support index was 15.7 on a range of 4-20.

## Teacher Support

Once children leave for school, teachers are often their first line of support. The indicators used to measure teacher support reflected whether parents and children felt comfortable around the teachers and trusted the relationships that teachers were forming with the students and their parents.

**TABLE 1.E. Teacher Support (Student/Parent Perspective)**  
Social Capital and Children's Development, 2008-2013 (n= 3071)

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators	Values/Responses	Statistics
Teacher Support	Student Perspective	P1a Trust School Staff	1= None	.6%
			2= A little	3.8
			3= Some	22.7
			4= A lot	73.0
		P2 Number of staff you feel comfortable approaching	0= None	1.0
		1=One	10.3	
		2=Two	18.4	
		3=Three	18.9	
		4=Four	12.5	
		5=Five	7.0	
	6=Six or more	31.8		
	Parent Perspective	P1d Staff shares your expectations	1= None	.9
2= A little			5.2	
3= Some			27.3	
	P1c Staff builds trusting relationship with parent	4= A lot	66.5	
		1= None	1.0	
		2= A little	6.6	
		3= Some	28.3	
		4= A lot	63.4	
	Index of Teacher Support <sup>1</sup>		Mean (sd)	14.61(2.8)
			Min-Max	3-18

<sup>1</sup> Index of Teacher Support = p1a + p1d + p1c + p2; correlations among the variables ranged from .242<sup>\*\*\*</sup> to .630<sup>\*\*\*</sup>; <sup>\*\*\*</sup>p ≤ .001

The relationships formed between the teachers, parents, and the students in the sample were highly supportive (Table 1.E). As for the relationships teachers have with the parents, 63.4% of parents trusted the teachers and 66.5% believed that a lot of teachers shared their expectations. Similarly, three quarters of students (73%) reported that they trusted the school staff a lot. On balance, the school environment seemed to be quite supportive of students; the mean on the index was 14.61 on a range of 3-18 indicating the strong support parents and youth felt they received from the teachers.

## School Privilege

The privileged status of the school attended by the students was measured by their financial, racial, and academic composition. School Privilege focused specifically on the

teachers' perspective of their school's system. A school can have either a positive or negative impact on a child's academic success and their behavior in the classroom.

The schools that the sample youth attended were comprised primarily of Hispanic students (64.7%). More than half (58.5%) of the student body were also on free or reduced lunch and two-thirds (60.1%) were able to meet AYP in Reading. In other words, students in these schools were able to excel despite being on a lunch aid program. The school privilege index, with a mean of 3.57 on a range of 1-5, revealed that overall there was a strong sense of school privilege.

**TABLE 1.F. School Privilege**  
Social Capital and Children's Development, 2008-2013 (n= 3084)

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators	Values/Responses	Statistics	
School Privilege	Academic	P_Read Percent student body who met AYP in Reading	0= Less than 50% 1= Between 50 and <75% 2= 75% or more	7.1% 32.8 60.1	
		Financial Composition	P_FRPL Percent student body eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	0= Less than 50% 1= Between 50 and <75% 2= 75% or more	9.3% 32.2 58.5
			Racial Composition	P_RE_HISP Percent student body 'Hispanic' race/ethnicity	0=75% or more 1=Between - <75% more 2= Less than 50%
	Index of School Privilege <sup>1</sup>		Mean (sd) Min-Max	3.57(1.0) 1-5	

<sup>1</sup> Index of School Privilege= p\_read+P\_FRPL\_+P\_RE\_HISP; correlations among the variables ranged from -.042 to .593 \*\*\*; \*\*p<.001 \*p<=.05

## Community Support

Being surrounded by communities that are supportive of the youth's academic and other aspects of their holistic development are helpful to child while growing up. However, the parents in this sample did not feel supported by one another as evidenced in the mean of 7.7 of the index on a range of 4-16 (Table 1.G). Many parents did not feel they could rely on other parents for help with babysitting/shopping (68.9%), to listen to problems (49.2%), to invite them to activities (45%), and to share expectations (30.8%).

**TABLE 1.G. Community Support (Parent Perspective)**  
Social Capital and Children's Development, 2008-2013 (n= 3071)

Concept	Dimension	Indicator	Values/Responses	Statistics
Community Support	Parents	Q8a Other parents: help with babysitting, shopping	1= None	68.9%
			2= A little	15.2
			3= Some	11.2
			4= A lot	4.7

Q8b Other parents: listen to your problems	1= None	49.2%
	2= A little	23.9
	3= Some	16.5
	4= A lot	10.4
Q9c Invite other parents to school activities	1= None	45.0%
	2= A little	26.1
	3= Some	20.2
	4= A lot	8.7
Q10 Other parents share your expectations	1= None	30.8%
	2= A little	20.4
	3= Some	27.9
	4= A lot	20.9
Index of Community Support <sup>1</sup>	Mean (sd)	7.7(3.23)
	Min-Max	4-16

<sup>1</sup> Index of Community Support= q8a+q8b+q9c+q10; correlations among the variables ranged from .353<sup>\*\*\*</sup> to .633<sup>\*\*\*</sup>; <sup>\*\*\*</sup> p<sub>≤</sub>.001

### Summary Sample Profile

The youth in this study were moderately successful academically and were quite pro-social (sociable and non-disruptive) in their interactions with others. They came from homes that provided much academic support. They also had teachers who were supportive. And even though they attended privileged schools, there was not much support for academics in their communities.

### **Bivariate Analysis**

Glimpses into the ecological systems relevant to the academic success of youth in this study were available in the correlational analyses presented in Appendix C. Hinting at holistic youth development, youth who were academically successful were also more pro-social or more sociable ( $r=.311^{***}$ ) and less disruptive ( $r=-.174^{***}$ ). In addition, youth who had more academic support in the home ( $r=.497^{***}$ ), in the community ( $r=.125^{***}$ ), and to a lesser extent in the classroom ( $r=.062^{**}$ ) did better academically. Female youth were more successful academically than their male counterparts ( $r=.105^{***}$ ).

The social dynamics around youth social behavior was also evident in Appendix C. Youth with more support in the home setting ( $.318^{***}$ ) were more sociable in their behaviors and less disruptive in the classroom ( $-.169^{***}$ ). Female students were more likely, than males, to display behaviors that are sociable ( $.188^{***}$ ), be less disruptive ( $-.097^{***}$ ) in the classroom, and to receive more support in the home ( $.074^{***}$ ). However, there were no appreciable differences on any of the support systems or behaviors among students from different race/ethnic backgrounds.

## Multivariate Analysis

The preliminary associations noted above between the measures of holistic development (academic success, sociable and disruptive behaviors), support systems and controls were re-estimated using multiple regression so that the unique system could be identified (Table 3). Three models were estimated. First, disruptive behaviors were regressed on sociable behaviors and their system supports. In the second model sociable behavior was used as the predicted variable. Finally, the net impacts of pro-social behaviors and support systems on youth academic success were estimated.

As seen in Table 3, the strong direct effect of academic support in the home ( $\beta = 0.42^{***}$  in Model 2) confirmed the expectation that youth academic success uniquely began in the home. Prosocial youth, be they sociable ( $\beta = 0.17^{***}$ ) or less disruptive ( $\beta = -0.07^{**}$ ) youth, were also more successful academically. Supportive home environments also indirectly supported youth academic success by encouraging sociable behaviors ( $\beta = 0.27^{***}$  in Model 1.B) and curtailing disruptive behaviors ( $\beta = -0.12^{***}$  in Model 1.A).

**Table 3**  
**Academic Success: Regression Analyses of the Relative Net Effects of**  
**Pro-Social Behaviors, Teacher, Home and Community Support, and School Privilege, net of**  
**Gender, and Ethnicity<sup>1</sup>**  
 Social Capital and Children's Development, 2008-2013)

Pro-Social Behaviors			
	Model 1.A Disruptive Behaviors Beta ( $\beta$ )	Model 1.B Sociable Behaviors Beta ( $\beta$ )	Model 2 Academic Success Beta ( $\beta$ )
<b>Pro-Social Behaviors:</b>			
Disruptive Behavior		-.10 <sup>***</sup>	-.07 <sup>**</sup>
Sociable Behavior	-.11 <sup>***</sup>		.17 <sup>***</sup>
<b>Support Systems:</b>			
Home Support	-.12 <sup>***</sup>	.27 <sup>***</sup>	.42 <sup>***</sup>
Community Support	-.09 <sup>***</sup>	.08 <sup>***</sup>	.04 <sup>*</sup>
Teacher Support	-.04	-.02	.05 <sup>*</sup>
School Privilege	.06 <sup>*</sup>	-.001	-.01
<b>Gender (1=Female)</b>	-.08 <sup>**</sup>	.16 <sup>***</sup>	.03
<b>Ethnicity (1= White)</b>	.09	-.021	-.003
<b>Model Statistics:</b>			
Constant (a)	7.22	8.4	1.22
Adjusted R	.06 <sup>***</sup>	.14 <sup>***</sup>	.28 <sup>***</sup>
DF 1 & 2	7&1793	7&1793	8 & 1766

<sup>1</sup> Index of Academic Success= a5a+a5b+a5c+a5d;  
 Index of Home Support for Education= A3I+A3G+A3E+A3D;  
 Index of Disruptive Behavior by Youth = Q3a +q3e+ q3v +q3x;  
 Index of Sociable Peer Relation= a4i+a4n+a4q+a4a;  
 Index of Community Support= q8a+q8b+q9c+q10;  
 Index of School Privilege= p\_read+P\_FRPL\_+P\_RE\_HISP;  
 Index of Teacher Support= p1a + p1d+p1c+p2



These statistical findings were echoed in the experiences of the education professionals who were interviewed for this research. In the words of a public school administrator (Interview #3) “Home support is the key”. This administrator believed that when a child has a good home life they will most likely succeed. Other interviewees expanded on the home-academics connection. For one, negative home lives can be detrimental to a child’s ability to learn in a classroom. A public school counselor (Interviewee #1), who spoke from her experiences with youth, noted that students who had a poor home life were more likely to be disruptive in the classroom; “Troubled youth typically need additional support and guidance because of their home lives”. Another public school administrator (Interviewee #2) shared that when a child believes that they can behave in any way that they want, then it is often difficult to have them focus in a classroom where there are strict rules. A teacher (Interviewee #7) confirmed; there is a sense of accountability that is held at home that shapes the child’s behavior in the classroom.

Prioritizing the roles of the different youth ecologies was this public school administrator (Interviewee #8): “one factor of academic success is home support, and while other communities play a role they do not affect the child to the same extent.” In fact, as seen above, communities that were supportive, even if to a lesser extent than support received in the home, encouraged sociable behavior ( $\beta = 0.08^{***}$  in Model 1.B), limited disruptive behaviors ( $\beta = -0.09^{***}$  in Model 1.A) and promoted academic success ( $\beta = 0.04^*$  in Model 2).

The school environment was mixed in how it shaped holistic development of youth. For example, compared to the home environment, the role that teachers played in youth academic success was quite small ( $\beta = 0.05^*$  in Model 2). Besides, attending a privileged school encouraged (rather discouraging) disruptive behaviors ( $\beta = .06^*$  in Model 1.A). Yet, a private school teacher (Interviewee #4) felt that sociable behavior and teacher support were the two most important factors in a child’s academic success. To her, the classroom is where a child can really focus on academics and change their behavior to be conducive towards learning.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS: Empirical and Applied Implications**

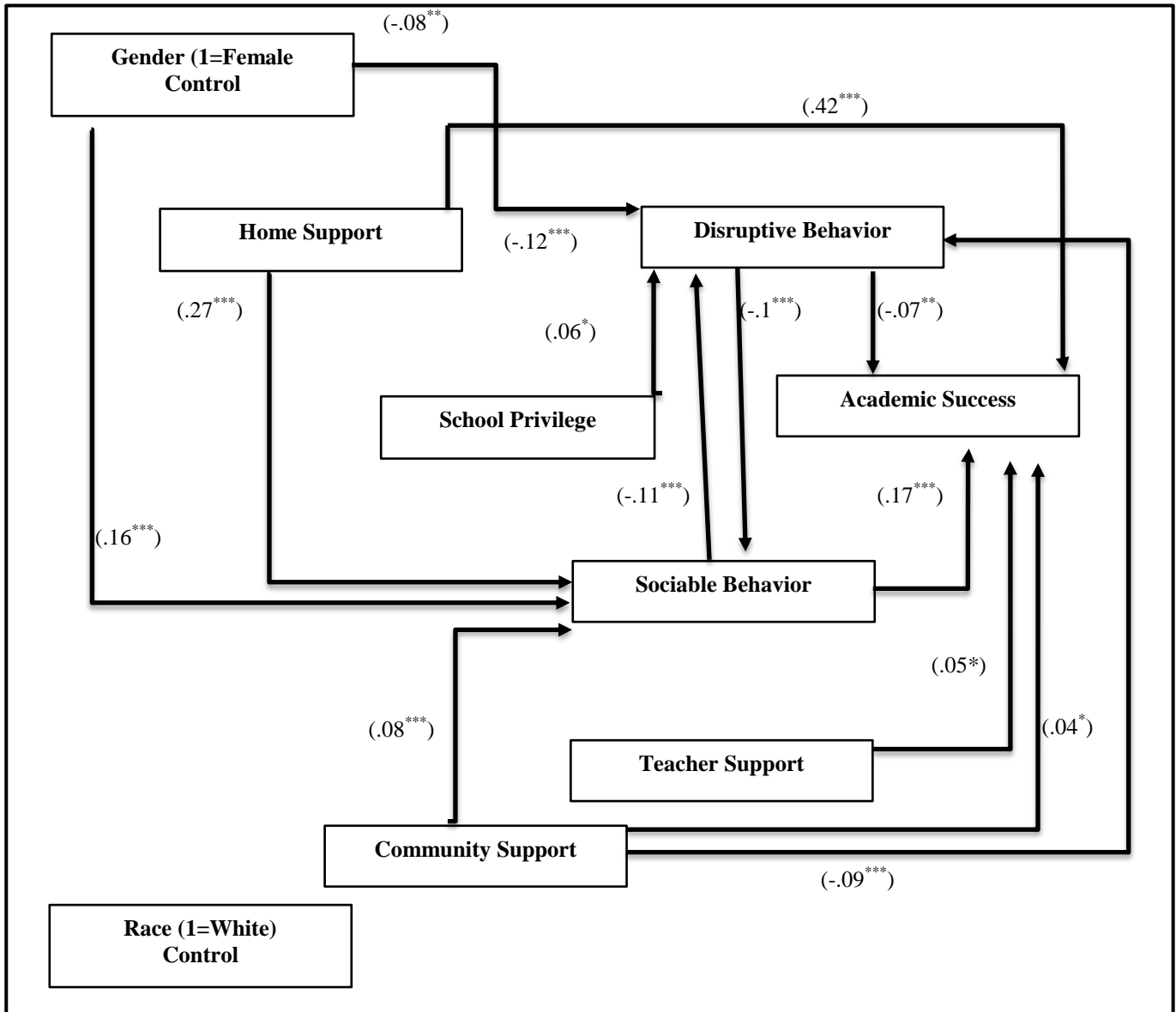
Overall, the home ecological system was the most important for the youth to be academically successful. When parents and caregivers encouraged their children in their academic endeavors, it also had the added benefits of curbing youth disruptive behaviors and encouraging sociable behavior in the classroom. Such pro-social behaviors had added academic benefits: sociable and less disruptive youth did better academically.

Being part of a supportive community was also somewhat beneficial for the overall development of youth. For one, when students were supported by adults who reside in their community, they were likely to perform better in the classroom, even if the influence was marginal. Supportive community adults also lent a hand in decreasing disruptive behaviors while encouraging sociable behaviors in the classroom. In short, the support youth received in the home, and to some extent from their community adults, were the most important to their academic success. Youth can be academically successful, even in challenging school environments, if they were supported in their home and by their communities.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Theoretically speaking, both Social Capital and Cultural Capital perspectives on developing youth academic self-concept were supported (Figure 1). Devoting social and cultural capital early on in a youth's life creates strong core self-concept that they can translate into their academics. Strong relationships that youth develop in the family and in their communities together help them become more pro-social (more sociable and less disruptive) as they move on to becoming successful in their academics.

**Figure 1**  
**Empirical Model of the Relative Effects of Pro-social Behaviors, Home and Community Support, and School Ecologies on Youth Academic Success, net of Gender, and Ethnicity (Beta Coefficients)**  
 Social Capital and Children's Development, 2008-2013 (n= 1929)



1 See Table 3 for index and variable coding

### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As with any research, while many valuable lessons were learnt about youth academic success, there is much more to be explored; the adjusted  $R^2$  in the Academic Success model was only  $0.28^{***}$ . Other sources of support, as well as those that might distract

youth, as they pursue their academics might include their peers and sibling relationships, rivalry, and home economic resources. It is worth exploring whether peers and siblings have a positive or negative impact on a child's individual growth academically. If there is a sense of peer or sibling rivalry, some youth may be more likely to respond positively and embrace the sense of competition and drive.

A public school teacher (Interviewee #5) hinted at additional sources of pro-social behaviors that should be explored further. She said, "I learned how mental illnesses are typically seen as misbehaviors; they are forms of behavior that teachers try to adapt to and learn about." A child's "self-motivation and drive through their own judgements and instincts" (Interview #6) to excel was another topic for future researchers. Some children do not necessarily feel as if they have other driving forces besides themselves. Finally, even though the statistical analyses showed that teachers made no net (after accounting for the support in the home) contribution to youth academic success, the Interviewee #8 disagreed. They believed that teachers are necessary for the classroom and to ensure that students are on the right track. Yet, other education professionals that I interviewed believed that while the teacher plays an important role for the youth, it is not the most important. Rather they felt that the home was the most important (Interviewee #1 & #2). After all, maximizing the ways adults can support youth prepare for success throughout lives is in the interest of families and the broader society.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

Social Capital and Children's Development, 2008-2013 (n= 1929)

Concepts	Dimensions	Indicators	Values/Responses	Statistics
Control Variables	Gender	GENDER of Student	0= Male 1= Female	49.3% 50.7
	Ethnicity	RACE_ETHNICITY District record of race/ethnicity of case	0= Ethnic Minorities 1=White	86.3% 13.7

### Appendix B

#### *Letter of Consent and Interview Protocol*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a Sociology Senior working on my Research Capstone Paper under the direction of Professor Marilyn Fernandez in the Department of Sociology at Santa Clara University. I am conducting my research on Disruptive Behavior on Youth.

You were selected for this interview, because of your knowledge of and experience working in the area of Youth in Education.

I am requesting your participation, which will involve responding to questions about student's behavior in the classroom, as well as background knowledge of the school. This interview will last about 20 minutes. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose to not participate or to withdraw from the interview at any time. The results of the research study may be presented at SCU's Annual Anthropology/Sociology Undergraduate Research Conference and published (in a Sociology department publication). Pseudonyms will be used in lieu of your name and the name of your organization in the written paper. You will also not be asked (nor recorded) questions about your specific characteristics, such as age, race, sex, religion.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call/text me at 209-777-7706 or Dr. Fernandez at (408-554-4432 [mfernandez@scu.edu](mailto:mfernandez@scu.edu))

Sincerely,  
Veronica Ybarra

By signing below you are giving consent to participate in the above study. You can also give me your written permission by sending a message to me via email stating that you give consent to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, through Office of Research Compliance and Integrity at (408) 554-5591.

*Interview Schedule for Supplemental Qualitative Interviews*

Interview Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Respondent ID#: \_\_\_\_

1. What is the TYPE of Institution (**NO NAME**, please) where you worked with Troubled Youth in an academic setting?
2. What is your position in this school?
3. What is the most important factor to Academic Success?
4. How long have you been in this position? How long have you been at this school?
5. How common is the problem of youth who do misbehave in the classroom?
6. Do you believe the youth who do misbehave tend to have more academic success?
7. What explains children's misbehavior in a classroom setting and what can be done to fix this problem?
8. More specifically,
  - a. What factor do you believe largely contributes to Academic Success and why?  
Teacher support, school privilege, sociable behavior, home support, or community support?

Thank you very much for your time. If you wish to see a copy of my final paper, I would be glad to share it with you at the end of the winter quarter. If you have any further questions or comments for me, I can be contacted at [vybarra@scu.edu](mailto:vybarra@scu.edu). Or if you wish to speak to my faculty advisor, Dr. Marilyn Fernandez, she can be reached at [mfernandez@scu.edu](mailto:mfernandez@scu.edu).

**Appendix C (n=3,084)**

**Table 2**

**Correlation Matrix: Indices of Disruptive Behavior on Youth, Teacher Support, School Privilege, Numbers of years lived in US, Gender**

	Index: Academic Success	Index: Home Support	Index: Disruptive Behavior	Index of Sociable Beha vior	Index: Comm unity Suppo rt	Index: School Privileg e	Index Teac her Supp ort	White vs. Non- White	Femal e (1) vs. Male (0)
Index of Academic Success <sup>1</sup>	1.00								
Index of Home Support <sup>2</sup>	.497***	1.00							
Index of Disruptive Behavior <sup>3</sup>	-.17**	-.17***	1.00						
Index of Sociable Behavior <sup>4</sup>	.31***	.32***	.16***	1.00					
Index of Communit y Support <sup>5</sup>	.13***	.097***	-.12***	.12***	1.00				
Index of School Privilege <sup>6</sup>	-.06*	-.05*	.06**	-.02	.05*	1.00			
Index of Teacher Support <sup>7</sup>	.06*	.07*	-.06*	.02	.14**	-.01	1.00		
Gender 1=Female	.11***	.07***	-.097***	.19***	.03	-.02	-.03	1.00	
Race (1=White)	.029	.040*	-.023	-.025	.013	-.410***	.008	.006	1.00

\*\*\*p<.001; \*\* p<.01; \*p<.05

<sup>1</sup> Index of Academic Success= a5a+a5b+a5c+a5d

<sup>2</sup> Index of Home Support for Education= A3I+A3G+A3E+A3D

<sup>3</sup> Index of Disruptive Behavior by Youth = Q3a +q3e+ q3v +q3x

<sup>4</sup> Index of Sociable Peer Relation= a4i+a4n+a4q+a4a

<sup>5</sup> Index of Community Support= q8a+q8b+q9c+q10

<sup>6</sup> Index of School Privilege= p\_read+P\_FRPL\_+P\_RE\_HISP

<sup>7</sup> Index of Teacher Support= p1a + p1d+p1c+p2

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