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"The Past Is Not Prologue" Educational Achievements of Young Adults

By
Oscar Quiroz-Medrano¹

Abstract. As global competition intensifies; college education has become a necessary tool for young adults to succeed. In this study, a mixed method approach was used (the NLSY survey, supplemented with qualitative interviews of seven education professionals) to identify the supportive resources needed by young adults to overcome the risks they faced as they aspired to complete high school and actualized their college aspirations. High school experiences and aspirations did not hinder youth from their later educational achievements. Rather, it was the social and cultural resources available in their post high school lives that mattered in actualizing their college aspirations. That the support available later in their lives as young adults were the most influential in their educational accomplishments supported the predictions of social-capital theories in shaping flexible (Chicago School) academic self-concepts of youth and contributed to the sociology of higher education. While contributing to the scholarship on higher education, the research also underscored the need for the continued support needed by young adults as they pursue their educational goals.

INTRODUCTION

As global competition continues to intensify, education becomes the fundamental mechanisms which can help individuals succeed. But, for many students across the United States, education is an obstacle that has to be overcome because they have limited access to resources in their communities which often translates into an inadequate preparedness for a four-year university. A youth's educational achievement is the end result of a host of social and cultural factors that shape aspirations and ultimate achievements. How much do early aspirations affect their later achievements? If aspirations do matter, what are the factors that shape early aspirations? And how important are social and cultural capital resources in actualizing educational aspirations. By furthering our knowledge of forces that shape our students, their parents, educators,

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and educational institutions can better manage and combat detrimental influences and augment support structures. Insuring that all needed resources are properly allocated and distributed is necessary for the positive success of future leaders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The central themes examined in the scholarly articles reviewed below about educational achievements and aspirations centered on assets and risks in the lives of young adults. The principal contribution of this research will be to uncover an interdependent set of important signs in student's experiences that facilitate or stand in the way of their future academic trajectories.

Resources and Educational Achievements

It is a well-known fact, in the popular and academic circles, that young adults need a variety of resources to thrive. Researchers have located these needed resources in institutions, communities, and families. These systems are fundamental agents in the education of young adults.

Institutional Resources

School institutional resources are significant in achievement gaps in the U.S. Fram, Miller-Cribbs, and Van Horn (2007), in their longitudinal study of 3,501 children in 1,208 classrooms from 264 schools in the south, found links between student performance and disadvantaged schools. Using a hierarchical linear model (HLM) these researchers found that variability in a child's first-grade learning was connected to resource structures of schools. For example, public schools with high minority population, higher subscriptions to free lunch plans had under-equipped classrooms, that is, teachers with significantly lower work experience and certification than comparison schools. In turn, their students showed lower reading skills.

While education is important for the future of young adults, it is particularly so if they are at high risk of juvenile delinquency and potential incarceration. Scholars have studied ways in which government and voluntary community programs can improve services to better help high-risk youth. Frankford (2007), in her review of research on the state of prevention and intervention services for high risk youth, argued that government and voluntary programs are not meeting the actual needs of these youth because of their limited view of "fixing" certain issues. She offered a "systems of care" approach (p. 596) for identified high-risk youths with behavioral disorders who had deficits in family, neighborhood, and community assets. Looking into micro level of changes will allow governments and organizations to better combat the negative environmental factors that reshape the lives of high-risks youths and end the rotating door of delinquency among youth of color.

Educational opportunities in juvenile justice institutions have been shown to have positive effects in reducing recidivism. Blomberg, Bales, and Piquero (2011) conducted a 1-year study of recently released juvenile delinquents from Florida juvenile justice institutions. Young juveniles with above average (compared to below average) academic achievement while incarcerated were significantly more likely to return to school post-release, particularly for males and Blacks. While males and Blacks had higher re-arrest probabilities, school attendance assisted them in the re-entry process. Educational achievement provided them positive life outcomes because of being disassociated from previous criminal trajectories.

Community Assets

Community assets are yet another influential set of resources in a young adult's development. McCammon (2012) promoted the implementation and effectiveness of system of care (SOC) for young adults, their family, and communities. SOCs create a holistic positive atmosphere for young adults and their families to realize their full potential. SOC clearly encourages proper training and supervision to strengthen the assets of struggling families so that there could be positive development within the nuclear family. SOC will also cultivate support at the school and community level to help strengthen young adults.

Building assets in a community translates into personal well-being, economic security, civic behavior, and well-being of women and children in the communities. Page-Adams and Sherraden (1997) reviewed community revitalization strategies in high poverty stricken communities. The underlying question that drove this research was whether asset holdings had positive effects, and if so for whom and under what circumstances? Their longitudinal study mapped out the community asset-building programs which positively addressed larger anti-poverty issues.

Family Assets and Risks

Families are a fundamental agent in the education of a child's knowledge of societal norms, values and expectations. Families with assets have been found to help their young smoothly transition into adulthood. Using data from 14,823 youth in the 1994 National longitudinal study of adolescent Health (Add Health), these researchers found that those whose families had more expendable resources to offer to the young adult during this important time in their life were had higher probabilities of attending Four-year universities. Those who had a natural mentor at any given time at the age of 14 years old were more likely to stay on a positive trajectory rather than participating in risky behaviors.

Children in families with more assets were also more likely to have positive outcomes compared to children with low family assets. Grinstein-Weiss, Williams Shanks, and

Beverly (2014) reviewed the positive effects of asset building and their long term positive impact. Two central questions were raised: Do family assets improve child wellbeing? And can asset-building programs increase saving and assets, leading to improvements in the wellbeing of children from low-income families? They found that program increased family assets but most importantly positive outcomes for the child. These outcomes are seen in the long term effects such as college enrollments, and a decrease in risky behavior, all resulting from increase in the nuclear family assets. They also made a case for federal and state incentives to increase the family assets to those who otherwise would not have them, thus increasing positive academic outcomes for low income children.

The importance of parent, teacher, and sibling involvement in the child's basic psychological development has also been documented by researchers. A 2017 study conducted by Kaap-Deeder, Vansteenkiste, Soenens, and Mabbe followed 2 children each from 154 families over a consecutive 5-day time span, revealed that parents, teacher, and siblings played a significant role, by offering mentoring and support, in more positive outcomes in the child's psychological development. Creating a positive atmosphere with the support of the parents and siblings encouraged the young adult to continue their education.

Family ties have also been shown to be important to broader education of youth, as in developing their civic values and wealth accumulation. Using data on second generation immigrants in 29 countries, Ljunge (2015) youth with strong family ties had higher civic virtues when compared to their counterparts with weaker family ties. Cultivating strong family ties and kinship takes on added significance in modern times where the family structures and functioning has changed. Guizzard (2006) argued that changes in the way modern families function have shifted the focus of new generations away from kinship relationships to their own professional career development and wealth accumulation.

College Aspirations

Another strand in the literature on youth education is college aspirations, factors that cultivate said aspirations, and its educational consequences. University aspirations, early on, are important predictors of attending college and completing a degree. Ching-Ling Wu and Haiyan Bai (2016), in their two wave-longitudinal study in Taiwan, found that parents and teachers expectations promoted positive outlook toward higher education among students and in turn their achievement. Family socio-economic resources were only an indirect force in dictating student aspirations. After factoring economic status and parents' educational experiences, early university aspirations of youth continued to be positively related to their university attainment. No doubt, parents played an influential role in shaping their children's life outlook by molding early academic aspirations.

But, once youth get to colleges, their university campus climate is another important factor in their success. To Shwu-Yong and Liou Huang (2012)'s sample of 12,423 juniors at 42 universities across Taiwan, relationships with faculty were instrumental in their sustained academic aspirations and success. The students positively responded to student cohesion on campus, library resources, and administrative support, even if they were less positive about student services and language enhancement, and supportive services for emotional development.

Research has also been conducted on the inhibiting and supportive aspects of youth social environments that might dim their college aspirations. Negative Experiences in high school, lack of support in the family support or in their neighborhoods, have been shown to promote juvenile delinquency and in turn dim college aspirations of youth. Peer victimization, such as verbal, physical, or relational bullying, is a growing problem in high schools. When such negative experiences were internalized or externalized by students in a sample of 6443 high school students, they were translated into problem behaviors (juvenile delinquency) and poor academic performance (Suldo 2016). On the other hand, high school students who were emotionally healthier and had lower psychopathology did better academically.

The health of neighborhoods in which youth grow up is another critical predictor of problem behaviors like juvenile delinquency, with consequences for college aspirations. Barrett, Katsiyannis, Zhang, and Zuhang (2016) compared students with non-criminal records to those with criminal records in the southern Carolina region of the United States. The constant negative social-environmental influences contributed to delinquency among adolescent youth. Those with criminal records had higher signs of aggression and anger, compared with those with non-criminal records. Unhealthy neighborhoods also triggered delinquent behavior among children (Burt, McGue, Krueger & Iacono 2016). Children from harmful environments exhibited conduct and oppositional defiant disorders, and arguably less clinically-significant outcomes.

Summary and Suggestions for Future Research

In the research reviewed above, the developmental circumstances of youth aspirations for higher education and achievements began to unfold. In addition to families and their critical place in shaping youth educational aspirations and achievements, resources are also needed in institutions, like schools, in government, and in communities. Educational opportunities in institutions of youth incarcerations have also been found to revitalize a yearning for success by improving their academic achievements advance positive life outcomes.

While these scholars offered valuable insights into the negative and positive forces in the academic trajectories of youth, they were treated in isolation. This study adopted a holistic focus on the macro and the micro environments of youth development, with a particular focus on their educational achievements.

RESEARCH QUESTION

In this research an attempt was made to unravel the mystery of young adults actualizing their aspirations for higher education. How much did early college aspirations affect their later educational achievements? If aspirations did matter, what were the factors that shaped early aspirations? And how important were social and cultural capital resources in actualizing educational aspiration.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Young adults' educational aspirations and their success were conceptualized as representing their academic identity and self-concept. As they go about actualizing their educational aspirations, many in their social environment play critical roles, some supporting them and others obstructing their progress. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner 1974), the following systems were identified as important socializing agents in the lives of youth. Starting early in the youth's lives, their family (micro-systems) and their communities (exo-system) offer essential resources, be they social network, cultural, and economic capital, that youth can tap into as they work towards realizing their educational aspirations. Social capital resources refer to the social connections, networks, and relationships which result in learning how to interact, maintain, and utilize relationships (Schaefer-McDaniel 2004). The knowledge and information that youth can gather about specific cultural beliefs, traditions and standards are some of the cultural capital resources (Bourdieu 1977). Available resources can also come in the form of financial (parental assets and net income), human capital (parent education and their economic skills), and social capital (social networks and connections/relationships (Coleman 1988, 1990).

As youth grow up, their friends (another micro-system) begin to play an increasingly influential role. While friends and peers often reinforce the socializing lessons taught by parents, they could also present alternatives that could detract youth from their goals. As theorized by Sutherland (Sutherland, Lee and Trapp-Dukes 1989), the more youth associate with delinquent sub-cultures, be they juvenile delinquents, drug and alcohol users, or criminals, the new peer norms and goals, that run counter to those learnt in the family home, are bound to present risks that divert them from their educational aspirations. Schools (a meso-system environment) could curb the negative influences of deviant sub-cultures and reinforce the educational aspirations of youth.

Which of these systems are most influential in guiding youth on their road to their educational accomplishments and shaping their academic self-concept? Stated differently, is the academic self-concept shaped early in high school or could it be reshaped by later life experiences? According to the Iowa School of Core Self-Concept (Kuhn 1964) the social systems that shaped the aspirations of youth in high school will be the driving forces behind their later educational success. On the other hand, it could be argued that (as per the Chicago School's Flexible Self-Concept (Meltzer 1975), irrespective of their high school experiences and aspirations, if youth have supportive

social capital resources available to them in their young adult lives, they can be successful in realizing their educational goals.

Following these theoretical lines of reasoning, two hypotheses were tested:

1. Net of early (during high school) college aspirations and associated supportive and risky environments, the supportive social capital resources (family and community) available in their young adulthood will be the most relevant for how successful they are in their later educational accomplishments (Chicago School of Self-Concept).
2. On the other hand, irrespective of later social capital resources, it will be the early college aspirations and the associated influential systems that will be the most predictive of later educational success (Iowa School of Core Self-Concept).

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

A mix-methods approach was used in this research to maximize the benefits of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The survey data were drawn from the 1994-2008 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Harris and Udry 2009.) Using a combination of self-reported surveys and interviews, the researchers gathered data on the experiences of 90,000 adolescents in four waves. Only information relevant to this research from Waves I and IV was used. Wave I (in 1994-2008) surveyed 90,000 adolescents who were in grades 7th-12th, with a focus on the social and demographic characteristics of adolescent respondents, their expectations for the future, self-esteem, health status, risk behaviors, friendships, and school-year extracurricular activities as well parents' education and occupation and household structure. In Wave IV (in 2008-2009), the former adolescents, now 24-32 years old, were followed up. Among other issues, data on their educational accomplishments, social and economic resources, and their psychological health status were gathered.

A subset of 6443 young adults who had complete information (from Waves I and IV) on the research concepts used in this study were selected for analyses. Both males (47.4%) and females (52.6%) were equally represented in the study sample; this demographic was controlled for in the multivariate analyses.

Supplementary information to elaborate on the survey statistical findings was collected through interviews with 7 highly knowledgeable education professionals. They had deep teaching backgrounds in the California High School Education System, were psychologists and therapists working with adolescents and young adults, and retirees from the California Division of Juvenile Justice system. The Interviews were identified through references and snowball sampling with the generosity and the support of the interviewees. Refer to Appendix A for Consent Form and Interview Protocol.

DATA ANALYSES

Three levels of data analyses were conducted to answer the research questions posed in this research. Descriptive analyses of relevant concepts were followed up with bivariate correlations to identify preliminary associations of educational achievements with resources and risks. In the final step, multivariate linear regression analysis was used to test the theoretically grounded hypotheses.

Descriptive Analyses

Educational Achievements

A child's future weighs heavily on their access to education. Their early experiences and access to resources influence their long term academic accomplishments. The lack of needed resources during adolescence could have detrimental effects later in their lives and continue the cycle of poverty.

Educational achievements of young adults were measured by evaluating the young adults' education and education progress in Wave IV. As seen in Table 1.A, the young adults had moderate academic success; their mean educational achievement (on the index with a range of 3-17) was 7.1. An overwhelming majority (85%) had finished high school. A third (33.3%) had completed some college education with another fifth (19.8%) had completed a bachelor's degree.

Table 1.A Educational Achievements (Wave IV, n=6443)

Concept	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics
Educational Achievements	H4ED1: What is your high school graduation status?	1=did not receive a high school diploma, equivalency degree (GED), or other certificate	6.4%
		2=earned a certificate of attendance or a certificate of completion	0.3
		3=earned a high school equivalency degree (GED)	8.2
		4=finished high school with diploma	85.1
	H4ED2: What is the highest level of education that you have achieved to date?	1=8th grade or less	0.3%
		2=some high school high	7.5
		3=school graduate	16.3
		4=some vocational/technical training (after high school)	3.6
		5=completed vocational/technical training (after high school)	6.4
		6=some college	33.3
		7=completed college (bachelor's degree)	19.8
		8=some graduate school	
		9=completed a master's degree	3.9
		10=some graduate training beyond a master's degree	5.0
		11=completed a doctoral degree	1.2
		12=some post baccalaureate professional education (e.g., law school, med school, nurse)	0.6
		13=completed post baccalaureate professional education (e.g., law school, med school, nurse)	0.8
	H4ED6: Are you currently furthering your education ¹	0=no	84.0%
		1=yes	16.0
	Index of Educational Achievements ²	Mean (sd) Min-Max	7.14 (2.1) 3-17

¹ Attending a college, university, or vocational/technical school where you take courses for academic credit? If enrolled but on school break or vacation, count this as attending;

² Index of Educational Achievements=H4ED1 + H4ED2 + H4ED6, correlation among these indicators ranged from .06* and .47***; ***p<=.001

Community Assets

Community Assets that were available to young adults are mapped out in Table 1.B. Indicators were selected based on their relative connections to educational achievements. On balance, the young adults lived in strong and stable communities with rich resources (Mean of 13.2 on a range of 7-16). The unemployment rates in the community were reasonably low (53.0%), had very low renter occupied units (6.3%). The interviewers who visited the neighborhoods highlighted the following community assets. The building structures appeared safe (91.2%), the yards were well maintained (9.7%), and safe (67.9%). And over three-quarters were lived either in suburbs (43.8%) or in urban areas (33.4%).

Table 1.B Community Assets (Wave1 HS and Wave IV, n-6443)

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics
Community Assets	Neighborhood Census Data	BST90P23. Unemployment rate	1=High 2=Medium 3=Low	22.5% 24.5 53.0
		BST90P26. Tenure of occupied housing units.	1=Heavily renter occupied 2=Mixed tenure 3=Heavily owner occupied	6.3% 44.7 49.1
		Interviewer Rating	H4EO3. The building structure or entrance is unsafe.. ¹	0=Yes 1=No
	H4EO4. The yard is unkempt.. ²		0=Yes 1=No	9.7% 90.3
	H4EO6: Which of the following best describes the immediate area -- where the sample member/respondent lives ³ ?		1=rural farm 2=rural own 3=suburban 4=urban, residential only	7.7% 15.1 43.8 33.4
			H4EO7: How safe did you feel when you were in the sample member's/respondent's neighborhood?	1=very unsafe 2=moderately unsafe 3=moderately safe 4=very safe
	Index of Community Assets ⁴		Mean (sd) Min-Max	13.2 (1.7) 7-16

¹ ... or contains cracks or holes, broken siding or glass, or peeling paint;

² ... with overgrown shrubs or grass, or contains clutter, trash or other debris;

³ ... or street (one block, both sides);

⁴ Index of Community Assets=BST90P23Recode+BST90P26+H4EO3Recode+ H4EO4Recode + H4EO6 + H4EO7. Possible range: 7-16.

Family Assets: Wealth

Family assets, represented by wealth, that were available to young adults are shown in Table 1.C. Indicators were selected based on their relative connections to the resources available for the student. On balance, the youth lived in moderately low income households (Mean of 4.4 on a range of 1-11). Their family income was typically under \$100k (11.2 %). While most families did not receive financial assistance from other relatives, about 40.9% owned their residence.

Table 1.C Family Assets: Wealth (Wave IV, 6443)

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics
Family Resources: Wealth	Family Income	H4EC7: What is your best estimate of the total value of your assets and the assets of everyone who lives in your household and contributes to the household budget? ¹	1=less than \$5,000	18.4%
			2=\$5,000 to \$9,999	12.2
			3=\$10,000 to \$24,999	18.3
			4=\$25,000 to \$49,999	17.2
			5=\$50,000 to \$99,999	15.1
			6=\$100,000 to \$249,999	11.2
			7=\$250,000 to \$499,999	4.5
			8=\$500,000 to \$999,999	2.0
			9=\$1,000,000 or more	1.1
	Other family assistance	H4ED7: In the past 12 months, have any relatives, including your parents or in-laws, helped you out by paying some of your educational expenses, such as tuition and books?	0=No	93.6%
1=Yes			6.4	
H4EC6: Have {YOU/YOUR SPOUSE/PARTNER} ever received any financial gifts from family ² ?			0=No 1=Yes	80.5% 19.5
	H4EC4: Is your house, apartment, or residence owned or being bought by {YOU AND/OR YOUR SPOUSE/PARTNER}?	0=No	59.1	
		1=Yes	40.9	
Index of Family Resources: Wealth ³			Mean (sd)	4.4 (2.2)
			Min-Max	1-11

¹ Included all assets, such as bank accounts, retirement plans and stocks. Do not include equity in your home. (Income data are important in analyzing the health information we collect. For example, the information helps us to learn whether persons in one income group use certain types of medical care services or have conditions more or less often than those in another group;

² loans from your parents, in-laws, or relatives to help you buy, remodel, build or furnish a home or condominium?

³ Index of Family Resources: Wealth=H4EC7+ H4ED7+ H4EC6+ H4EC4. Correlation among these indicators ranged from .057** to .217*** and significant at ***p<=.001.

Family Assets: Ties

Family social ties available to young adults are shown in Table 1.D. Indicators were selected to tap into kinship ties between parents and the young adult. On balance, youth had a low relationship with their parents (Mean of 7.82 on a range of 2-14. Father Tie rates was significantly low (24.2%), mothers had slightly higher ties (21.4%).

1.D Table Family Assets: Ties (Wave IV; 6443)

Concept	Dimension	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics
Family Ties	Availability of Parents	H4WP20Recode: How far do you and your (mother figure) live from one another?	1= More than 200 miles	21.4%
			2=101 to 200 miles	6.2
			3= 51 to 100 miles	5.7
			4=11 to 50 miles	19.6
			5=1 to 10 miles	21.5
			6= Within 1 mile	9.2
			7=Live Together	16.5
		H4WP34: How far do you and your (father figure) live from one another?	1= More than 200 miles	24.2%
			2=101 to 200 miles	6.7
			3= 51 to 100 miles	6.7
			4=11 to 50 miles	21.2
			5=1 to 10 miles	21.2
			6= Within 1 mile	8.3
			7=Live Together	11.7
Index of Family Ties ¹		Mean (sd)	7.82 (3.9)	
		Min-Max	2-14	

¹ Index of Family Ties= H4WP20Recode + H4WP34. Correlation between the two indicators was .81^{***}, p<=.001.

Aspirations for Higher Education

To understand fully the importance of early experiences (Wave I) in a young adult's life and their ability to overcome obstacles, one must understand the influences of positive and negative experiences they faced in high school. Negative high school experiences and juvenile delinquency are important factors in the development of a young adult's educational aspirations and achievement.

The young adults in this research had quite high aspirations for college education (Table 1.F). Seventy percent registered a high level of desire (5=70.3%) while half (55%) thought it highly likely that they will go to college. The average young adult had a high mean score of 8.6 on the aspirations index that ranged from 2 to 10.

Table 1.F Aspiration Higher Education, Wave 1 (n= 6443)

Concept	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics
Aspiration Higher Education	H1EE1: On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high, how much do you want to go to college?	1. Low	3.6%
		2. Not That Low	2.7
		3. May Be	10.3
		4. Not That High	13.1
		5. High	70.3
	H1EE2: On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high, how likely is it that you will go to college?	1. Low	5.4%
		2. Not That Low	4.6
		3. May Be	13.9
		4. Not That High	20.8
		5. High	55.2
Index of Higher Education Aspirations ¹		Mean (sd)	8.6 (2.0)
		Min-Max	2-10

¹ Index of Aspiration Higher Education H1EE1+ H1EE2. Possible range: 2 to 10. Correlation among these indicators ranged from 0.244^{***} to 0.699^{**} and significant at .001 level.

Negative High School Experiences

Negative high school experiences coupled with its indicators are shown in Table 1.G. Indicators were selected based on their connection with student's daily experiences in a high school atmosphere and give important insights into their academic future.

One is able to see in Table 1.G that while the young adults had endured negative high school experiences, their positive experiences outnumbered negative ones. More than half felt close to people at their high school, that they were part of school, were happy to be at school, felt safe at school, and that their teachers treated them fairly. The only exception was the quarter (25%) who thought other students were prejudice. Their overall positive experiences in high school were captured in the summative index that had a mean of 14.56 on a range of 6 through 30.

Table 1.G Negative High School Experience (Wave 1, n= 6463)

Concept	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics
Negative High School Experiences	H1ED19: You feel close to people at your school?	1.Strongly agree	20.0%
		2. Agree	47.5
		3. Neither agree nor disagree	19.1
		4. Disagree	9.8
		5. Strongly disagree	3.6
	H1ED20: You feel like you are part of your school?	1.Strongly agree	26.3%
		2. Agree	47.7
		3. Neither agree nor disagree	13.8
		4. Disagree	8.9
		5. Strongly disagree	3.2
	H1ED21: Students at your school are prejudiced?	1.Strongly disagree	13.8%
		2. Disagree	27.0
		3. Neither agree nor disagree	24.0
		4. Agree	25.0
		5. Strongly agree	10.1
	H1ED22: You are happy to be at your school	1.Strongly agree	24.7%
		2. Agree	41.3
		3. Neither agree nor disagree	17.0
		4. Disagree	11.1
		5. Strongly disagree	5.9
	H1ED23: Do you feel safe in your school?	1.Strongly agree	25.5%
		2. Agree	45.7
		3. Neither agree nor disagree	16.4
		4. Disagree	9.1
5. Strongly disagree		3.4	
H1ED24: The teachers at your school treat students fairly?	1.Strongly agree	15.9%	
	2. Agree	41.8	
	3. Neither agree nor disagree	21.9	
	4. Disagree	15.3	
	5. Strongly disagree	5.1	
Index of Negative High School Experiences		Mean (sd)	14.38 (3.74)
		Min-Max	6-30

¹Index of Negative High School Experience = H1ED19+H1ED20+H1ED21+H1ED22+H1ED23+H1ED24. Correlation among these indicators ranged from .263*** to .595*** and significant at ***p<=.001.

Juvenile Delinquency

To capture student social interactions in academic settings, measures of campus juvenile delinquency was included (Table 1.H). The young adults typically did not engage in much delinquent actions (mean of 2.9 on an index range of 4.2 to 20.) They were not very likely to have trouble with their teachers, to get into trouble at school, to finish their homework done, and getting along with other students.

Table 1.H Juvenile Delinquency (Wave I, n= 6443)

Concept	Dimension	Indicators	Values and responses	Statistics
Juvenile Delinquency	Academic	H1ED15: How often have you had trouble getting along with teachers?	1. Never	39.4%
			2. About once a week	43.0
			3. Just a few times	9.2
			4. Almost every day	5.5
			5. Every day	3.0
		H1ED16: How often have you had trouble paying attention in school?	1. Never	24.4%
			2. About once a week	45.6
			3. Just a few times	16.6
			4. Almost every day	10.1
			5. Every day	3.4
		H1ED17: How often have you had trouble getting your homework done	1. Never	29.7%
			2. About once a week	41.4
			3. Just a few times	15.8
			4. Almost every day	9.1
			5. Every day	4.1
		H1ED18: How often have you had trouble getting along with other students?	1. Never	39.2%
2. About once a week	44.8			
3. Just a few times	8.1			
4. Almost every day	4.6			
5. Every day	3.3			
Index of Juvenile Delinquency ¹			Mean (sd)	4.16 (2.9)
			Min-Max	0-16

¹ Index of Juvenile Delinquency= H1ED15+ H1ED16+ H1ED17+ H1ED18. Possible range: 4.2 to 20. Correlation among these indicators ranged from .306*** to .383*** and significant at ***p<=.001

Family Risks

Risks that young adults faced in their families as teenagers are shown in Table 1.E. On balance, youth had a low level of family risk factor (mean of 17.71 on a range of 4-20 on the cumulative index). The risks of hurt feelings, physical and sexual violence was very low (53% to 96%). Besides, overwhelming majority did not either their biological mothers (96.5%) or fathers (84.9%) had ever been incarcerated.

Table 1.E Family Risks (Wave IV, 6443)

Concept	Dimension	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics	
Family Risks	Availability of Parents: Before your 18th birthday,	H4MA1: how often did a parent or other adult caregiver say things that really hurt your feelings or made you feel like you were not wanted or loved?	1=More than ten times 2=Six to ten times 3=Three to five times 4=Two times 5=One time 6=This has never happened	10.3% 9.4 10.7 4.5 12.3 53.0	
		H4MA3: how often did a parent or adult caregiver hit you with a fist, kick you, or throw you down on the floor, into a wall, or down stairs?	1=More than ten times 2=Six to ten times 3=Three to five times 4=Two times 5=One time 6=This has never happened	4.7% 3.3 3.4 1.6 4.4 82.6	
		H4MA5: How often did a parent or other adult caregiver touch you in a sexual way, force you to touch him or her in a sexual way, or force you to have sexual relations?	1=One time 2=Two times 3=Three to five times 4=Six to ten times 5=More than ten times 6=This has never happened	1.7 0.8 1.0 0.5 1.0 94.9	
		Ever in life time	H4WP3Recode: (Has/did) your biological mother ever (spent/spend) time in jail or prison?	0=Yes 1=No	3.5% 96.5
			H4WP9Recode: (Has/did) your biological Father ever (spent/spend) time in jail or prison?	0=Yes 1=No	15.1% 84.9
		Index of Family Risks [†]		Mean (sd) Min-Max	17.7 (2.76) 4-20

[†] Index of Family Risk H4MA1+ H4MA3 + H4MA5 + H4WP3Recode + H4WP9Recode; Correlation among these indicators ranged from .28^{***} to .21^{***} and significant at ^{***}p<=.001

Bivariate Analyses

In the next analytical step, bivariate correlations were used to identify preliminary associations of young adults' educational achievements with their assets (community and family assets) family risks, their college aspirations, problematic youth behaviors, and gender (Table 2 in Appendix B). Of the resources available to the young adults in their post-high school lives, community ($r=.18^{***}$) and family ($r=-.17^{***}$) assets seem to be the most useful in their educational progress. Interestingly, those with closer family ties were more likely to have progressed in their educational careers ($r=-.26^{***}$) than those who lived away from their families. Females achieved more in their education than

males (-.06^{**}). However, none of the experiences in their adolescent years were associated with later educational achievements (r not significant). The stability of these relationships was re-tested using multivariate regression analyses.

Multivariate Analyses

In the final analytical step, multivariate regression was used to test the hypotheses about the relative effects of social and economic resources available to young adults in the adolescent years and later on their educational achievements. Several important insights about what it takes for young adults to succeed in higher education were available in the results presented in Table 3 below. One, it was the resources available in their young adulthood that were the most useful for their educational progress later in life. For example, young adults who had community (Beta = .14^{***}) and family economic (Beta = .17^{***}) resources made the most progress in their higher educational trajectories, irrespective of their adolescent college aspirations and negative experiences during their high school years. Second, except for their negative high school experiences, their college aspirations and risky behaviors were not relevant for their later educational success (Betas were not significant). Third, given access to resources, even those who had negative high school experiences were educationally successful (Beta = .06^{**}).

Table 3
Regression Analyses of Youth Educational Achievements on
Community and Family Assets, Risks, College Aspirations,
Problem Youth Behaviors and Gender¹

	Model Beta (β)
Community Assets	.14 ^{***}
Family Assets: Wealth	.17 ^{***}
Family Ties	-.21 ^{***}
Family Risk	.03
Aspiration Higher Education	-.01
Negative High School Experience	.06 ^{**}
Juvenile Delinquency	-.04
Male (vs. Female)	-.05
Constant (a)	4.37 ^{***}
Adjusted R ²	.11 ^{***}
DF 1&2	8 & 2408

^{***} $p < .001$; ^{**} $p < .01$; ^{*} $p < .05$

¹ Index of Educational Achievements = H4ED1 + H4ED2 + H4ED6 (Range: 3-17);

Index of Community Assets = BST90P23Recode + BST90P26 + H4EO3Recode + H4EO4Recode + H4EO6 + H4EO7.
(Range: 7-16);

Index of Family Resources: Wealth = H4EC7 + H4ED7 + H4EC6 + H4EC4 (Range: 1-11);

Index of Family Risk = H4MA1 + H4MA3 + H4MA5 + H4WP3Recode + H4WP9Recode (Range: 4-20);

Index of Family Assets: Ties = H4WP20Recode + H4WP34 (Range: 2-14);

Index of Aspiration Higher Education = H1EE1 + H1EE2 (Range: 2 to 10);

Index of Negative High School Experience = H1ED19 + H1ED20 + H1ED21 + H1ED22 + H1ED23 + H1ED24
(Range: 6 to 30);

Index of Juvenile Delinquency = H1ED15 + H1ED16 + H1ED17 + H1ED18 (Range: 4.2 to 20)

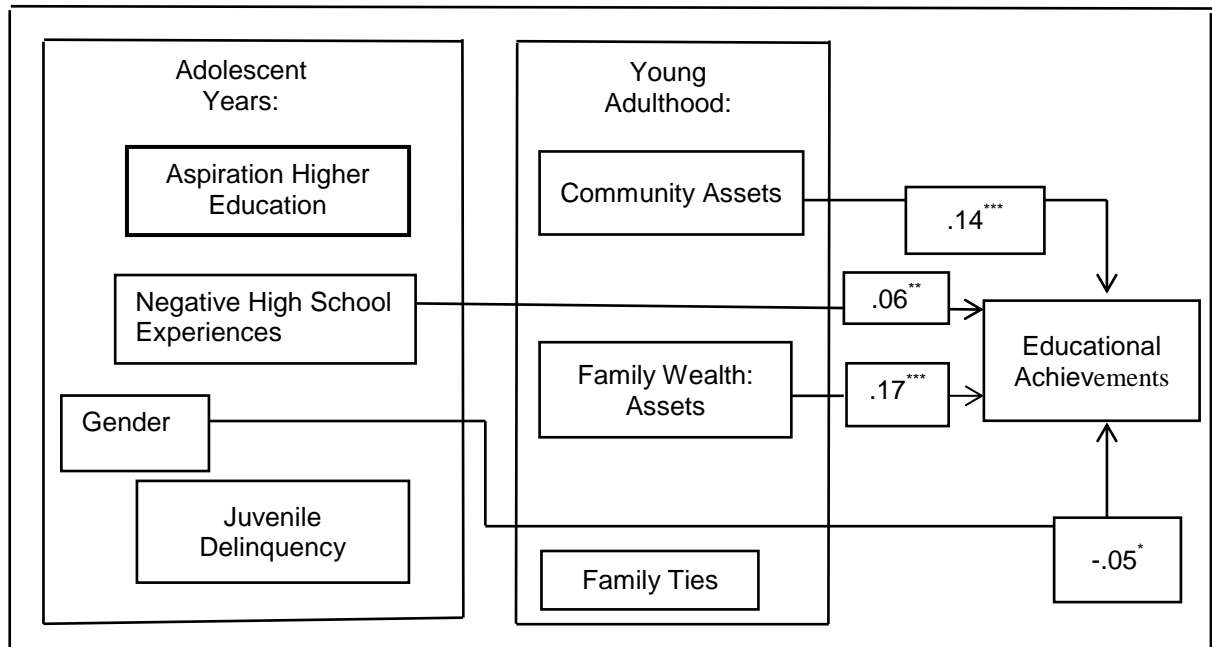
Gender: 0 = Female 1 = Male.

Ironically, living geographically closer to their families reduced the likelihood of being successful in higher education (family ties Beta= $-.21^{***}$). Males too (compared to women) were disadvantaged in higher education (Beta= $-.05^*$), irrespective of support from family and community. On balance, the trajectory of a young adult's future is delicately balanced between what happens in their adolescent lives, but even more during their young adult years. If they do not have the needed safety nets in place, the young adult might lean towards the negative path, resulting in a future of difficulties.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ensuring young adults have the best opportunities for success is an unalienable right. However, political and economic systems have placed current and future generations in jeopardy of not actualizing their full potential due to the budget cuts in our education system and in programs which help struggling parents ensure their children's success. It was evident in this research that given support and access to resources in young adulthood, youth will positively modify their educational trajectories irrespective of their high school experiences. These findings also lent support to the Chicago school's flexible self-concept theoretical idea (Figure 1). With adequate resources and support, youth can overcome early disadvantages and become academically successful as they grow up.

Figure 1. Empirical Model of Educational Achievements: Impacts of Community and Family Assets and Risks, College Aspirations, Problem Youth Behaviors and Gender^{1,2}



¹ Refer to Table 3 for Index and variable Coding

² Non-significant effects not shown: Aspiration Higher Education, Juvenile Delinquency, and Family risks.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

The results of this research fell into five separate types of supportive resources and risks that young adults faced in realizing their education goals. They were: community assets, family assets, family ties and risks, negative high school experiences, and problem behaviors in adolescence.

Community Assets

Supportive services located and accessible to young adults in their community cultivated more positive outcomes for them. These resources expand an adolescent's perspective of the world; they are exposed to different possibilities and can use these resources to realize their future goals. A youth corrections professional who was interviewed for this research underscored the important connection with having accessible resources in the community: "These kids have never experienced success in anything, because there is nothing out in their communities, ultimately limiting their views of what they can do" (Interviewee #4). This professional worked in the California Youth Authority (CYA) for 30 years before retiring. Resources embedded within the community allow youth to be exposed to something more than just their neighborhoods. Programs such as the Boys and Girls Club of America and National Compare Network are organizations embedded within disadvantaged communities cultivating and guiding youth towards realizing their full capabilities and opening their minds to the opportunities outside of their neighborhoods. These programs also offer a support system to young adults that may not be available in their households, filling a niche with positive influences and taking them away from misleading entities. Another professional interviewee (Interviewee #3) expanded: the mentors offered by these and other programs allow a support system to be established and ensure that the youth has access to a safe space where they can receive positive encouragement and support to continue on a healthy path.

Community assets are especially important as youth transition into young adults. A young adult having to balance earning an education, earning an income, and other competing responsibilities faces stressful and tedious times, ultimately causing the young adult to choose between sliding by economically and competing their higher education. However, if they are supported through their transition from adolescence to young adulthood they can work through the difficulties they might face. These support systems are not solely limited to the nuclear family. They can be supported by various individuals in their young adult lives; mentors, teachers, siblings, and other permanent figures can also have great influence in the developmental process. The notion of permanence was a recurring theme during the interviews conducted. Interviewee #7 expanded on this concept by stating, "Permanent relationships such as long-term mentor has a significant influence in the adolescent development and transition into young adulthood because going off of kids in the system, they have inconstant family relationships (Interviewee #7)."

Family Assets: Wealth

Access to family resources was a significant asset in the educational achievements of the young adult. Family assets offer an easier transition from adolescence to young adulthood and a new set of adult responsibilities, a transition that is quite difficult without adequate help. Having families as a safety net allows young adults to focus on their education and expand their minds to a wider set of possibilities without having to juggle their education, family responsibilities, and working. Interviewee #7, who, for 27 years, has worked in various positions in the California Youth Authority, commented on the assets offered by parents. She stated; "The primary job of a child is to be exposed to the world and focus in school but we are speaking of parents will higher assets. Parents may want their children to get an education but due to limited resources is this not an opinion." Parents, she said, should be cultivating and encouraging this development; however, many parents do not have access to these resources for a variety of reasons such as low education, limited income, and language barriers. Parents who have limited assets might not be able to support their children in achieving academic success.

Family Ties and Risks

Family kinship ties also play a significant role in the young adult's educational outcomes. During adolescence, youth begin to develop their knowledge of the needed components of a healthy relationship; family interactions and relationships shape their identities. Besides, a strong family support system can disrupt other negative influences surrounding the young adult. But, left unmonitored, exposure to negative influences runs the risks of affecting the young adult's life outcomes. It should also be noted that close family ties do not necessarily mean geographic proximity. In fact, young adults in this research who were successful in their education lived away from their families. Perhaps, higher education opportunities lie away from the natal homes and moving away is the only way to make use of these opportunities.

While the importance of a healthy family support system was a reoccurring theme in the interviews with professionals, they were quick to add that for many children, the structure of their homes is far from healthy. Consequently, their support systems do not necessarily have to include the parents. Adult individuals that honestly care for the success and future of the child can make up for the lack of family support. But, adults who fulfil this support niche have to be permanent and positive channels of encouragement and support (interviewee #7). Unfortunately, in households where the parents are often away from the home due to work, adolescents try to fulfill this empty void by finding others who they can relate to or offer them what they are missing. If these others are themselves have problematic backgrounds, the youth end up joining gangs, or participating in other risky behaviors. In short, positive community support systems allow youth a smoother transition from adolescence to young adulthood. These support systems can include teachers, mentors, coaches, and other adults who are

willing work to build long-term connections with these youths. It is when these support systems are non-existent that youth become defiant and engage in behaviors with negative outcomes (Interviewee #3).

Negative High School Experiences

Adolescents' developmental experiences during secondary education are also significant in their future trajectories. During adolescence, youth are continually soaking up information from their kin and their surroundings and slowly molding their identity. Fortunately, negative high school experiences did not have enduring negative effects in young adulthood in this research. Support during the secondary education period is a huge factor in helping them successfully dealing with negative experiences and ensuring their future successes. As Interviewee #2 stated, "I feel that we lack a good prevention education model in our district. This is where students go when they are in trouble and it should be more for students who are about to get in trouble. Stopping the risky behavior before it becomes late is key because I'm not sure we will be able to stop in the future."

Overcoming Problem Youth Behaviors

Misconceptions about youth range from their risky behaviors, lack of motivation, and delinquency. However, it was clear in this research that adolescents who have made mistakes or bad decisions still have the ability to change their life around provided they have stable, permanent, and continued support. These findings countered the Iowa School's idea of Core Self-Concept, that youth who have made mistakes in the beginning stages of their life have set the negative trajectories of their future. The quantitative and qualitative analyses presented in this paper suggested that youth, with adequate support, are fully capable of changing their trajectory to create more positive outcomes. As Interviewee #1, who has worked in California Youth Authority (CYA), commented, motivation is key to youth, even those who are in the juvenile hall system who want to change their current situation. However change becomes difficult when no one has ever encouraged them or has given them positive reinforcement (Interviewee #1). But, early disadvantages might not negatively affect a young adult's later success in their life, if these experiences can fuel their motivation for success in their future. With adequate support youth can create positive outcomes from difficult starts.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the valuable lessons offered in this research, much more needs to be known about educational successes of young adults. The support and risk factors in the lives of young adults measured in this research explained only 11% ($R^2=0.11$) of their educational achievements. Additional explanations need to be studied to create a more holistic view of the factors influencing young adult's life trajectory. One such factor is the

roles of federal, state and local organizations in helping young adults succeed, particularly when they have gotten off track in their early years.

APPENDICES

Appendix A *Research Consent Form*

Dear Interviewee:

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 research on how much do early aspirations affect students later achievements. If aspirations do matter, what are the factors that shape early aspirations? Moreover, how important are social and cultural capital resources in actualizing educational aspirations?

You were selected for this interview because of your knowledge of and experience working with high school students.

I am requesting your participation, which will involve responding to questions about your professional experiences working with youth and 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/email me at (669) 300-1687 or Dr. Fernandez at 408-554-4432 mfernandez@scu.edu

Sincerely,
Oscar Quiroz-Medrano

By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the above 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) 554-559)

Interview Questions

Interview Date and Time: _____

Respondent ID#: _____

1. What is the types of Agency or school (**NO NAME**, please) where you learned about (and/or worked) with this issue?
2. What is your position in this organization?
3. How long have you been in this position and in this organization?
4. Based on your experiences working with youth, what do you think helps young adults succeed

- academically?
5. Can youth who get into trouble early in their lives (as when they are in high school) and recover later in their lives and become academically successful?
 6. What kind of supports will they need to overcome the early disadvantages?
 - a. How can parents help young adults go to and complete their college education?
 - b. What types of community resources would be useful to youth to go to college and complete their degrees?
 - c. Any other kinds of supports?
 7. Based on your vast experience in the field, what other resources do we need to provide young adults to become successful in life.
 8. Is there anything else I should know about?

Appendix B
Table 2. Correlations¹

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
A. Index of Educational Achievements:	1.0							
B. Index of Community Assets:	.18**							
C. Index of Family Resources: Wealth	.17***	.08***						
D. Index of Family Ties:	-.26***	-.11***	-.02					
E. Index of Family Risk:	.04	0.31	0.71***	.007				
F. Index of Aspiration Higher Education:	.000	0.47**	-.01	-.002	.01			
G. Index of Negative High School Experiences:	.02	-.05*	-.01	.02	.01	-.20**		
H. Index of Juvenile Delinquency:	.01	.03	-.01	.02	.00	-.20**	.36***	
I. Male vs. Female:	-.06**	-.00	-.01	.02	.01	-.00	.02	-.004

*** p<=.001; ** p=.05

¹ Refer to Table 3 for index and variable coding.

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- Interviewee #4. March 11, 2017. Juvenile Corrections teacher
- Interviewee #5. March 14, 2017. Retired CYA California Youth Authority
- Interviewee #6. March 17, 2017. Associate Social Workers-Mental Health
- Interviewee #7. March 21, 2017. Retired CYA California Youth Authority
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