



# Socioeconomic Status, Neighborhood and Home, Peer and Family Influence, and Social Capital as Predictors of Educational Success

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Thesis submitted as a requirement of the  
CSU Stanislaus Master of Social Work program.





# ABOUT ME

- I have lived 97% of my life in San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties.
- I have worked full-time for Stanislaus County in various departments and capacities for 14 years.
- I am from a large, low-socioeconomic status, single-parent family.
- I am a first-generation student.

# BACKGROUND:

## PERSONAL MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

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- Grew up in low-socioeconomic, single parent home.
- Grew up in less-than-desirable neighborhoods with high crime, no sidewalks or safe pedestrian walkways, limited neighborhood resources, and experienced frequent moves.
- Experienced wavering academic support or encouragement within the home and frequently felt "different" due to having academic goals.
- Had limited access to social capital building activities.



# BACKGROUND: COMMUNITY MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

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- A majority of Turlock Unified School District (TUSD) schools receive funding through Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to bridge educational gaps.
- TUSD has an average high school graduation rate of 90%<sup>1</sup>.
- With a four-year public university in the center of town, only 23.7% of Turlock's residents aged 25 and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

<sup>1</sup>Turlock Unified School District, 2018

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Census, 2010



# STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- **Research Question:**

Which combination of educational opportunities (socioeconomic status, neighborhood and home, peer and family influence, or social capital) best predict educational success?

- **Hypothesis**

The underlying hypothesis is federal funding through ESSA is not enough to bridge educational gaps, nor is the funding enough to compensate for the impact the four educational opportunities have on educational success.



## Definition of Variables:

- **Socioeconomic Status** – Social class or standing often measured by income or education<sup>1</sup>.
- **Neighborhood and Home** - Characterized by median income, social isolation, residential segregation, housing quality and stability, crime, drug use, quality and quantity of institutions such as schools, availability of childcare or social welfare resources, community organizations, recreational facilities, job market<sup>2</sup>.
- **Peer and Family Influence** – An individual's sense of belonging, peer group, support network<sup>3</sup> and parental involvement or presence<sup>4</sup>.
- **Social Capital** - "An aggregate concept that encompasses the association networks, norms, and trust that facilitate collective interactions for mutual economic and social benefits."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>American Psychological Association, 2021

<sup>2</sup>Gephart, 2017

<sup>3</sup>Crosnoe and Muller, 2014; Fowler, Metzger, & Swanstrom, 2018

<sup>4</sup>Hill & Taylor, 2004

<sup>5</sup>Groot, Huang, & van den Brink, 2011, p. 1012



# LITERATURE REVIEW

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**Socioeconomic Status:** "Socioeconomic status often reveals inequities in access to resources, plus issues related to privilege, power and control"<sup>1</sup>.

**Neighborhood and Home:** Continuous childhood exposure to characteristics of high-poverty neighborhoods, including welfare receipt, single-parent homes, and poorly educated adults hinders chances of high school graduation<sup>2</sup>.

**Peer and Family Influence:** Peer groups are vital to school attachment<sup>3</sup>, "peers' choices and aspirations were positively related to a student's aspirations and choices"<sup>4</sup>, and parental educational involvement is strongly associated to student academic success<sup>5</sup>.

**Social Capital:** Extra-curricular or recreational activities provide youth opportunities to gain social capital, access to tangible resources, knowledge, and opportunities<sup>6</sup>.



<sup>1</sup>American Psychological Association, 2021, p. 1

<sup>2</sup>Elwert, Harding, and Wodtke, 2011, p. 713-714

<sup>3</sup>Fowler, Metzger, & Swanson 2018

<sup>4</sup>Rosenqvist, 2018, p. 73

<sup>5</sup>Benner, Boyle, & Sadler, 2016

<sup>6</sup>Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009, p. 250

# METHODOLOGY

## **Research Design:**

- Quantitative study
- Survey tool created using a combination of concepts from the Social Capital Measurement Tool, data from the American Community Survey, U.S. Census, and Community Equity Initiative.

## **Criteria to Participate in the Study:**

- Must be a student currently enrolled at CSU Stanislaus.

## **Data Collection:**

- Qualtrics - electronic circulation of the survey, via student email.
- Survey tool sent via email a total of three times to 11,326 students.

## **Data Analysis:**

- Statistical Package for Social Sciences program
- Used multiple regression, univariate, and bivariate analyses.





# RESULTS

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## **Sample Size and Demographics:**

- 1,076 respondents, which is a 10.5% response rate.
- Of that number, 113 respondents had matriculated through Turlock schools.
- 74.2% (n = 821) respondents were undergraduate level (lower and upper divisions combined).
- 24.6% (n = 264) respondents were post-baccalaureate (Master's, Doctor's, Credential).
- 1.2% (n = 13) were in Open University Extended Education or did not indicate a program.

## Socioeconomic Status

- Nearly half (45.4%,  $n = 485$ ) of the respondents receive socioeconomic status-based grants (CalGrant, Pell Grant, etc.).
- 44.7% of mothers achieved at least some college or less.
- 34.2% of fathers achieved at least some college or less.
- Just over 80% of respondents have already surpassed their parent's education level, which indicates upward mobility.

# Neighborhood and Home

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- Of the 1,076 respondents, a combined 56.6% (n = 609) generally felt safe in their neighborhoods growing up, while 28.8% (n = 216) did not.
- 29.2% (n=33) of those who generally felt unsafe were the sub-sect of respondents who matriculated through Turlock schools ("Turlock students").
- Childhood moves (N = 1,076):
  - 73.9% (n = 795) selected 0-4; 10.8% (n = 86) were Turlock students.
  - 20.3% (n = 218) selected 5-9; 10.6% (n = 23) were Turlock students.
  - 5.8% (n = 62) selected 10+; and 6.5% (n = 4) were Turlock students.





<b>Residential Barriers Experienced by Respondents (N = 870)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
My family used public resources (CalFresh, Medi-Cal, Section 8, etc.)	<b>432</b>	13.7
I was made responsible to care for my siblings	<b>418</b>	13.3
My family immigrated to the United States	383	12.2
I had to learn English as my second language	371	11.7
I had to translate for my parent/guardian as they did not speak English	369	11.7
I witnessed crime or violence outside of the home	297	9.4
I witnessed crime or violence inside the home	238	7.6
My family has had utility services disconnected (electricity/water, etc.)	185	5.9
My family spoke of working as a task more important than education	132	4.2
I had to work to help support the family home	128	4.1
My siblings cared for me more than my parent/guardian	102	3.2
My family experienced one or more eviction	96	3.0

## Peer and Family Influence

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Total
Communication in home / ability to talk to parent(s) or adult family members	17.8	14.4	14.1	29.3	24.4	100
Homework help from parent(s) or adult family members	21.2	17.3	9.9	28.4	23.2	100
Supportive teachers, coaches, educators, and school staff	4.3	9.6	14.6	<b>40.6</b>	<b>30.9</b>	100
Strong support network of peers and friends	5.7	14.2	16.7	<b>34.8</b>	<b>28.6</b>	100

## Social Capital

Family Support	100

Top 10 Resources as Indicated by Respondents (N = 1,076)	(n)
Running Water	1044
Electricity	1032
Heating / Air Conditioning	939
Access to Healthcare (doctors, hospitals, mental health, dentist, etc.)	934
Parent / Guardian transportation	930
Adequate School Supplies (uniforms, equipment for school activities, etc.)	874
Bed (not shared with anyone else)	835
Three meals a day (available from/provided at home)	814
Internet	778
Sidewalks / Paved Roads	752



## K-12 Experience vs. General Perceptions

	Most Present (n)	Most Important (n)	Present (n)	Important (n)	Somewhat Present (n)	Somewhat Important (n)	Not Present (n)	Not important (n)	Least Present (n)	Least Important (n)
Essential resources (food, money, shelter)	454	493	290	236	251	244	57	70	25	34
Other resources (transportation, computer, internet)	45	118	213	257	508	513	154	106	157	83
Family support	338	243	179	154	387	436	101	144	72	100
Peer / community groups (sports, arts, agriculture, etc.)	55	19	78	32	320	252	302	305	322	469
Supportive teachers, coaches	51	77	117	124	329	379	313	296	267	201
Safe and/or stable housing	139	132	199	273	357	328	149	155	233	189

# Barriers as a CSU Stanislaus Student

Top 10 Barriers Experienced by Respondents (N = 372)	n	%
COVID-19 Pandemic	93	19
Lack of Belonging	60	12
Cost of Attendance	46	10
Lack of Navigation (resources, general campus)	40	8
Personal Finances and Lack of Basic Needs	33	7
Lack of Academic / Student Support	28	7
Commuting and / or Transportation	26	5
Faculty	26	5
Limited Access to Resources or Personal Support	23	5
Lack of Diversity / Inclusion	22	5

**Correlations between respondent current education level, supportive teachers/coaches, participation in and support of extra-curricular activities.**

		<b>Respondent Education Level</b>	<b>Supportive Teachers/Coaches</b>	<b>Participation in Extra- Curricular Activities</b>	<b>Family Support in Extra Curricular Activities</b>
<b>Respondent Education Level</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	-.076*	-.063*	-.090**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<b>.013</b>	<b>.039</b>	<b>.003</b>
	N	1076	1075	1075	1076

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)





# SUMMARY

## **Findings of this study:**

- Do not support the hypothesis because students are upwardly mobile regardless of socioeconomic status, neighborhood and home, or peer and family influences.
- Do show evidence of correlation between aspects of social capital and educational attainment.
- Show that students who matriculated through the Turlock school system were on-par with their non-Turlock counterparts.

## **Limitations**

- 10% of responses were TUSD matriculated students, which was only 1% of total responses and not a large enough sample to explain the educational gap in Turlock.
- There lacks a consistent tool to measure social capital.

## **Areas for Further Research**

- Theoretically produce a consistent tool for measuring social capital.
- Conduct a longitudinal study among TUSD students of ESSA receiving schools throughout their educational experience.

## **Implications for Social Work**

- Engage clients in social capital building activities.
- Train educators on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how to support students/families who may have experienced adversity.
- Emphasize the importance of parental involvement in children's education and functions.
- Advocate and lobby for educational policies, school funding, and more flexibility in school choice.

*“Social workers should act to expand choice and opportunity for all people, with special regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and groups.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>NASW Code of Ethics 6.04(b), 2017.

QUESTIONS...

