

The Effects of Self-Processes and Social Capital on the Educational Outcomes of High School Students

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(ABSTRACT)

This study seeks to offer a meaningful statement about the relative importance of self-processes and activated social capital in the process that links high school students and educational outcomes. The conceptual model for the study draws on the large and diverse body of research that aims to understand the process and effects of the interaction of the person and his or her environment. It is hypothesized that adaptive self-processes and social capital are positively related to school engagement, educational aspirations, and actual performance in school; and, that these factors mediate the effects of family background and other potential social capital on educational outcomes. The data for this study were obtained from a sample of N=1,176 in grades 9-12 from three school divisions in Virginia. Students completed the School Relationships and Experiences Survey (SRES), an instrument designed for this study. The study uses structural equation modeling (SEM) to model the relationships between the variables of interest.

Data were analyzed using LISREL 8.3 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). The covariance structure models tested include both single-indicator and multiple-indicator constructs. The analysis follows the two-step procedure suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). First, a measurement model was tested using confirmatory factor analysis to develop a model with acceptable fit to the data. In step two, the theoretical model of interest was specified as an *a priori* model. This theoretical model was then tested and revised until a theoretically meaningful and statistically acceptable model was found.

In conclusion, the results of the analyses are discussed, and possible explanations for the results are proposed. Directions for future research are outlined, including the need for

cross-validation of this model on additional samples of high school students. Social capital has previously been conceptualized primarily as family resources and parent-child relationships. This study provides promising initial evidence that activated social capital (education-related support received by adolescents from the broader social network) has stronger and more meaningful effects on academic engagement and other educational outcomes than the more passive indicators of social capital used in previous research.

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