Social capital of non traditional students assignment

Sociology

The number of undergraduates enrolled in higher education in the United States has risen to new heights (ONCE, 2012). Between 1 999 and 2009 alone, US college matriculation increased by 38 percent, three times the rate of the preceding decade (Rosenberg, Deli-Amen, & Person, 2006). This stunning growth is driven in large part by record enrollments of " nontraditional" students: defined as older, minority, of lower income, and often the first generation in their family to attend college (ONCE, 201 1).

Their numbers have en increasing since the sass, while the " traditional" definition of a college student as young, financially dependent, and living on campus now describes only about 14% of current undergraduates in the U. S. (Telltale & Alvin, 2012). While the bulk of undergraduates engage in higher education as commuters, however, most research on higher education (with the exceptions of Change, 2005; Appeasable, Dub & Iverson, 1983) continues to focus on traditional, residential institutions.

Urban commuter colleges, such as community colleges and the new, for-profit career colleges, have attracted the most Halloween segments of the non-traditional population (Beam, Little, & Payee, 201 1; ONCE, 2012). Compared to other four year colleges, urban commuter and career colleges have a significantly larger percentage of students below the poverty line, a larger percentage of single parents, African American and Latino students, and first generation college students (Deeming, Golden & Katz, 201 0; Rosenberg, Deli-Amen, & Person, 2006) that, taken together, raise the specter of growing segregation in higher education.

About 72% of two year and 54% of four year community colleges are minority students, while minorities constitute about 80% of career college enrollments (ONCE, 2012). This concentrated environment of minority, disadvantaged students at commuter schools presents a challenge to social models of college success.

Birds of a Feather: On the one hand, recent studies suggest that non-traditional students may have more frequent contact with faculty than their more “ traditional” counterparts (Cole, 2008; Appeasable, et al; 2004) and that African American students in particular tend to have the highest frequency of contact with faculty (Fischer, 2007; SKU & Huh 2001; Lundeberg & Screener, 2004). Since the home environment of non-traditional college students often lacks the social capital of those familiar with implicit college know-how, they especially need to reach beyond family and friends to succeed (Deli-Amen & Rosenberg, 2003).

On the other hand, non-traditional students have more responsibilities outside of school, such as employment and children, and have less time and opportunity for developing social capital on campus (Appeasable & Chapmen, 1983; Appeasable, Pierson, Wolfing, & Trending, 2004). This exploratory research hopes to expand on the literature of social capital in higher education by focusing on the non-traditional population of an urban, commuter college and by measuring student faculty ties as a group or mezzo- level construct.

Most studies measure student ties to faculty in isolation from their relationships with other adults. Without considering the entirety of a

student's academically relevant social network, however, high levels of faculty interaction could simply be a proxy measure for extroverted personality traits (Chapmen & Appeasable, 1983). In addition, the importance of strong family ties to the academic success of especially African American and Hispanic dents (Gifford, 2005; Whereon & Hire 2004; Nora & Caber, 1 996) suggests that the importance Of faculty over family ties be explored and not assumed.

Yet the bulk of research on the nature and value of college student social capital focuses exclusively on interaction with professionals or with family and community (Martin, 2007, is a notable exception). This study draws on social network theory as well as on social 2 integration studies to consider the whole network of non-traditional students' academically relevant social capital. Social capital, network theory and the infinite of weak versus strong ties Social capital refers to the resources accessed through connection to others.

James Coleman (1988) famously focused on the value of trust, norms and information provided by family members in particular. Subsequent studies measured the strength of parental social capital in terms of expectations as well as personal involvement in school, community or civic activities and found it correlated to a plethora of positive student outcomes for youth (Carbon, 1 998; Hay & Bonneted-Burns, 1998; for an overview, see Disk & Sings 2002).

Similar tidies of undergraduates focus on the importance of family expectations for getting them into college (Engineer & Wooing, 2010; Verna

& Titus, 2005). Once there, minorities in particular are found to rely heavily on family members for the support they find necessary to succeed (Barnett, 2004; Cooper & Smalls, 201 0; Gonzalez, 2002; Whereon and Hire, 2004; Hindered & Kenny, 2002). In contrast, the social integration literature suggests a shift away from family to new college based relationships as more conducive to college success.

Interaction with faculty is found to improve overall academic performance Fischer, 2007, Lundeberg & Screener, 2004; Martin, 2007; Mayo, Murmur(a, & Patella, 1995; Piccalilli et al, 2004), as well as a number of specific skills, such as problem-solving, abstract reasoning (End & Harper, 1 982; Piccalilli & Trending, 1978), classroom note taking (Checkering, 1 972) and motivation (Kumara, Insulin, & Apothecary, 2010). Most significantly for many non-traditional students, college professionals may serve as their main link to the middle class, professional world (Santos & Regards, 2002). Campus peers are seen as a similar resource. Shifting from home to college reindeer's has been linked with increased faculty interaction, as well as with cognitive development and persistence (Satin 1 999; Appeasable & Trending, 1991 More recent studies, however, find mixed results on the academic benefits of campus ties (Cole, 2010; Martin, 2009; Thomas, 2000), especially on performance Outcomes for students at commuter colleges (appeasable, Wolfing, and Pierson, 2003) Thomas (2000) found the value of campus peers could dissipate if the network grew beyond an optimal size.

Thus, the value of an actors social capital is mediated by the network in which it is located. Social enjorg theory explains how the composition of a

social network shapes the transmission of social capital. By considering all relevant social actors simultaneously, social network theory examines properties of the whole network by mapping the relative strength of individual relationships.

As such, family ties are examples of “ strong-ties,” defined as those between people who know each other well and so form a homophobic structure dense with ties (Carolyn & Nathaniel, 2009; Garrotter, 1973). Its cyclical dynamic reinforces commonly held norms and trust that also exerts a downward reassure which maintains commitment to the status quo and limits innovation or change (Broodier, 1986; Despond & Lopez Turtle, 2009; Poorest & Senselessness, 1993). The structural dynamic of a enjorg accounts for both its strengths and its limitations.

The same trust and solidarity of a predominately strong-tie network, for instance, provides students’ with deep sense of belonging and commitment but can also more easily impose countervailing demands on students’ time and energy, such as the demands for help at home with siblings and chores (Chugging, 1999; Caber, Nora, Trending, Appeasable, & Headgear, 1999). In contrast, student ties to campus professionals are examples of “ weak-tie” social capital, that act as a bridge to new and distant worlds that provide little solidarity but are gateways to social mobility and change (Burt, 2004; Garrotter, 1 973; Line, 1999).

Actors in bridging, weak-tie networks, such as those consisting of students’ professors, academic advisor, or new college friends, tend not to know each other well, if at all. These actors usually come from and inhabit different

social worlds (Shadbush, 1966). As such, the sparsely-knit structure of a predominately weak-tie network gives students access to a wide range of diverse resources as well as the flexibility and openness to use them with little restraint (Burt, 2004; Line, 1999; Poorest & Senselessness, 1993).

With little shared loyalty to a common past, students in bridging, weakest networks are left relatively unencumbered by guilt, traditions, or obligations that could limit their growth and social mobility (Line, 1999). Ultimately, this openness to change and to new vistas of experience and knowledge is also at the heart of a successful college learning experience. Ethnicity, however, may serve to complicate the benefit and dynamic of weak- ii networks (Change, 2005; Cole, 2010).

While some studies suggests that minority and first generation students rely on faculty and guidance counselors more frequently than their " traditional" counterparts (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005; Ridge-Crumb 2010; Trending et al, 1 996; Thiele & Matt, 1995), others find that such outreach may be less helpful or satisfying for them (Cole, 201 0; SKU & Huh, 2001; Nora & Caber, 1996). Kim (2012), for example, found that African American and White students interact with faculty more than Hispanic and Asian students, but that such interaction mainly improves he academic aspirations of only the White students. In particular, the social distance between minority students and predominately White professionals may impede the salutary benefits of bridging, weak-ties (Aimers, 2000; Hurtled, Courtship, Inkwells, Biggs, & Rhea 1997; Larvae & Horror, 1 990; Mitchell & Bryan, 2007; Manville, Hipper, J, & They, 2004). Instead, minority students may prefer interacting mainly

with faculty or mentors of their same ethnicity (Incas, Skedaddle & Mohr, 2000; Lundeberg & Screener, 2004; Santos & Regards, 2002) even when the perceived support is not linked to improved academic outcomes (Blake-Beard, Payne, Crosby, & Mueller, 2011).

Similarly, students attending self- consciously minority-serving institutions, such as historically black colleges and universities (Hubbubs) or Hispanic-serving institutions (His), consistently report feeling more " at home' and secure in their academic pursuits when their ethnic group is dominate or at least attains a certain " critical mass. " (Fries-Bruit & Turner, 2002; Prepares, & Headgear, 2010). If students feel marginalia or illegitimate by the demographics of their college (Tierney, 1999), increased contact with campus professionals alone will not facilitate heir success.

To shift their sense of belonging, students need to trust the instigators of that shift (Cracked, 1992; Smith, 2007). While weak ties mediate a rich and diverse flow of information, the actual process of learning hinges on the ability to trust the source of the new information received (Carolyn & Nathaniel, 2009; Levin & Cross, 2004). Ethnic capital acts as an extension of family capital and is rooted in the trust and familiarity of shared meaningful experiences. As such, it also confers the limitations as well as the advantages of strong ties (Poorest & Senselessness, 1993). Studies of Afro-

Caribbean immigrants or first generation students, for example, credit their immigrant identity and national pride for their academic achievements and perceived differences from native born African- 6 Americans (Madders, 1 998; Waters, 1999). Similarly, Asian student academic success has long been

linked to the strong intra-ethnic ties to family and cultural values (Chou and Bankbooks, 1 998; for an overview, see Nag & Lee, 2007). At the same time, ethnic capital has also been found to mediate or problematic attitudes toward authority figures (Larvae & Horror, 1990) or even feed an " oppositional" reaction to the dominant order (Gobo, 1983).

V?? leg-life & Greenberg (1992), for example, find that warm, extended family bonds or families in Mexican-American communities can interfere with students' adjustment to the more distant, formal style of U. S. Faculty. Ethnic capital is a social resource like all social capital. While it may be important to differentiate the different values associated with different ethnicities (Bankbooks, 2004), ethnic social capital is ultimately a social construct and not an essentialist group or individual trait. It is largely the structure of social ties within the group that determines how effectively those norms are perpetuated and transmitted.

A model of antecedents to weak-tie social capital While the social integration model promotes students' shift away from family, the social capital literature celebrates the ties that bind, albeit recognizing the complex mediation of ethnicity and class (Aka & Rutherford, 2007; Larvae & Horror, 1999). This model seeks to transcend the choice between kin versus non-kin as resources by exploring the extent to which both figures in the formation of social capital among our fastest growing sector: " nontraditional" students at commuter schools (Beam, Little, & payee, 2011; Deeming, 2012).

It will explore how assure of both strong family and bridging, campus-based ties impact on students' conception of their academically relevant social

capital. 7 The importance of race is also central to this exploration. The concept of predominately minority colleges differs from that of historically black or Hispanic serving institutions and remains relatively unexplored. This research can help shed some light on the dynamics of social capital where a mix of predominately African American and Hispanic students constitutes the majority.

Finally, past research suggests that the process of faculty interaction differs for different minority groups. In the same vein, this model considers the antecedents of weak-tie capital separately for key ethnic groups. Three types of student capital are the first set of dependent variables: the extent to which academically relevant social capital consists of professionals (weak-tie capital), the extent to which this capital is actually accessed (realized weak-tie capital), and the extent to which this capital consists of shared ethnic ties (ethnically homologous capital).

This study considers antecedents to all three variants of students' academically relevant social capital and the possible effects of these variants on academic outcomes. Antecedents to weak-tie capital Probably the most consistent finding on weak-tie capital formation, at least in ' traditional" college settings, is that age is positively related to more frequent faculty contact. Younger students were found to feel less established in their college or school setting and had less access and understanding of the advantages of faculty relationships (Cotton & Wilson; Martin, 2009; SKU & Huh, 2001; Stanton-Salary & Doorknobs, 1995).

In one of the few studies of commuter students to disaggregate faculty interaction by ethnicity, Change (2005) found that age was a significant predicator of faculty contact only for African American and Hispanic students, but was irrelevant to Asia and White students. 8 Language acquisition is also important to the formation of social capital. Difficulty with English has been found to impede helpful relationships with educators and other professional for Mexican (Stanton-Salary & Doorknobs, Ream 2003) and Asian students (Nag & Lee, 2007), as well as for visiting, foreign students (Sherry, Thomas, & Wing Hong, 2010).

Class also clearly mediates the perception of social capital and plays a fundamental role in how social inequality reproduces itself (Broodier 1993; Larvae & Winger, 2003). However, the effect of family income on postsecondary outreach to university professionals is somewhat mixed. Appeasable (1983) finds that commuting students tend to be low income but have more contact with college faculty than students in residential colleges, while SKU & Huh (2001) found that income had no significance on extent of faculty interaction.

In one of the few studies of educational outcomes that disaggregate ethnic groups, Fischer (2007) found that the parent income was significantly linked to grade point average mainly for African American and Hispanic students, while actual rental contribution to college costs was also relevant, but was significant only for students of Hispanic descent. In contrast, Hamilton (2013) found parent income related positively to initial college GAP so that students of richer parents had higher average GAP than poorer students, but that

parent contributions were a disincentive and negatively affected academic performance across all income levels.

The extent to which parents have prior college experience is another key aspect of student social capital but the effect of low parent education is confounded by the fact that it is also expatriation's found among low income and minority students (ONCE, 2001). There does seem to be some support for the argument that lack of family resources " push" first generation students in particular to seek out faculty contact (Appeasable et al, 2004).

While Martin (2005) found no significant relationship between parents' education and student grades or aspirations at 9 Duke, Writ (201 1) suggests that first generation status is linked to greater faculty involvement especially for part-time students. At the same time, however, ethnicity mediates the effect of first generation status. Change (2005) found that parent education was positively related to greater faculty interaction only for students of Hispanic descent and Fischer (2007) links it to higher grades for both Hispanic and White students.

In contrast, the level of parent education was not significant to faculty interaction for Asian and White students (Change, 2005) and also had little bearing on grades for Asian and African American students (Fischer, 2007). The importance of parental norms may wane as children approach college and adulthood, but expectations embedded in ethnic communities appear longer-lived. Finally, the immigrant status of parents can further compound the cultural disjuncture that college represents for non-traditional students.

Inkwells, Dave, Vogue, and Leonard (2007) found that immigrant status was a key variable for understanding the process of academic transition for first generation college students. Immigrant students and first generation native born are often found to be more hard working and successful than successive generations (Patella & Gonzalez; 2001; Verne & Abraham's, 1996; Waters, 1999). At the same time, immigrant parents can better enforce a sense of family obligation and indebtedness that deters students from developing bridging ties on campus both with professionals as well as with peers (Tsars, 2004).

Limitations A position generator listing job titles was used to help prompt students' conception of social resources but could also alter or limit the number or type of resources conceived. Another problematic issue of measurement springs in part from the lack Of clear specifications in the 10 literature itself, particularly on how to distinguish bridging, weak ties from those that are becoming strong ones. The attempt has been made in all cases ere to use consistent criteria defining ' quake" ties as those that are relatively formal, infrequent, or new (Burt, 2004; Garrotter, 1973).

Thus only ties to peers at students' current campus were counted as weak, campus-based ties. Ties to older friends at institutions that a student may have transferred from, for instance, were not included in the measure of campus-based ties. The focus of this exploratory study is the proportion of weak ties in students' academically relevant social capital and the relevant antecedents thereof. As such, ties here are ego-based, asymmetrical dyads without data on the possible relationships between alters.

This research assumes therefore that actors conceived of as professionals fit the criteria of weak ties by not also doubling as prominent figures in students’ private life. The sample Students for this study were solicited from all the mandatory introductory social sciences courses at a four-year, urban, commuter college of about 4500 full- time students. The majority of the students enrolled seek to attain a Bachelors Degree with a focus on some aspect of business or the criminal justice system.

The college fits the profile of an institution catering to non- traditional students as the average age of a full-time student is 24 years old ND it is overrepresented by female (65%) and minority students (79%), the largest groups of which were Hispanic students, followed by African Americans. A total of 595 students completed the questionnaire over the course of four consecutive quarters, for a response rate of about 64%. Each quarter, participating students were eligible to win a randomly awarded 550 gift card.

This sample also had a majority of female (62%) and 11 minority (81. 8%) students. The largest ethnic groups were students of Hispanic descent (33. 8%), followed by African American (21. 8%), Afro- Caribbean (9. 2%), and Southeast Asian (8. 9%). Typical for a commuter college, most students (89%) came from the local area, while 1 1 % were visiting, international students. Dependent variables Academically relevant capital: Three measures of student academically relevant capital were calculated: weak-tie capital, realized weak-tie capital, shared-ethnicity capital.

The basis for all three measures was the following question: “ Who would you have the confidence to go to for personal advice and guidance on

academic decisions? ” (Stanton-Salary & Doorknobs, 1995). Respondents identified the social/ institutional position of each person mentioned drawing from a list of ten social/ institutional categories provided along with the name generator. The list included the following positions: College Advisor, College Professor, Guidance Counselor, other College Administrator (ex: Deans, Activities Coordinator, Club Sponsor, etc. , Employer, Religious official, Parent, Relative, Friend. Weak-tie capital was computed as the proportion of the total number of ties in the network that was constituted by weak-ties to college and work professionals only. Students were then asked to mark how many people listed in each category 1) shared their ethnic background? And 2) had they actually approached for advice in the last 3-4 months?. Shared-ethnic capital was calculated as the proportion of their total capital that shared the student’s same ethnic background.

Realized weak-tie capital was calculated as the proportion of professionals in the entire network that were actually approached for information. 12 Independent variables Parent social capital: Three different items were combined to assess the strength of parent social capital. Students were also asked to rate how frequently their parents attended social, ethnic, or community events respectively using a five point Liker scale (Cockroach’s alpha = . 81 A second measure of parent capital was a five-point Liker scale measure asking self-reported parent expectation of student academic success.

Campus ties: Students were asked to list their good friends using a name generator that also asked for the basis of each tie from a list of seven

categories including current campus, former campus, neighborhood, work, relatives, and so on. The campus ties measure is the number of current campus friends reported. Expectations: A five-point Liker scale measured the educational attainment expectations students had for themselves and also heir perception of parental expectations for their educational attainment (1= no expectations, to continue full-time for more training after graduating 4 years of college).

Grade point average (GAP): Current overall average as self- assessed and measured on a nine point scale of “ A- or above (90% – 1 00%)” through ” (less than 60%). ” Background variables English language ability using a five point Liker scale (1 = poor command, 5= fluent). Immigrant status was measured using a five point Liker scale (1 = native born, 5= visiting, international student). 13 Age: Grade level in college was used as a proxy for student’s age. Parent Financial support was self-reported percentage of financial support students received from parents for college tuition and expenses.

Level of parent education was measured for each parent with a seven point scale for the furthest educational level attained did not complete primary school; had less than 8 years, 7= completed doctoral (PhD) or professional (ID, MD, MBA) degree). The high count of missing data on fathers education made it unreliable and only mother’s educational level is used. Ethnicity: Students were asked to select their perceived ethnicity from a category of 1 1 options lulus “ Other. Findings Table 1 summarizes the means of background control variables and social capital measures for both the total

sample and across the five main ethnic groups. Significant differences across ethnic groups were found in all of the family background measures except for gender and grade.