

Social Capital and the Educational Performance of Latino and Non-Latino Youth

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ABSTRACT

Using the High School and Beyond data, the author attempts to determine whether social capital explain the academic achievement of Latino students. The author assesses the importance of human, financial, and social capital in determining the academic (and life) outcomes of Latino youth. The author found that social capital is more useful than socioeconomic status in predicting educational outcomes. Whites in vocational programs have less social capital available from home than Latinos in college-bound programs. White youth in vocational programs even have slightly less social capital than Latino youth in vocational programs. These findings hold true even when social capital of school, such as the influence of teachers and guidance counselors, is accounted for in the model. The author concludes that social capital from the home and school environments are very important factors in determining educational outcomes of both White and Latino youth, net of the effect of socioeconomic status. The study suggests that home and school environments, which foster guided reading and writing activities, are more conducive to improved educational outcomes than the socioeconomic status of students. The author recommends further work to better understand social capital in the pre-labor market environments of youth.