Social Capital: Similarities and Differences Between Future Educators and Urban Youth Leaders

Melissa M. Pearrow\textsuperscript{a}, Julia Zoino-Jeannetti\textsuperscript{b}, and Takuya Minami\textsuperscript{a}

\textsuperscript{a}University of Massachusetts Boston; \textsuperscript{b}Framingham State University

\textbf{ABSTRACT}
This study examines differences in social capital between two demographically disparate groups: future education professionals and youth leaders living in urban communities. This is important because there is growing scholarly evidence of a positive relationship between social capital and student achievement. Social capital, defined as a constellation of privileges, is parallel to “the concepts of financial capital, physical capital, and human capital—but embodied in relations among persons” (Coleman, 1988). The impact of the varying access to social capital and its attendant resources may have profound implications on the interactions within the classroom; thus, this study measured this construct in a sample of students in education preparation programs ($n=145$) and a sample of youth leaders living in urban communities ($n=119$). There were significant differences between groups in: community participation, value of life, and feelings of trust and safety. Educational and consultative strategies to develop cultural competence and diversity sensitivity are discussed, with a particular focus on training future school professionals.

Differences in demographics between school professionals and their students are well documented, and it is predicted that these differences will continue, as the preponderance of public educators remains predominantly White, middle class, and female while the diversity of school-aged children steadily increases (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], 2010; Boser, 2014; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010; Sleeter, 2008). Several influential reports have documented this difference, commonly referred to as “the demographic imperative,” and researchers have consistently called for efforts to diversify the education workforce (Sleeter & Thao, 2007; Villegas & Davis, 2007). This is uniquely so in urban environments where schools face a host of challenges, given the stark differences in the social background of the students’ families and the disproportionate rates of students who are vulnerable to oppression and marginalization (Kaufman & Hines, 2010; Lee & Burkam,
As such, those consulting with and preparing education professionals need to recognize the importance of developing an awareness of and sensitivity to diversity and its implications in the learning environment.

Within the dialogue of urban education, the 100 largest public school districts represent less than 1% of all school districts in the US and educate 22% of all public school students (Council of Great City Schools, 2011). Disproportionately, these students come from poverty (69%) and represent racially and ethnically diverse communities (80% non-White; Plotts & Sable, 2010). Moreover, national assessments of achievement in both reading and math indicate that urban schools, in general, perform at lower rates than their suburban and rural counterparts (NCES, 2011a, 2011b). The persistent disparities in achievement highlight the need to understand how access to resources influences educational outcomes. Pedagogical practices and policies implemented in schools with communities that are often marginalized are characterized as perpetuating hidden and overt cycles of domination (Foucault, 1980; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994). Furthermore, institutional discrimination, perpetuated through segregation and concentrations of poverty, restricts access to social mobility (Massey, 1994). These practices inadvertently support patterns of underachievement in educational outcomes and challenge the myth of an American educational system that operates as a pathway for upward mobility. Instead, this confirms research demonstrating that “schools perpetuate the existing status hierarchy and reinforce social inequity” (DeSena & Ansalone, 2009, p. 60). Within this context, consultants have the opportunity to alter these oppressive educational practice and enhance cultural relevance in order to reduce disproportionality (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The scope of the differences between education professionals and students in urban communities has been recognized along multiple dimensions, ranging from age and demographics to social privileges (Villegas & Davis, 2008; Zoino-Jeannetti, Pearrow, & Couse, 2013). These differences are postulated to extend into the lived experiences (e.g., living in poverty, exposure to community violence, access to quality education) and access to resources and networks that create future opportunities through the presence of social capital. Social capital, and its attendant resources and social networks, can influence daily interactions within classrooms. As such, this study explores the variability of social capital based on one’s position in the classroom and contributes to the discourse on consultation practices that influence educational success.

What is social capital?

Social capital is “a resource that emerges from social relations” (Plagens, 2010, p. 18). It has been described as “a sense of personal and collective efficacy,” as well as “the interpersonal trust, norms of reciprocity, and social
engagement that foster community and social participation” (Carpiano, 2007, p. 639). According to Beaudoin (2007), “social capital is the actual or potential resources that stem from shared social connections and senses of reciprocity and trust, which, when put to use, can influence outcomes at both the individual and collective levels” (p. 947). Research on the construct of social capital bridges several scholarly fields: sociology, public health, and education, and is described as parallel “to the concepts of financial capital, physical capital, and human capital—but embodied in relations among persons” (Coleman, 1988). Furthermore, there is evidence of the positive relationship between social capital and student achievement, highlighting the challenges of academic success with disparities in access due to systemic and institutional barriers (Massey, 1994).

Having social capital impacts opportunities for young people, and research has demonstrated how families’ and communities’ access to social networks advance their children’s chances of educational achievement and success. A meta-analytic study demonstrated that “families with high social capital are more likely to produce children who fare positively in areas of general well-being, including mental and physical health, educational attainment and formal labor-market participation,” and that—after poverty—social capital is “the best predictor of children’s welfare” (Ferguson, 2006, p. 590). The presence of social capital uniquely and positively impacts young people in neighborhoods with overwhelming social issues (e.g., high poverty rates, single-parent household, etc.), as it has been linked with increased rates of school completion (Coleman, 1988), socioeconomic success (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995), and empowerment (Parrow, Harvey, & Aruro, 2012). The presence of social capital among these communities has also been correlated to improved health (Cattell, 2001; McPherson et al., 2013) and a decrease in delinquent behaviors (Mangino, 2009), including property crimes (Nakhaie & Sacco, 2009). Social capital may serve as a buffer to mental health issues, as it is negatively correlated with depression and anxiety among adolescent and adult ethnically diverse populations (De Silva, McKenzie, Harpham, & Huttly, 2005; Fitzpatrick, Piko, Wright, & LaGory, 2005; Valencia-Garcia, Simoni, Alegria, & Takeuchi, 2012). Furthermore, limited social capital in these populations, as manifested through weaker ties, can result in less cohesive interactions and collective efficacy to address community problems (Hanks, 2008).

Moreover, scholars have provided evidence of the positive relationship between social capital and student achievement (Carolan, 2012; Goddard, 2003; Plagens, 2010). Research links social capital to an increase in attendance rates, a decrease in dropout rates, and an increase in achievement (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; John, 2005; Putnam, 2000). Yet, the opportunities embedded within the construct of social capital are immersed within the community context. As stated by Putnam (2000), “a well-connected individual in a poorly connected society is not as productive as a well-connected
individual in a well-connected society” (p. 86). In ways similar to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological perspective of development, social capital implies a link between individual characteristics and immediate social contexts such as families, neighborhoods, and communities (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995). However, for students growing up in poor, urban neighborhoods, the “behaviors that enhance cohesion among peers and urban-specific social capital jeopardize school completion” (Rendon, 2014, p. 62). As such, social capital can influence behaviors that positively or negatively contribute to school success.

Social capital, and an awareness of its influence, has the potential to influence pedagogical practices of those leading schools and classrooms. Access to social capital has shown to be a predictor of both the educational aspirations of students and of teacher expectations for the educational achievement (Byun, Meece, Irvin, & Hutchins, 2012). In addition, mainstream teachers enter the teaching force with limited cross-cultural knowledge and experience, and tend to assume a deficit perspective regarding the achievement of students of color (Sleeter & Thao, 2007).

Thus, this study seeks to examine social capital of future school professionals and youth in urban communities as it is believed to influence the interactions and educational outcomes of urban schools. As such, this research seeks to identify and compare social capital of two distinct groups who enter the same classroom—young adults entering as professional educators and student leaders in the classrooms of urban schools. The authors combined two separate data sets to empirically examine social capital, and given the exploratory nature of this study, the purpose was to identify the basic characteristics of these samples as well as similarities and differences between these two groups with the prediction that those leading the classroom would have greater access to social capital. In doing so, a theoretical and pragmatic awareness of how access to social resources and influence relates to opportunities in an educational context. This study also offers strategies for consultation within urban school environments and expands the scholarship of factors influencing the training of future school professionals.

**Methods**

**Participants**

Two samples were independently recruited for this comparison of social capital. The two samples were obtained at separate locations and occasions over a 4-year time span. Sample 1 was recruited from introductory undergraduate and graduate education-related courses in licensing preparation programs at two state-funded institutions in the Northeast. These institutions were targeted as they each had strong partnerships with urban
districts in the local area. Students were matriculated into training programs that focused on areas of elementary or secondary teacher education and education support personnel (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists). The majority of students (62%) were in the teacher educator preparatory program. Students training for education support personnel comprised 21% of the participants, and data was missing on the remaining participants (17%). A trained graduate research assistant recruited participants at the end of seven separate class sessions, after the instructor had completed the day’s lessons. The vast majority of those recruited voluntarily participated in this study, with a conservative estimate of 90% participation rate, totaling 145 future educators. Similar to the national demographics of individuals in education and in preparatory training programs (AACTE, 2010; Curtis, Castillo, & Gelley, 2010), the vast majority of the participants self-identified as Caucasian (86.9%) and were between the ages of 20 and 25 (82.1%).

Sample 2 consisted of 119 youth who participated in a community-based organization (CBO) project addressing social issues related to community violence (e.g., domestic violence, education reform, environmental equality, and youth empowerment) in their diverse neighborhoods. Data from this sample were collected as part of a program evaluation of an urban-based, youth empowerment program facilitated in neighborhoods disproportionately experiencing high rates of criminal activity and youth violence, as determined by local police reporting. The youth who participated in this program were recruited at the community sites. De-identified archival survey data were collected from the CBO conducting the program evaluation (see Pearrow, 2008 for more information). The participating youth ranged in age from 14 and 17 years, with a mean age of 15.8 (σ = 1.08). Using the categories on the United States Census, the participants identified as African American (49%), Latino (24%), Caucasian (9%), Asian/Pacific Islander (2%), or “other” (16%; e.g., Caribbean, Cape Verdean, multi-ethnic). The participants were relatively representative of the local, urban public school district’s student body, which was comprised of African American (34%), Hispanic (43%), and Caucasian (12%), and Asian (8%).

The authors’ institutional review boards approved both studies and conferred ethical protection of human participants. Table 1 provides additional information on the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Materials and procedures

Participants from the two samples completed self-report surveys to examine the construct of social capital and background demographic information using the following measures:
Social capital is most commonly measured by asking individuals about their participation in social relationships and their perceptions of the quality of those relationships (De Silva et al., 2005). The Social Capital Questionnaire (SCQ; Onyx & Bullen, 2000) was used to measure the participants’ perception of neighborhood and societal characteristics and connections within their community. Seven of the eight factors of this scale were used. The seven factors addressed the following dimensions: (1) Participation in Local Community, which refers to participation in formal community structures; (2) Social Action or Proactivity in Social Context, referring to a sense of personal and collective efficacy or personal agency within a social context; (3) Feelings of Trust and Safety, reflecting a belief of trustworthiness of community locations and members; (4) Neighborhood Connection, indicating informal interactions in their area; (5) Family and Friends’ Connection, reflecting relational interactions and networks; (6) Tolerance of Diversity, examining a sense of multiculturalism; and (7) Value of Life, or their perceived value in society. The eighth factor, Work Connections, focused on experiences with paid employment and those items were eliminated as they were not relevant for the participants in the study. Similarly, 2 items from the Social Action or Proactivity in Social Context were removed as they also related to experiences with paid employment.

The scores for each of the 29 items were calculated on a 4-point scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of activity and/or agreement (4 = Yes, definitely; 3 = Yes, frequently; 2 = No, not much; and 1 = No, not at all). The validity of this survey instrument and its replicated use with U.S. populations were found to be adequate by O’Brien, Burdsal, and Molgaard (2004). This measure was also found to have good reliability, or internal consistency, with both samples in the present study, obtaining a Cronbach’s alpha of .73 with Sample 1, and .81 with Sample 2.

Demographics
Basic demographic information was gathered at the end of the survey. Items included queries on race, age, and ethnicity, and for Sample 1, there was an additional item on their undergraduate program or degree.
Descriptive analyses of the overall social capital as well as the identified factors were calculated for each of the samples. The descriptive analyses identified the overall distribution of mean scores and variability (Myers, Well, & Lorch, Jr., 2011). Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with the seven subscales of the SCQ as the dependent variables was conducted to compare between the future educators and urban youth. In addition, post hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted to identify significant differences between these two samples (Hoyt, Imel, & Chan, 2008).

**Results**

With each of the samples, the authors sought to empirically examine the level of social capital, and the factors encompassed within it. The results were analyzed to identify the descriptive characteristics of these samples as well as elucidate similarities and differences. As there were no significant differences between those training to be classroom educators and those training to be support personnel, these participants were clustered into one group. The differences between the two groups—future educators and youth leaders—were compared in order to extrapolate implications for the school settings, and for consultants as they support the educational achievement of all students.

With regard to the descriptive analyses, both samples demonstrated relatively similar results based on the findings from the SCQ; however, there were significant and noteworthy similarities and differences among the factors that contributed to the findings of each sample. In the sample of future educators, the *Family and Friends Connection* factor was rated the highest ($\mu=3.18$, $\sigma=.61$) while *Participation in the Local Community* was rated the lowest ($\mu=2.10$, $\sigma=.60$). All factors were rated with a level of “agreement” with the exception of the *Participation in the Local Community* factor.

In the urban youth sample, the *Tolerance for Diversity* ($\mu=3.21$, $\sigma=.70$) factor was rated the highest, and the *Feelings of Trust and Safety* ($\mu=2.29$, $\sigma=.55$) was rated the lowest. Within this sample, there were three factors that were not indicated with agreement, including *Participation in the Local Community* ($\mu=2.49$, $\sigma=.71$), *Value of Life* ($\mu=2.47$, $\sigma=.79$), and *Feelings of Trust and Safety* ($\mu=2.29$, $\sigma=.55$; see Table 2).

The omnibus MANOVA was statistically significant (Wilk’s $\Lambda = .015$, $df = [7,252]$, $p < .001$), indicating that the combination of the seven subscales of the SCQ were different between the urban youth and future educators. Post hoc analyses (Holm, 1979) indicated that the two groups differed on three subscales; specifically, the urban youth indicated significantly higher scores in the *Participation in Local Community* ($t = 4.96; p < .001$), while the future educators demonstrated significantly higher scores in the *Feelings of Trust*
The results from this scale and for each of the factors are included in Table 2.

### Table 2. Social Capital and Factors: Descriptive Statistics and Post Hoc t Test Comparisons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Future Educators M (SD)</th>
<th>Urban Youth M (SD)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in local community</td>
<td>2.09 (.60)</td>
<td>2.49 (.70)</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social agency</td>
<td>3.06 (.45)</td>
<td>3.09 (.57)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>.619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of trust &amp; safety</td>
<td>2.88 (.68)</td>
<td>2.28 (.55)</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
<td>-7.84</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood connections</td>
<td>2.75 (.53)</td>
<td>2.67 (.62)</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-1.06</td>
<td>.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and friends connections</td>
<td>3.19 (.66)</td>
<td>3.18 (.61)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance for diversity</td>
<td>3.05 (.71)</td>
<td>3.22 (.71)</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of life</td>
<td>2.92 (.66)</td>
<td>2.46 (.79)</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>-5.14</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital Questionnaire</td>
<td>2.74 (.33)</td>
<td>2.70 (.39)</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.99</td>
<td>.322</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Four-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of agreement. Differences between the samples for Participation in Local Community, Feelings of Trust & Safety, and Value of Life were statistically significant after controlling for Type I error rate using Holm (1979).

Discussion

The findings from this study suggest that even though students in urban schools and those who will become their educators and support staff may share the same physical space of a classroom, they have access to different components of social capital and its attendant resources. In addition, the finding that there are no differences between those who are future educators who will provide educational services in the classroom and those who provide consultation to these educators is noteworthy. Thus, the significant differences between these two groups in three of the factors that constitute the social capital construct—Participation in Local Community, Feelings of Trust and Safety, and Value of Life—have implications for consultative and educational practices. Given the diverse demographic profiles of the two samples, these differences have the potential to shape exchanges within the classroom, accentuating a cross-cultural divide that permeates many urban schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The difference between the two samples’ levels of participation in their local communities was significant and striking and may be attributed in part to the unique aspects of how this engagement is demonstrated by each sample. The urban youth in this study were seeking an employment opportunity to address violence in their community, so it is logical that this sample demonstrated a greater degree of participation in the community. Nonetheless, we might expect to see higher levels of community engagement for this sample. For educators, this level of participation might be expected given that those who seek out professions in education have the tendency to obey the rules and seek out opportunities to work within socially recognized institutions (Pearrow & Sanchez, 2008). This...
may reduce a need or desire to engage in the community to make it “a better place” and challenge institutional practices and the status quo. Correspondingly, the similarities in social agency, which refers to the sense of personal or collective efficacy, may reflect the social context of the two samples. In other words, to be proactive in a community that is adequately resourced might look very different from being proactive in a community influenced by a paucity of resources and exposed to community strife. Thus, the impetus or desire for community participation may vary based on individual and contextual factors that contribute to issues to be addressed.

Based on these findings, urban youth experience vastly lower rates of feelings of trust and safety (e.g., “Do you agree that most people can be trusted?”) and lower rates of believing that their life has value (e.g., “Do you feel valued by society?”). For many new educators working in urban education, it may be worthwhile to explore and understand how environmental and community factors influence this lack of feelings of trust and safety. Without a foundational sense of safety and security, as conceptually articulated by Maslow (1954), a student’s ability to pursue educational obtainment may be compromised. This highlights the need for schools to provide a haven from community violence and create positive school climates that promote safety and security (Swearer, Espelage, Love, & Kingsbury, 2008; Rendon, 2014). Similar to their limited feelings of trust and safety, the sample of youth indicated a belief that they are not satisfied with their life and that they do not feel valued by society. Together, these factors portray young people in urban communities who internalize a societal context that leaves them vulnerable both physically and psychologically. As an effort to counter this, schools can take an empowerment approach rather than reducing them to passive vessels in the learning process (Freire, 1970). By engaging the voices of students and families in urban schools, there are enriched opportunities to influence school climate and to enhance a sense of value by the youth (Swearer et al., 2008). Moreover, a nuanced and sensitive understanding of how this perception of societal messages influences urban youth and how this contributes to their engagement in school and life can alter conversations and activities facilitated by the educators and consultants within the school environment. This also speaks to the need to solicit youth voice through the educational process, as we know that youth demonstrate improved mental health and academic performance when given opportunities to contribute and have an influence on their school and community lives (Bemak, Chi-Ying, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005; Hazler & Carney, 2002; Pearrow & Pollack, 2009).

Both groups indicate comparable levels of access to networks that have the potential to support academic success (Bourdieu, 1973; Goddard, 2003; John, 2005; Plagens, 2010). However, neighborhood and community factors also impact social capital, and for the purposes of educational obtainment, it may
be that the family and friend connections that are available to young people in urban communities may have the paucity of resources to enrich academic success (Subramanian, Lochner, & Kawachi, 2003; Williams & Le Menestrel, 2013). Even more, in urban communities with high rates of community violence, young people's exposure to the neighborhood context can contribute to poor educational outcomes (Rendon, 2014). This presents a potential link for schools and educators to become translators of resources that build networks for access to educational opportunities (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011). Moreover, even though quantitatively these two samples are similar in their family and neighborhood connections, qualitatively there appear to be significant differences in the resources available through those networks.

Limitations and future directions

Of the limitations to this study, an influential one is the lack of normative data with which to compare either of these samples. The construction and utilization of the SCQ has been examined and validated by the original authors, Onyx and Bullen (2000); however, there is a lack of clarity on how the participants in these samples may or may not reflect those in other studies. Moreover, given the regional variance demonstrated in the changing racial and ethnic demographics of students in public schools (NCES, 2013), it is possible that these findings uniquely reflect the experiences of those in the Northeast. This could be addressed by expanding regions from which samples are studied as well as examine the utility of this assessment tool.

In addition, data collected through self-report surveys heavily relies on the temporal beliefs and attitudes of the respondent, which may or may not accurately reflect time behaviors associated with these attitudes. Future research could attempt to verify how these findings influence interactions in the classroom setting. This research could be collected through observations and qualitative interviews, to deepen the understanding of how social capital is translated into the classroom setting and to help elucidate an awareness of each samples’ perspective on these issues—particularly as they relate to success in school. Once these attitudes are better understood, then there is the need to examine whether simply increasing awareness of these differences is enough to improve educational practices and outcomes in urban schools, and if not, then what other interventions are needed to enhance the connection between students and teachers with disparate lived experiences.

More research is needed to develop a critical understanding of the contextual and developmental factors that contribute to the youth leaders’ findings, specifically in the value of life and feelings of trust and safety. It is possible that most of the adolescents in American society have lesser
amounts of feelings of trust and safety and feeling valued by society when compared to adults. In the absence of examining whether these findings are relevant to all youth, as opposed to this sample comprised primarily of urban youth, we lack an understanding of contextual and environmental influences that contribute to these results.

Similarly, research could explore how the social capital of this sample of future educators—whose demographic characteristics predominantly reflect the dominant culture—may compare with a more ethnically diverse sample of young adults. In addition, comparisons of young adults who pursue careers in education with those who chose other career paths could enhance our understanding of the social capital of young adults.

**Implications for the consultant**

For the consultant engaging in indirect services, the focus is on offering supports and training that direct service providers find “helpful, respectful, and address the concerns of the consultee” (Sander, 2013, p. 226). Yet, this assumes that the consultee is aware of the differences in social capital and how it influences the students in the classroom. If students walk into classrooms believing that society does not value them, it impacts all aspects of how they engage in their lives—including their efforts and beliefs about school and the value of education. For many of the individuals who stand in front of a classroom, most of whom may have never experienced the world in this way, simple references and covert messages from the worldview of the teacher may not translate into the world of students who have vastly different life experiences. In a sense, they cannot ordinarily find common ground, as neither group has a frame of reference for the other’s worldview. Recognizing differences and increasing awareness of these differences can have profound implications on how one proceeds to educate students (DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008). It can also influence how consultants, particularly those who address the educational and psychological growth of vulnerable students, engage and support classroom teachers.

Paulo Freire (1970) posited that schools can perpetuate the “banking system of education” in which a cycle of oppression ensues from the narrative of teacher to student, wherein the teacher, who assumes the role of paternalistic figure, “deposits” information into the passive student receptacles. The opportunity for dialogue is short-circuited, and with that, the chance for a true development of understanding and a socially just environment is eliminated. Perpetuating this system of imposing knowledge into an empty vessel gives a message to youth that their knowledge and life experiences lack value—which further perpetuates their belief that their life lacks value. Thus, teachers are in a position to **corroborate this belief** or to **challenge it**. Breaking this cycle requires teachers and school staff to engage youth in
ways that recognize these differences and empowers them to connect to resources that extend community networks. This is particularly relevant for youth of color, who frequently reside outside the networks of power and experience a culture of silence that contributes to the massive dropout problem (McInerney, 2009).

Altering the access to the networks in these social and power structures may require altering school operations, where parents and community leaders participate in school planning and expand the access to opportunities that improve the school learning environment. Building on the belief expressed by Evans (2007), “meaningful youth voice and influence in settings can deliver rewards to communities, as youth bring their collective energy, creativity, and innovation to bear on transforming unjust social conditions and alleviating human suffering” (p. 706). Nonetheless, perpetuating the current systems risks the continued loss of potential for some vulnerable youth, and misses an opportunity to work with young people as they come to realize that they can be powerful agents of educational attainment and positive social change (Williams, 2007).

Similarly, research by Rendon (2014) indicates that in order to understand factors that result in school non-completion in inner city neighborhoods, “it is necessary to shift attention away from educational norms presumed to figure predominantly in education outcomes and to account for the everyday context that guides urban youths’ choices and behavior” (p. 76). The differences in social capital demonstrated by these two samples suggest that contextual factors influence their accessible networks and connections, and the inadvertent consequences may undermine the well-being of urban youth, as the social cohesion of the inner city that helps residents navigate urban conditions can serve as a detriment to school success. Rendon (2014) also found that the institutional structures of schools have the potential to buffer young people from neighborhood and urban violence, or they can also increase the risk for school failure. Interventions, such as half-day alternative school programs and suspensions, inevitably give youth more exposure to the neighborhood and its risks. Consultants may be in a unique position to assist students as they access new networks that expand opportunities and provide increased exposure while entering different worlds. Consultation with school administrators and staff can build on alternative strategies to addressing behaviors that negatively impact academic growth and instead support positive relationships and address the safety of students.

Consultants can also support classroom teachers and school administrators as they take on courageous conversations about how these factors contribute to the psychological safety experienced by students in the school. Consultants can work to create psychologically safe learning communities that extend beyond metal detectors at the door (Brock et al., 2009), especially given the significant difference in this foundational aspect of trust and safety.
and value of life. A public health and primary prevention approach can establish psychological safety as part of the education practice of schools (Overstreet & Mathews, 2011). Classroom-based educators may assume practices of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) to foster an examination of unintended perspectives of privilege in the hidden curriculum.

While one can argue that the basis for the differences between the two samples is based on each group’s lived experiences, this study also suggests a need to increase the awareness of school personnel to the foundational, psychological perspective of students in urban communities. Likewise, consultants working with educators need to be cognizant and responsive to educators as they recognize their own privilege, and build supportive learning environments for students who do not share the same experiences. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), this unfolds as educational practices that are culturally relevant, defined as practices that “empower . . . students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes” (p. 118). For those in training programs, this emphasizes the need to place future educators in schools with diverse student populations while critically examining the manifestation of these differences. It is also important to increase the racial, ethnic, and economic diversity of the professionals entering schools. Introducing these conversations into classrooms at the training and program recruitment levels has the potential to disrupt or interrupt the status quo and support the retention of educational professionals from diverse backgrounds, and help other professionals be more prepared to examine underlying beliefs that contribute to their work in classrooms.

In summary, this study compared and contrasted the social relationships, connections, and networks of two separate groups that share the same environment in urban schools. Based on these findings, the SCQ scale reliably quantifies how social capital may manifest itself differently based on privilege and social context. The impact of the varying access to resources may have profound implications on the work and activities within the classroom, particularly in urban school settings where continuing a banking system of education only perpetuates inequities. Greater awareness and understanding of how societal and community factors contribute to these differences can serve as a foundation for engaging and empowering vulnerable students to promote success beyond the classroom and into multiple aspects of school and life.

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References


**Notes on contributors**

**Melissa M. Pearrow, PhD**, is in the Department of Counseling and School Psychology in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

**Julia Zoino-Jeannetti, PhD**, is an Associate Professor and Education Department Chair at Framingham State University.

**Takuya Minami, PhD**, is an Associate Professor in Counseling Psychology and Chair of the Department of Counseling and School Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

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