

**COMPARING U.S. BORN AND IMMIGRANT YOUTH:  
THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL  
ON PLANS TO ATTEND COLLEGE**

by

Akilah S. Alleyne

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Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Aaron Kupchik, Ph.D.  
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Karen Parker, Ph.D.  
Chair of the Sociology & Criminal Justice Department

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
George H. Watson, Ph.D.  
Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ann L. Ardis, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education

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## ABSTRACT

Although previous studies have examined social capital of family and communities as influential factors toward educational outcomes, few have researched how students' own social capital gained from engaging in their schools and communities affect aspirations for continued education. For this study, I adopt the new assimilation theoretical framework to explain how school and community social capital may affect immigrant high school students' well-being in the area of education, when compared to their U.S. born counterparts. Using data from the High School Longitudinal Study (HSLs), I use multi-level modeling techniques to study the relationship between social capital obtained through school and community engagements and plans for attending college. My findings demonstrate that interactions between U.S. born status, and participation in particular school and community engagements such as college preparation programs and out-of-school community sports, have a significant effect on high school students' plans for attending college. These findings suggest educational policymaking must consider the significant influence of community and school-based social capital when designing and implementing programs to assist with academic trajectories of both U.S. born and immigrant youth. This includes reforms in creating more culturally diverse school curriculum, as well as social and extra-curricular environments.

**Keywords:** education; immigration; high school; social capital; schools; communities; college plans



## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Immigrant groups' migration to the U.S. have had a net positive effect on cultural diversity and productivity of U.S. born citizens (Ottaviano & Peri 2006). Immigration has thus resulted in racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity whereby families integrate not only into U.S. communities, but into their educational institutions as well. Assimilation for immigrant individuals and families therefore, consists of the unique task of balancing and adjusting homeland cultural practices and behaviors while assimilating to U.S. structures and school curriculums. As a result, culturally diverse and thriving communities are expanding to include greater diversity in the student body population in schools (Banks 2004, 2008). Such diversity has extended into education curriculums, for example, through the establishment of English Learners Language programs.

Increased diversity in education is important and relevant to current literature on immigration and education, as many studies thus far explore its effects on academic engagement and educational outcomes. Scholars have explored the effects of student relationships with teachers and peers in the school setting, as well as student self-efficacy (Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). Other studies suggest that generational status and various forms of capital are mediators of the impact of immigration on education (White and Glick 2000; Perreira, Harris, & Lee 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2009). However, despite many studies on immigration and

education, little is known about immigrant youths' engagement in their communities and its effects on academic plans when compared to U.S. born youth.

The "immigrant paradox," coined by Cynthia Garcia Coll, suggests that ironically, length of time in the U.S. is associated with long-term declines in academic achievement of newcomer immigrant youth—undocumented youth who have moved from their homeland to another country to become a citizen (Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). However, scholars also note that factors variations in cultural and educational values of U.S. communities may be particularly important in aiding children and families in their adjustment to the U.S. (Glick and White 2003). These factors include socioeconomic status and cultural identity (Fuligni 1998), as well as social supports, as well as children's, parents' and schools' view on the value of education and its importance in achieving goals (Bhattacharya, 2000). Glick & White (2003) find that socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity reflect immigrant families' social environment experienced in the U.S., and are better predictors of academic trajectories than nativity or U.S. born status. Other studies find that low socio-economic status and race-ethnicity are also correlated with negative academic outcomes for immigrant youth (Garcia-Coll & Magnuson 1997; Hong, Merrin, Peguero, Gonzalez-Prendes, & Lee, 2015).

Previous studies point to other factors that have various effects on immigrant youths' educational trajectories over time, such as generational status, demographics, and elements of human, social, and cultural capital like English-language proficiencies and birth place, to name a few (Suarez et al. 2009). Yet still, few studies on immigration and education examine how immigrant students' engagements in their U.S. residential communities as well as in school may be influenced by each other,

and how such engagements influence their desire to continue their education after high school. This study will examine how factors such as English-language status, social capital, and students' engagements with their school and community affect their plans towards continuing education: a critical stage that is understudied in literature on immigration and education. My study will fill an important gap in the literature by considering how students' plans to attend college may be influenced by school and community, and whether such relationships are similar or different when comparing U.S. born to immigrant youth.

## Chapter 2

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Early theories of assimilation describe and explain different educational trajectories of immigrant youth. The *straight-line hypothesis* (Gordon, 1964), sometimes referred to as ‘classic assimilation theory,’ describes the effects of social bonding between U.S. born and immigrant youth and suggests that over time and across generations, ethnic immigrants will abandon their homeland cultures and practices and adopt U.S. native behavioral patterns (Park & Burgess 1969; Waldinger and Perlmann, 1998; Rong and Brown, 2002), becoming more assimilated to U.S. institutions. Thus, with more interaction with U.S.-born youth, the cultural patterns and structures of immigrant youth will diminish over time. In this study, I will not be examining generational difference or the effect of time on academic outcomes, however, this hypothesis is relevant since it explains the effects of social bonding between U.S. born and immigrant youth on academic outcomes. Furthermore, this hypothesis makes a broad claim regarding the educational trajectories of immigrant youth, but lacks evidence of distinguishing factors that account for the effects of direct interaction between U.S. born and immigrant youth in schools and communities, or minority status on educational plans. My study aims to make a contribution to the straight-line hypothesis by studying the effects of direct interaction between immigrant youth and their U.S. counterparts on educational trajectories, and explaining what factors influence differences or similarities.

The *optimism hypothesis* (Kao and Tienda, 1995) expands upon the ‘straight-line hypothesis’, and highlights English-language proficiency as a distinguishing characteristic across generations. In relation to this hypothesis, I will not be examining generational differences, however, this hypothesis is relevant since it demonstrates the significant influence of English-language acquisition on academic achievement. Studies testing the hypothesis reveal that second-generation youth inherit a unique set of characteristics, such as positive attitudes and determinism from their parents, and have better English language skills than first generation youth that allow them to be more successful academically (Kao and Tienda 1995; Landale, Oropesa, and Llanes 1998). Kao and Tienda (1995) find support for their hypothesis, which states that non-U.S. born youth are at a slight disadvantage due to limited English skills when compared to U.S. born youth. However, Callahan (2005) demonstrated that English language proficiency was not a primary or sole determinant of English learners’ academic success. Therefore, there are mixed findings regarding the effect of English language proficiency on academic outcomes. However, it is possible that there are immigrant students in U.S. schools who, despite feeling well assimilated to the U.S. culture, are still facing some cultural and language barriers that make school more difficult. My study will test the optimism hypothesis by examining whether enrollment in an English Learners program have an effect on high school students’ plans for attending college when controlling for demographic factors like SES, U.S. born status, sex/gender, and minority status.

The *accommodation or selective acculturation* (Gibson, 1988; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001) hypothesis predicts that while maintaining full or partial elements of their native ethnic culture, immigrant families also acquire certain cultural practices

from the dominant culture into which they migrate. The selective acculturation hypothesis makes no mention of what specific element of immigrant families' native ethnic cultures may protect against harmful academic outcomes when compared to U.S. born youth. However, as the *selective acculturation hypothesis* suggests, it is possible that immigrant youth may choose to maintain structures and patterns of ethnic cultural norms that have been instilled by their immigrant families, like their native non-English language that may serve as a protective quality embedded with values and endurance (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001) that helps improve their outcomes when compared to those of their U.S. born counterparts (Rumbaut, 1997).

This is important since learning the English language is a part of the dominant U.S. culture, and therefore certainly essential for educational progress and success in U.S. schools. Although Callahan (2005) finds that it is not a *primary* or sole determinant of English learners' academic success, primary English-language capabilities may, in fact, affect the educational outcomes of youth when comparing college aspirations of students who know English as a first language to those whose first language is not English. I predict that knowing more than one first-language will increase the odds of planning to attend college, when compared to students who know English as a first language. Therefore, my study will examine how primary English-language proficiency effects educational plans. Specifically, I will examine the how English-language capabilities effect students' plans for attending college by comparing immigrant youth whose first language is English and/or English and another non-English language equally, to students' whose primary language is a non-English language only.

Overall, earlier theories of assimilation have received mixed support empirically in regards to how social, human, and cultural forms of capital affect educational trajectories. Perreira et al. (2006) find support for the selective and segmented assimilation hypotheses, demonstrating that cultural capital and immigrant optimism act as ‘buffers’ for first-generation immigrant children against dropout rates, but not for second generation as predicted by the optimism hypothesis. When examining differences across race/ethnicity, scholars find support for the straight-line hypothesis towards educational achievement and attainment for Hispanics, but not for other race-ethnicities (Driscoll 1999; Perreira et al. 2006).

Prior studies have also examined the effects of assimilation on education and find support for *the selective acculturation hypothesis*, which demonstrates that immigrant youth are more successful academically when they maintain full or partial elements of their native culture (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001) and improve their outcomes when compared to their U.S. born counterparts (Rumbaut, 1997). However, the selective acculturation hypothesis makes no mention of what specific element of immigrant families’ native ethnic cultures may protect against harmful academic outcomes when compared to U.S. born youth.

Later, Gans (1992) developed a counter theory to earlier hypotheses, alluding to the assimilation process as one that does not occur in a straight line for second generation and later youth. Moreover, Gans (1992) proposed that immigrant youth as late as the third generation may experience uneven patterns of assimilation, rather than a ‘straight-line’ course. With continued growth of immigration in the U.S., Zhou and Portes (1993) built on earlier hypotheses and expanded on Gans’s hypothesis that suggested several different pathways for assimilation of immigrants. The *segmented*

*assimilation* theory (Zhou and Portes 1993) was created, based on beliefs that decades of migration in U.S. history cannot adequately explain the assimilation process of new immigrants. The theory further suggests that ultimately, both new immigrants and their children may follow an array of different paths as they assimilate into U.S. society.

The segmented assimilation theory (Zhou and Portes 1993) introduces the element of social class, a factor not discussed by prior assimilation theories, and explains how different assimilation pathways affect immigrant families' economic integration (SES), or social class, in the U.S. More specifically, the theory describes how factors like ethnic advantage and disadvantage either facilitate or block assimilation into certain social classes. For example, (Zhou & Portes 1993) describe a complex, multi-path perspective in which new immigrants may take three different 'paths' of assimilation into different socio-economic statuses. Path 1 explains that immigrant youth assimilate through increased enculturation and integration into the American middle class. Path 2 describes the acculturation and assimilation of immigrant youth into the urban underclass. Immigrant youth that fall into Path 2 assimilate into the urban underclass, experiencing structural barriers such as poor urban schools and low access to employment. Thus, immigrant youth in Path 2 experience impediments that stagnate their potential for upward economic mobility or academic achievement, also known as 'downward mobility' as children of other immigrants follow divergent or straight-line paths of assimilation. Path 3, the 'selective acculturation' path suggests that advantaged immigrants may embrace traditional values and attitudes of their native country, thus inspiring their children to achieve, resulting in upward assimilation. That is, while maintaining their



community's culture and values, immigrant families diligently pursue economic integration into the American middle class. Still within the same path of selective acculturation, children of disadvantaged immigrant descendants may reject assimilation altogether and embrace attitudes and behaviors of opposition that could lead to negative outcomes in schools (i.e. fighting, suspension/expulsion, dropout, etc.).

However, although the segmented assimilation theory (Zhou & Portes, 2003) examines the effects of factors like ethnic advantage and disadvantage during assimilation on social class, it does not examine the effects of social capital, which derives from relationships and resources within social classes (Coleman 1988). Moreover, the segmented assimilation theory does not explain immigrant individuals' and families' experiences relative to social class and/or social capital, such as on educational trajectories.

The *new assimilation theory* was formulated by Alba and Nee (2003). Alba and Nee (2003) fill a gap in the segmented assimilation theory by Zhou & Portes (1993) by suggesting that economic integration occurs by attaining various forms of capital (i.e. social, human, and cultural capital) within different pathways in the assimilation process. More specifically, Alba & Nee (2003) suggest that financial and social gains in socioeconomic status and family resources are attained through the acquisition of social, human, and cultural capital. Alba and Nee (2003) highlight that the acquisition of social capital comes through decision-making processes, and not as a natural adaptation outcome. Moreover, the theory posits that the social class in which immigrants become assimilated are a result of cumulative 'pragmatic decisions'

to integrate into diverse segments or social classes of American society—decisions that are often unintentionally made by immigrants to improve their wellbeing.

The *new assimilation theory* (Alba & Nee 2003) states that assimilation is not inevitable, and that cumulative and unintended decisions work in favor of improving the well-being of immigrant families. Specifically, the *new assimilation theory* (Alba and Nee 2003) suggests that a relationship exists between immigrant families' social capital and how they make decisions towards improved well-being in the U.S. The new assimilation theory does not, however, explicitly state what specific factors representing social capital affect the well-being of immigrant individuals and families during assimilation to the U.S culture. In addition, Alba and Nee (2003) do not provide specific examples of what qualifies as an unintended decision, as opposed to an intentional one.

Furthermore, although the new assimilation theory suggests that various forms of capital improve the well-being of immigrant families over time, it does not directly address how various forms of capital effect educational trajectories. Therefore, I use multiple variables net of forms of social capital that students can gain from either school or community engagement. Making plans for greater educational attainment is, without question, a choice that can affect the well-being of many individuals and families in the United States across all nationalities and race-ethnicities. Therefore, the new assimilation theory is relevant for my study, and to be used to explain how social capital gained in schools and communities effect students' intentions for attending college when comparing U.S. born and immigrant youth, which has not been studied.

For this study, I borrow the variable English Language Learners program from Callahan (2005) who examine whether English-as-a-second-language (ESL)

performance levels are a better predictor of academic achievement than track placement, or college entry-level courses, net of English language proficiency as a form of social capital that students can gain from schools. I also chose to study English language proficiency as a measure of social capital based on the *optimism hypothesis* (Kao and Tienda, 1995) and *accommodation hypothesis* (Gibson, 1988; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001), which suggest that English language proficiency is an element of immigrant students' ethnic cultural norms and can therefore affect academic performance. This variable is therefore important for examining whether English language proficiency effects an educational trajectory such as planning to attend college. I also borrow recreational activities as a variable from Sun (1999), who measures how community social capital affects academic performance, net of participation in out-of-school recreational activities as a form of social capital. I also use the variable college preparatory programs to examine how access and availability of such programs effect high school students' educational trajectories (see Bailey, Hughes & Karp 2002; Callahan 2005; & Solorzano and Ornelas, 2004). I use a variable measuring students' feelings towards school, a factor of social capital that can derive from social supports (Coleman, 1998), and may include the effects of school climate such as attachments and bonds to school (Stewart, 2003) on educational outcomes.

Kao and Tienda (1995) examined the effects of behavioral difference between immigrant and U.S. born youths' parents on academic performance when comparing U.S. born and immigrant youth. However, scholars have not yet studied how social capital gained solely through high school students' direct interactions in schools and communities, and English language proficiency, independent from parental influences,

affect their aspirations for attending college. The new assimilation theory mentions children and families respectively, but does not distinguish how children have access to social capital in different ways than their parents do, based on their own individual/personal experiences in schools and communities. Thus, my study also makes a unique contribution to the literature and the new assimilation theory by examining whether youths' own autonomy in obtaining social capital through direct engagements and interactions in their schools and communities, influences their educational trajectories.

Although many studies use an assimilation theoretical framework to examine the effects of various factors on educational outcomes my study lends a new approach both theoretically and empirically to explaining the effects of U.S. born status, English language proficiency and school and community engagements on post-secondary education plans using the new assimilation theory, which has yet to be explored. Perreira et al. (2006) refers to various assimilation theories when explaining the relationship between social capital and high school dropout, and suggests that none of the theories can *fully* explain the educational trajectories. This shows that the relationship between social capital and education is inter-related, yet complex, and my study fills a gap by attempting to use the new assimilation theory to explain the relationship between social capital and high school students' plans for attending college.

Therefore, in this study, I will study how cultural, school and community capital that is acquired both intentionally and unintentionally can affect plans pertaining to educational well-being. I examine how English-language proficiency, engagements with school climate, college preparation programs, and participation in

out-of-school community activities may affect high school students' plans for post-secondary education. When examining the effects of various forms of capital on educational trajectories, I expect the new assimilation theory to explain how human, social and cultural capital factors like demographics, English language proficiency, school engagement, and community engagement effect students' educational plans for attending college. This study will provide new insight towards how students' U.S. born status, English-language proficiency and other forms of social capital acquired through direct school and community interactions effect educational aspirations for attending college.

For this study, as explained by the new assimilation theory, I predict that when compared to U.S. born students, immigrant students who are also engaged in school and/or community capital will have greater odds of planning to attend college. I also predict that English language proficiency is likely to influence students' decisions towards continued education when comparing U.S. born status, and across demographics. I ask the following questions:

1. Do high school students' school engagement (i.e. positive feelings towards school, participation in college prep course, and enrollment in English-Learner program) affect their plans to attend college?
2. Do high school students' community engagement (i.e. participation in music/dance and sports) affect students' plans to attend college?

3. Is the relationship between high school students' school engagement and their plans to go to college moderated by their community engagement?
4. Does this relationship vary across English language proficiency and U.S. born status?

## Chapter 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Racial Discrimination in U.S. Education

There are many important historical landmarks for racial discrimination and segregation in education in the United States. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) is a landmark case from the U.S. Supreme Court of law, which ruled segregation laws as legal under the premise that public school education would be “separate but equal”. The case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) effectively overturned this doctrine, noting that segregating children by race is detrimental to the hearts and minds of black children making them feel inferior to children of other races in their schools. Since then, the U.S. has made strides in providing equal access to education for Black and other minority students, however, there is not much literature on immigrant students’ obstacles with obtaining equal education during critical periods of racial unrest in the U.S. like the Civil Rights Era.

Furthermore, educational literature lacks accounts that compare racial discrimination faced by immigrant minority youth to that of U.S. born students prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling. Today, studies show that immigrant youth still experience unique obstacles with discrimination in education (Conchas, 2001; Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2006; Hollins & Spencer, 1990; Perreira, Fuligni, A., & Potochnick, 2010). Moreover, scholars suggest that adolescent immigrant youth living in the United States are often ‘overlooked’ and ‘underserved’, and face challenges of long-term limited English proficiencies and parent-teacher miscommunication daily

(Hill and Torres 2010; Ruiz-de Valasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000). However, scholars have yet to examine whether racial/ethnic differences exist among high school students who are planning to attend college upon graduating. Therefore, this study has important implications for understanding how cultural identity plays a role in the planning aspect of continuing schooling through U.S. education systems. Further my findings will determine whether certain racial groups aspire more than others to obtain higher education, help promote evidence based school evaluations to determine why such disparities may exist, and inspire policy changes that will work towards closing the gap.

### **The Effects of Race, Human Capital and Social Capital, and Immigration on Education in the U.S**

Social constructions of race in the U.S. have had a historical influence on the acquisition of social capital across generations of both U.S. born and immigrant individuals in areas of housing and employment, which are two areas that directly affect future socioeconomic status of individuals and families. Golash-Boza (2015) discussed social constructions of race in the U.S. and explained that various immigrants of European, Jewish, and even Asian descent did not consider themselves as 'White' prior to immigrating to the U.S., nor were they seen as white in some cases. However, over time, with changing definitions of whiteness some were able to reap the benefits of White privilege in U.S. history due to the phenotypical light appearance of their skin. Some of these benefits include GI bill qualifications and Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Department of Veterans Affairs mortgages.

Such benefits acquired through White privilege allowed various race-ethnicities who 'passed' phenotypical qualifications to experience upward social



mobility into the middle class (Gans, 2007). The term *white privilege* stems from earlier works of American sociologist and civil rights activist W.E.B. DuBois who had observed how white working class men opposed their solidarity to recently freed black slaves by identifying strongly with their whiteness, making greater psychological alignment with their White bosses. According to DuBois (1963) although poor like recently freed black slaves, working class white men saw themselves as more privileged because they were still White like the dominant group.

The social construction of race, however, has extended beyond U.S. law and qualification regarding housing and employment, and into U.S. education systems. Prior studies reveal that teacher and administrator discrimination against the race and/or class of students produce racial disparities in school punishment and academic planning, and also influence students' attitudes towards classroom behavior. For example, scholars find that nearly half of White and Asian students were placed on college preparatory course tracks compared to students of other race/ethnicities (Kao and Thompson 2003). Moreover, Golash-Boza (2015) suggests that whiteness has been 'learned' by various race-ethnicities overtime, and Ferguson (2001) shows that children who behave and conform to white, middle class norms do better in school and have lesser likelihoods of getting in trouble at school as teacher and administrators respond more positively to them. Such studies reveal the historical influence of social constructions of race towards access, transfer, and acquisition of social capital and education across race-ethnicities.

Socio-economic status, which includes parent/guardians' education, occupation, and family income, is a form of human capital that has a significant role in shaping educational trajectories of immigrants (Perreira et al. 2006; Suarez-Orozco et

al. 2009). However, racial biases permeate hiring practices and policies for gaining employment, too, which directly affects socioeconomic statuses of minority and immigrant group children and families in the U.S. For example, Mexican immigrants who had come to the U.S. looking for work during the Mexican Revolution in 1910 struggled to gain adequate income in the U.S. to support their families and increase their SES. Asian immigrants have also experienced discrimination and economic hardships in gaining human capital upon entering the U.S. For example, the United States Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), which restricted Chinese immigrant laborers from entering the U.S. and followed up six years later with restrictions that prevented resident laborers who left the country from re-entering unless they were returning to family. Therefore, understanding how racism and racial biases are connected to SES, social capital and education in the U.S. is important because these factors are inextricably related to aspirational educational goals, and may affect immigrant students' plans toward continued education.

White and Glick (2000) conducted a longitudinal study examining the effects of generational status and parental human capital (i.e. SES, parental involvement and parent expectations) on immigrant youths' completion of high school and enrollment into post-secondary education. However, White and Glick's (2000) study lacked an examination of how students' own school and community capital may affect immigrant youths' post-secondary enrollment into college. Perreira et al. (2006) also made a significant contribution to the literature by studying the longitudinal effects of cultural, school, and community social capital as well as SES on students' risks of dropping out of high school; however, Perreira et al. (2006) focused only on parents' education as a form of human capital for their study.

## **Social Capital, Schools and Communities**

Much of the extant literature suggests that school environments, including interpersonal relationships within schools serve as a source of capital for students who are middle school aged (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003; Kuperminc, Leadbeater, and Blatt., 2001; Welsh, 2000) and/or in elementary school (Griffith 2000; Koth, Bradshaw & Leaf, 2008; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). However, these prior studies do not examine how positive feelings towards school, and other forms of direct engagements in school may affect high school students' aspirations for college. Further, these prior studies lack a comparison examining whether students' feelings towards their school climate, and other types of engagement that promote social capital affect immigrant youth and U.S. born youth differently. In addition, despite active participation in learning environments, scholars find that disparities still exist between those of different racial/ethnic groups regarding academic performance (Hu & Kuh, 2002; Swigart & Murrell, 2001).

Studies on immigrant youth's educational outcomes find that students who gain social capital through teacher and peer support show high participation and engagement in the classroom perform well in school (Suarez-Orozco et al. 2009, Rhodes & Milburn 2009). However, many immigrant students still experience additional hardships in U.S. schools that affect academic outcomes such as discriminatory treatment, social exclusion, low sense of attachment or social belongingness, and low English language proficiency (Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, & Neumark-Sztainer 2007; Olsen, 1988, 2000; Peguero 2009). In fact, immigrant students who report unsupportive relationships with both their teachers and family have negative school outcomes such as fighting in school (Hong, Merrin, Peguero, Gonzales-Prendes, & Lee, 2015) or dropping out (Perreira et al. 2006). Hill

and Torres (2010) suggest that ‘cultural misunderstandings’ between families and schools, as well as discordant perspectives and expectations for school-based supportive relationships, can hinder the positive effect of school attachments and result in disparate racial-ethnic academic outcomes for immigrant youth.

While many of these studies make an important contribution to the literature regarding the effects of social capital on students’ academic trajectories, many examine immigrant groups alone (Hong, Merrin, Peguero, Gonzales-Prendes, & Lee, 2015; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2009; Hill & Torres 2010; Olsen, 1988, 2000; Peguero 2009) and do not compare immigrant youth to U.S. born students. Unlike other studies (Hong et al. 2015; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2009), my study provides a meaningful contribution by focusing exclusively on high school aged students from grades 9-12 while comparing U.S. born and immigrant youth. This is important since scholars find that school practices lead to collective socialization into educational norms (Ainsworth 2002; Koomen & Jellesma, 2015; Madill, Gest, & Rodkin, 2014; Pianta et al., 2008; Perreira et al. 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2009), and relationships play an instrumental role in students’ social and emotional development during adolescent years that affect their academic outcomes (Eccles & Roeser 2011).

When examining influences of community-level capital on academic outcomes of youth, Wilson (1987) finds that neighborhood conditions such as joblessness and concentrated poverty create an environment with unemployed adults and may promote certain behavior as socially acceptable, affecting children’s motivation to stay in school. Perreira et al. (2006) contribute to the literature by using cluster sampling of immigrant youth grades 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>, and examining how community capital of immigrant youth affect academic outcomes. However, like Wilson (1987), Perreira et

al. (2006) only examined how neighborhood characteristics such as residency types categorized as advantaged or disadvantaged neighborhoods, and segregated, desegregated or racially mixed affect youths' academic outcomes, while focusing on immigrant youth.

Sun (1999) used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) and made an important contribution by recognizing that there is a processual component to community-based social capital, which involves intentional interpersonal interactions and social ties among community members, and a structural component (i.e. number of siblings, family structure, and frequency of moving schools) that affects American middle school students' academic performance. However, neither Wilson (1987), Sun (1999) nor Perreira et al. (2006) used nationally representative longitudinal data that examines how capital obtained through high school students' in school or out-of-school community participation effect plans for post-secondary education, nor do they compare U.S. born to immigrant youth.

Sun (1999) examined how community capital through parent and student participation in extra-curricular and recreational activities affects academic performance of middle school students. My study contributes to the literature by examining how community social capital through students' interaction in school- and in community-related extracurricular and recreational activities affects high school students and not middle school students' plans to continue their education by attending college. Moreover, unlike Sun (1999), I examine student participation alone in out-of-school recreational activities and in college-based educational programs, and do not include measures of parental involvement in my analysis, which Sun (1999) and Perreira et al. (2006) had done. I also examine how factors like English language

proficiency and students' feelings towards their school can affect educational plans, and compare U.S born students to non-U.S. born students, and use the new assimilation theory to explain how social capital can affect the educational trajectories, and therefore overall well-being, of immigrant youth in different ways than for U.S. born youth

High school students, too, engage in extra-curricular and recreational activities out-of-school, and in-school social communities. Therefore, I use the new assimilation theory to explain the relationship between gaining community social capital through participation and engagement in school and community activities and college education plans, whereby the engagement process occurs over time in different settings. Sun's (1999) findings suggest that in addition to the process component, socioeconomic characteristics also largely explain the relationship between community capital and academic structure. However, Sun (1999) uses data only comprised of middle school students, thus, my study makes an important contribution by examining how high school students' school and community engagements through direct participation and interaction effect plans for continued education post-high school.

Some scholars find that connecting service and community engagement with academic material to create service learning courses increases cognitive skill development in students, and influences their future educational and occupational plans (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee 2000). Despite such findings regarding the combined affect of community engagement and academic instruction on educational outcomes, scholars have not studied how participatory community engagement effects immigrant students compared to U.S. born ones. Moreover, studies have not yet

examined the effects of different types of social and communal participatory engagement (i.e. sports, art, college prep programs, etc.) on students' plans for attending college, prior to admission or enrollment.

By examining the effects of school and participatory community engagement of high school youth on desires to continue education, my study will provide a significant contribution to knowledge surrounding the role of cultural capital gained from not just households, but also community settings, and its effect on academic outcomes during a critical stage in the life course, adolescent years. My study extends current research on the effects of community capital obtained by immigrant youth, and suggests that scholars should view community capital as multi-faceted, and acquired through multiple different types of participatory interactions and engagement.

### **The Effects of Social Capital on U.S. Born and Immigrant Youth in the U.S**

Research shows that students' school engagement influences their self-perception and relationships in school (i.e. academic self-efficacy, behavioral engagement, relational engagement with teachers and peers etc.) and have significant mediating effects on students' academic engagement (Suarez-Orozco et al. 2009). Additionally, studies find that differences in cultural backgrounds and students' self-expectations can provide a level of protection against factors that influence negative academic outcomes over time (Hill & Torres 2010; Perreira et al. 2006). Similarly, community engagement encompasses various forms of social interaction and networking, especially in the education system where students are constantly learning values and behaviors and thus, gaining social capital from their teachers and peers. However, prior studies (Hill & Torres 2010; Perreira et al. 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2009) have not yet used the new assimilation theory to explain how high school

students' school and/or community engagement activities, independent from their parents' capital, may affect plans to attend college when comparing immigrant and U.S. born youth. The findings will illustrate how direct interactions in social systems outside of the home may influence students' academic trajectories, and whether they increase or decrease the odds that students plan to enroll in college.

In my study, I examine both students' intended and unintended participation in their schools and communities and how these types of engagements influence their educational trajectories. In this study, school and community participatory engagement qualify as *intentional* decisions made by students since individuals choose to participate in extra-curricular communal engagement and activities in the U.S. community. Students may also choose to accept or deny teacher recommendations to enroll in college prep courses, and therefore make an *intentional* decision to enroll in such courses. Enrollment in an English language learners program qualifies as an *unintentional* decision in this study since only students from non-English language backgrounds who are identified by their teachers, parents, and/or staff as needing language assistance services in their own language or in English while in school were enrolled in the program.

The variable socioeconomic status also measures an unintentional decision for students in this study. Although having plans for continued educational attainment is an intentional choice for students in this study, immigrant students they have no direct influence towards their parents' educational credentials that influence their family's socioeconomic status. And since educational experience and credentials are a key element of socioeconomic status which is passed down to children from their parents, socioeconomic status is an unintended factor that influences the overall welfare and



well-being of families in the U.S., and therefore can affect both immigrant and U.S. born students' decisions towards plans for continued education.

When studying generational effects over time by comparing immigrant youth to U.S. born youth, immigrant youth of the same race-ethnicity as U.S. born youth become more at risk for dropping out the longer they live in the U.S., all else remaining constant (Perreira et al. 2009). This finding suggests that in the beginning stages of the assimilation process, upon arrival and into the early years of living in the U.S., first-generation youth likely benefit from capital acquired from their native country that later generations lose. However, other studies show that the acquisition of social capital is variable, and therefore immigrant youth can benefit from the resources in the U.S. environment at various stages as they become assimilated to U.S. culture (Peguro 2008, 2009; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2009). These findings regarding the effects of time suggest that the acquisition of social capital occurs in different ways across race-ethnicities over time in the U.S., and thus, can have different effects depending the ways social capital was acquired by the child (i.e. intended or unintended, parental SES, White privilege of decedents, etc.).

In my analysis, I will examine whether there are any significant differences between the effects that both unintentional and intentional engagements in school and community activities have on students' plans for attending college. I will explore how community engagement factors may affect the educational trajectory of high school students, and use the new assimilation theory (Alba & Nee 2003) to explain how social capital through school and community engagement may have different effects on educational outcomes across U.S. born status and English-language proficiency, two social capital characteristics that according to the new assimilation theory, effect

immigrant assimilation in U.S. education. My study makes an important contribution to research since previous studies have not used assimilation theories to explain how engagement with communities, both independently and jointly with school engagement, affect educational trajectories of high school students. Moreover, prior studies have yet to use the new assimilation theory to explain the relationships between community and school engagements, when comparing to U.S. born youth to immigrant youth.

## **Chapter 4**

### **METHODS**

I use restricted-use data from student and parent questionnaires in the High School Longitudinal Study, 2009-2013: Dataset 2 [ICPSR 38423]. The 2009 base year and first-follow-up restricted-use data include the school ID variable, which is unavailable in the public use data. I obtained the data from ICPSR [36423] through the National Center for Education Statistics. HSLs:2009-2013 contains a base year school file, which took place in the 2009-10 school year, a first year follow up, and a 2013 updated student file. The survey examines students' post-high school plans for continued education. The HSLs:2009-2013 is a longitudinal, nationally representative study of a randomly selected sample of fall-term 9th-graders.

The HSLs:2009-2013 data focuses on various stages of high school students' development in their educational careers, vocational careers, and personal lives including factors that may affect development. Such factors include familial, social, institutional, and cultural influences. The data focus on high school students' attitudes, behaviors, and decisions towards secondary to post-secondary plans and progress in those plans, and social and educational experiences that affect these shifts (i.e. parents, teachers, peers, counselors, etc.).

As part of the core research questions, the HSLs:2009-2013 data also focus on the high school students' interests leading into and out of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) paths. The STEM focus in the data applies to questions on the questionnaire and the surveying of students' math and science

teachers as part of the study. Thus, information on student home and family life, background information, and mathematic ability assessments were collected from teachers, students, and parents and were included in the data.

The public and private school samples used in the initial base-year were chosen from the 2005-06 Common Core Data (CCD) or the 2005-06 Private School Universe Survey (PSS), and were selected using a random stratified selection process. These data contain the most up-to-date information for sampling and are stored in National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) files. New schools from the updated 2006-07 CCD and 2007-08 PSS were also included in the sample in order to maximize coverage of the target population, and were selected just prior to HSLs:09 data recruitment. The public and private school samples used in the initial base-year were regular public schools, including public charter schools and private schools in the 50 States and the District of Columbia. Schools qualified for participation in the study if they were providing instruction to students in both the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade as of fall 2009.

Schools without both 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, ungraded schools, and schools that were not in operation were considered study-ineligible. Other schools that were excluded from this set of schools as study ineligible include: Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, special education schools for students with disabilities, and schools that offer career technical education schools but do not enroll students directly were ineligible to participate in the study; detention/ juvenile correction facilities; schools that address disciplinary issues but do not enroll students directly; schools that only offer testing services to home-schooled students; schools that do not require students to attend daily classes at their facility (i.e. online schools) and Department of Defense schools located

outside the United States (see School Longitudinal Study, 2009-2013 [United States] (ICPSR 36423) User Guide, *National Center For Education Statistics*, for more detailed discussion of the sampling strategy used by the HSLs).

Base year data collection occurred in 2009, during the fall-term of the 9th-grade year, and included information on student home life, student and parent background information, school climate, teacher background and preparation, and classroom practices. The random selection probability for the parent questionnaires in the base year was identical to that of his or her student. The student questionnaires (HSLs:2009-2013 base year and first follow-up) were administered by trained school recruitment and field staff. Six institutional contractors (ICs) were hired to perform the first follow-up recruitment task. ICs were trained to focus on recruiting schools for participation; identify a school coordinator (SC) for each school; and coordinate logistics for all in-school sessions. SCs contacted school administrators for all sampled schools to request permission for in-school student data collection, and therefore, each school administrator was sampled with the same probability as calculated for the school.

Approximately 140 field supervisors (FSs) and session administrators (SAs) were hired for the study. SAs were trained to perform in-school and field follow-up data collection and administration for the base year and follow-up surveys. The school counselor questionnaires for the base year and first follow-up were administered to senior or head counselors for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at each participating school via web survey. Each school administrator and counselor was also sampled with the same probability as calculated for the school.

Telephone interviewers were trained to contact students and parents by phone. Students who missed the in school session and/or were no longer enrolled at the base year school at the time of data collection were contacted to participate in each of the surveys via web, computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) or computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI). Initially, the parent questionnaire for the base year was fielded as a web survey. Over time, however, parents were given the option to complete the survey via CATI or CAPI at the end of the field period.

The first follow-up was an extension of the base-year student record, used to analyze school-level effects on longitudinal outcomes. Students were eligible to participate in the first follow-up even if they did not participate in the base year, or if they were not capable of participating in the base year. Of the 1,889 selected schools from the base year, 944 schools responded to the first follow-up resulting in a school sample of 944 schools. Of the 944 schools, five were found to be closed or had no eligible students still enrolled from the base-year. Students were randomly selected from the 939 participating schools in the first follow-up. Students participated in the base year survey by completing a questionnaire and mathematics ability assessment. A random subsample of students' parents and guardians were chosen to participate in the first-follow-up. The parent subsample was randomly selected for the first follow-up parent questionnaire from within defined categories of combined base year, first- and second- stage sampling strata.

Students were randomly selected using a stratified systematic sampling method, first using base year enrollment lists, and then by race/ethnicity. Out of 25,206 selected students, 21,444 students participated and completed in the base year survey (85.7 percent weighted, 85.1 percent unweighted). Of these 21,444 students,

87.0 percent (unweighted) completed an interview, or 87.4 percent weighted. There were 20,781 student participants that completed the mathematics ability assessment, resulting in 84.7 percent (weighted) or 84.3 percent (unweighted). A series of weights were constructed for the data to accommodate analyses specific to each wave of data collection (base year or first follow-up) to adjust for representativeness, based on attrition. The samples were weight for probability selection.

The first-year follow-up data were designed to measure changes in students' secondary and post-secondary plans over time. Students from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort who were in their 11<sup>th</sup> grade year during the spring of 2012 participated in the first follow-up. Out of 25,184 eligible students in the first follow-up, 20,594 students participated and completed a questionnaire with an 82.0 percent (weighted) response rate and an unweighted response rate of 81.8 percent. Out of 939 schools that remained eligible from the base year, 904 participated in the first follow-up. Like the base year survey, the first follow-up included a student, parent, administrator, and counselor questionnaire. Ineligible schools were not included in the first follow-up survey, therefore transfer students associated with ineligible schools were not included in the first follow-up questionnaires. Out of 25,184 eligible students in the base year and first follow-up sample, the sample size used in this study was n=18,623 student respondents. Only respondents who answered the survey question for each variable were reported in the total number of respondents in the final regression model. All other participants who did not respond to any variable in the model were not able to be matched to the dependent variable in the regression model, and therefore were considered missing. Due to missing data, the final sample size was n=13,106.

## Variables

The dependent variable in this study examines students' *plan to continue their education*, and comes from the follow up survey. The dependent variable asks students "Will you be continuing your education after high school?". The dependent variable S2CLG2013 was originally coded into three categories (1=yes, 2=no, 3= I don't know). Students who marked that they do not know whether they are going to college in the fall by their spring term may not have plans to attend in the fall, so I combined categories 2 and 3 together. Then, I recoded this variable into a dichotomous measure of whether high school students expect to continue their education after high school "S2CLG2013" (1= "Yes", 0= "No"). Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the dependent variable.

The variable used to measure *socio-economic status* (SES) was taken from the base year survey. X1SES is a standardized, composite variable that was previously calculated for the dataset using two-parent/guardians' education, occupation, and family income. This variable will allow me to measure whether there are differences in students' plans to continue their education across socioeconomic status.

Items from the follow-up survey are used to measure students' self-reported *community engagement* through out of school participation in music/dance and sports. The question for each type of activity asks whether students had participated in the activity outside of school since fall 2009. These items are all dichotomous (1=Yes, 0=No). Although the two variables measure students' participation in community activities outside of school, performing an exploratory factor analysis allowed me to confirm that variables did not load together, and thus are not related to each other. In fact, most of the responses related to extra-curricular activities and specialty programs were skewed towards "No", and therefore were not included in the study. For



participation in sports, the responses for “Yes” and “No” were split, showing a mean of 0.50. For participation in music/dance the mean response was 0.34. The high number of “No” responses as reflected in the average response for all other activities suggest that a large percentage of students had not yet participated in any type of community engagement activities ‘...since fall 2009’. Depending on the geographic area of the survey, it is possible that many of the out of school recreational activities or programs were not available in the communities or neighborhoods in which the students reside. In addition to availability, another possible reason could be that students were not enrolled in out of school activities by their parents due to financial costs of out of school programs related to arts, dance, drama, or scouting. Sports is a type of community engagement that does not require joining an official recreational team, which may explain the near split responses. Because of these issues, I only kept the dichotomous community engagement variables for sports and music/dance since they had the most “Yes” responses. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for each of these independent variables.

Items from both the baseline and follow-up survey are used to measure students’ *school engagement*, based on two factors: self-reports of attitudes or feelings towards school and whether students have ever participated in college prep academic programs. Wave 1, which is the base year survey, includes reports of students’ attitudes or feelings towards school; respondents were asked: whether they feel *safe* at school (1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3=Disagree, 4= Strongly disagree), whether they feel *proud* to be part of school (1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3=Disagree,4= Strongly disagree), and (3) whether getting *good grades* is important (1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3=Disagree, 4= Strongly disagree). All of the items measuring

attitudes and feelings towards school were reverse coded so that higher scores represent agreement with positive statements about school. Next, I used principle component analysis, and rotated the factor using the direct oblimin rotation method. The rotated factor produced loadings all above 0.5, for an overall alpha coefficient of 0.65. I generated an index measuring positive feelings towards school by computing the mean of these variables. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for each independent variable.

Wave 2 is the first follow-up survey, and includes survey questions that ask students whether they have ever participated in the following academic or college preparatory programs: Upward Bound, MESA, AVID, and GEARUP (1=Yes, 2=No, 3= Don't know what that is). "College prep" is the second variable that I will use to measure school engagement, and demonstrates students' participation in college prep academic programs. These variables were recoded as (1=Yes, 0=No), whereby the response 3= 'I don't know' was coded as "No" because students who were not aware of these programs were likely not enrolled. It is likely that different students take different college preparation programs, rather than all, thus I created a variable that is equal to 1 if a student participated in any of the college preparation programs, and 0 if s/he participated in none of them. This way, I measure whether students' enrollment in *any* college preparation program influences their desires to continue education after high school.

The variable measuring whether students have ever enrolled in an *English Language Learner* program during high school was taken from the parent questionnaire in the first-follow up survey, and is a dichotomous measurement. The original survey question asks parents whether their student has ever been enrolled in

an English Language Learners program during high school (1=Yes, 2=No, 3=Don't Know). A total of 239, or 1 percent of respondents originally responded "Don't know". This variable was recoded as "Ever in English Language Learner program" (1=Yes, 0=No), whereby the response 3= 'I don't know' was coded as "No" because if students' parents were not aware of their child's enrollment in an English Language program, it is likely that the child was not enrolled. The variable "Dual Language" was taken from the base year survey and measures students' *Language Proficiency* by asking whether students speak a dual language at home and school (1=First language is English Only, 2=First language is non-English, 3=First language is English and non-English equally). I separated each of these responses into their own categories by creating dummy variables for each. For this study, I created a new variable for first-language proficiency "English only" (1=Yes, 0=No), and recoded the dummy categories as (1/3=1, or Yes, English as primary, and 2=0 or No, non-English as primary)).

The following variables taken from the base year survey: race-ethnicity, sex/gender, and U.S. born status. The race/ethnicity variables are dichotomized to represent any "minority status" (1=Yes, 0=No). Students who identify as any of the following categories were categorized as a minority: Hispanic; Black/African-American, non-Hispanic; Asian, non-Hispanic; American-Indian/Alaska Native, Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian, non-Hispanic; and more than one race, non-Hispanic. The variable sex/gender is a dichotomous variable (1=Male, 0=Female). The variable "U.S. born status" measures students' place of birth (1= United States, 2=Puerto-Rico or another U.S. Territory, 3= Another country). This variable was recoded into a dichotomous variable (1=United States or U.S. Territory, 0= Another

country) and used to compare differences and similarities in outcomes between U.S. born and immigrant youth.

### **Analytic Strategy**

The new assimilation theory builds off prior existing assimilation theories, and ultimately suggests that the educational trajectories of immigrant students depends on the students' acquiring and maintenance of various forms of social, human, and cultural capital. I use the new assimilation theory to examine youth's assimilation to the U.S. education system, through school and community engagement, and compare how various forms of social capital affect immigrant adolescents' plans for attending college when compared to U.S. students. In order to test my research questions, I use multi-level, random-intercept logistic regression models to focus on how participatory school and community engagement shape the likelihood that students will plan to attend college after graduating high school. Since students are nested in schools and standard errors can become inflated, the multi-level modeling strategy is most appropriate for my study. This strategy allows me to look at the average between-group and within-group effects, rather than only individual-level effects. Since my dataset is longitudinal, this method allows me to measure how individuals and groups changes over time across schools; and identify how such variations can affect students' plans for attending college.

Based on the new assimilation theory, in testing research questions 3 and 4, I expect to find that when comparing U.S. born students to immigrant youth, community and school engagement as well as English language proficiency will have different effects on plans for attending college. I include interactions terms in my analysis because they will allow me to use the *new assimilation theory* to explain how

intersectional relationships between school and community engagement in the U.S., as well as U.S. born status and English-language proficiency affect plans to attend college while accounting for race-ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and English- language proficiency.

To test research question 3, I will examine a series of two-way interactions to explore whether community engagement variables moderate the effects of school engagement on plans to attend college using two-way interactions (i.e. school x community). I predict that community engagement will moderate the effects of school engagement on immigrant students' desires to continue education after high school when compared to U.S. born students. Initially, models included interaction terms for all main effect variables, however, if an interaction term not theoretically or statistically significant alone to merit inclusion in the final model, it was removed. Ultimately, only two of the key school engagement variables were sufficiently significant to create interaction terms with the community engagement variables. Thus, I observe how interactions between positive feelings towards schools or participation in college prep courses, and community engagement in music/dance and sports affect students plans to go to college.

I will also use a series of three-way interaction terms to test research question 4, which explores whether or not the benefits of social capital gained from U.S born status and language proficiency moderate the effects of school and community engagement on students' plans to attend college. The first series of three-way interaction will be between school engagement, community engagement, and U.S. born status. (i.e. U.S. born x school x community). I predict that students who are non-U.S. born, engaged in their schools and in out-of-school community activities will

have higher aspirations for continuing their education post-high school when compared to U.S. born youth.

The second series of three-way interaction will also test research question 4, and will involve interactions between school engagement, community engagement, and English-language proficiency (i.e. English-language proficiency x school x community). According to the new assimilation theory by Alba & Nee (2003), attaining various forms of social, cultural and human capital can influence different pathways into the assimilation process, including educational trajectories. I predict that immigrant students who are engaged in their schools and their communities, and whose first language is a non-English language, or English and a non-English language equally, will have greater odds for planning to attend college post-high school when compared to U.S. born youth.

I created several models to explore the effects of school engagement, community engagement, minority status, U.S. born status, SES and language proficiencies on students' plans for continuing education upon graduating high school. Model 1 includes both community and school engagement variables, as well as the control variables SES, minority status, dual language capabilities, English Learner enrollment status, gender, and U.S. born status. Models 2 and 11 demonstrate a series of two- and three-way interactions between school and community engagement variables in order to test research questions 3 and 4.

## **Chapter 5**

### **RESULTS**

The results of the multi-level random intercept logistic regression models are shown in Tables 2 through 12. Model 1 demonstrates the results for both school and community engagement variables, as well as the control variables [see Table 2]. Models 2 through 12 show the results for interaction effects [see Table 3]. All of the models include the control variables and were significant at the  $p < 0.001$  level. Each table lists the odds ratio and the standard error. The unconditional intra-class correlation coefficient for the model without independent or control variables reported 9.7% of the variance between groups of schools. The conditional intra-class correlation coefficient for the final model, which included all engagement and control variables was 3.8%. This shows that the final model explains 5.9 % of the unconditional ICC. The average VIF score without interactions included was 1.12. The average VIF score including interactions was 1.40.

I was particularly interested in whether several factors affect plans for attending college. My first two research questions seek to address whether: 1) Students' positive feelings towards school, school engagement in college prep courses, and English Language Learner programs affect students' plans to attend college; and 2) community engagement in out-of-school recreational activities affects plans to attend college. My last two research questions seek to examine if 3) the relationship between students' school engagement and their plans to go to college are moderated

by their community engagement, and if 4) the relationships vary based on English language proficiency and U.S. born status.

In support of my first research question, my findings for Model 1 show that positive feelings towards school and enrollment in college preparatory courses have positive significant effects on high school students' plans to attend college. For example, students with positive feelings towards school have 119% greater odds of attending college than those who do not have positive feelings towards their school [see Table 2]. Model 1 also shows that students who are enrolled in college preparatory courses have 45% greater odds of planning to attend college [see Table 2]. Although both types of school engagement have significant effects on students' plans for continuing into post-secondary education, my findings suggest that students' feelings about their schools have a particularly robust effect on plans to attend college. The relationship between community engagement and plans to attend college had the most robust effects when examining participation in sports. For example, students who participated in a community sport activity had 92% greater odds of planning to attend college than students who did not play sports [see Table 2].

The results also show that when examining school engagement, minority status, socio-economic status, and sex/gender are also significantly related to plans to attend college [see Table 2]. My findings show that minority status students have 35% greater odds of planning to attend college upon graduating high school when compared to white students [see Table 2]. The results also show that compared to females, males have 60% lower odds of planning to attend college upon graduating high school [see Table 2]. In regards to SES, model 1 demonstrates that students with higher social capital have 89% greater odds of planning to attend college [see Table



2]. Although prior studies find that race-ethnicity, sex/gender (Strayhorn, 2010) and socio-economic status (Battle & Lewis, 2002) are significantly related to academic achievement, my findings add to the literature by demonstrating that socio-economic status, gender, and minority status specifically affect students' plans for attending college as well [see Table 2].

Model 2 includes two-way interaction terms for the significant main effect school engagement variables and community engagement variables. The finding in Model 2 suggest that the relationship between students' school engagement and their plans to go to college is, in fact, positively moderated by community engagement, particularly engagement in sports. In support of research question 3, the results of Model 2 show that participation in college preparatory courses have more of an impact on plans to attend college for students who participate in sports activities than it does for others [see Table 3]. The demographic variables in Model 2 measuring sex/gender, minority status, and socioeconomic status also remain significantly related to plans for attending.

Model 3 includes the U.S. born status and school engagement two-way interaction effects, and Model 4 includes the U.S. born status and community engagement two-way interaction effects. The results of Model 3 address research question 4 and show that interaction effects between U.S. born status and school engagement do not significantly affect plans to attend college. [see Table 4]. In Model 4, the interaction between U.S. born status and community engagement address question 4, and show that interaction effects between U.S. born status and community engagement do not significantly affect plans to attend college [see Table 5]. All significant control variables remained significant in this model.

Model 5 includes two-way interaction effects between English-language proficiency and school engagement, and Model 6 includes two-way interaction effects between English-language proficiency and community engagement. The results of Model 5 and Model 6 address research question 4 and demonstrate that the interaction effects between English-language proficiency and school engagement, as well as English-language proficiency and out-of-school community engagement do not have any significant effect on plans to attend college [see Table 7]. This finding does not support my hypothesis, but it does support prior findings by Callahan (2005) that English language proficiency was not a primary or sole determinant of English learners' academic success. Similar to prior models, the demographic variables measuring sex/gender, minority status, and socioeconomic status also remain significantly related to plans for attending college.

Models 7 through 9 demonstrate a series of three-way interactions between U.S. born status, school engagement, and community engagement. The significant interaction effect result in Model 7 indicates that participation in college prep programs have less of an impact on U.S. born students who participate in sports than for immigrant students when planning to attend college [see Table 8]. These results answer research question 4, and support my hypothesis by demonstrating that when comparing U.S. born and immigrant youth, although not all types of 2- and 3-way student engagements in schools and out-of-school communities showed significant relationships to plans for attending college, some were significant, showing therefore that different types of interaction relationship have different effects on educational outcomes. This shows that different types of interaction relationships have different effects on educational outcomes. Theoretically, this finding supports the new

assimilation theory and suggest that when comparing U.S. born and immigrant students, social capital gained through school and community engagement does have an effect on individuals' wellbeing in the area of educational outcomes. More specifically, my findings contribute to the literature by demonstrating that the effect of U.S. born status on plans to attend college is particularly present when observing interaction effects between certain types of school and community engagement activities while comparing U.S. born to immigrant youth. That is, school engagement in college prep programs when interacted with community participation, can affect students' plans for attending college.

Model 8 addresses research question 4 and shows that the 3-way interaction effect between U.S. born status, participation in an English Language Learners program, and out-of-school participation in music or sports have no significant effect on plans to attend college [see Table 9]. Model 9 also addresses research question 4 and demonstrates that the interaction effect between U.S. born status, positive feelings towards school, and out-of-school community engagement in music or sports have no significant effect on plans to attend college [see Table 10]. As in all prior models, the demographic variables measuring sex/gender, minority status, and socioeconomic status also remain significantly related to plans for attending college.

Models 10 and 11 address research question 4, and demonstrate three-way interactions between English-language proficiency, school engagement, and community engagement. The findings for Models 10 and 11 show that three-way interactions between English language proficiency, school engagement, and community engagement do not have any significant effects on plans to attend college. However, as in all prior models, the demographic variables measuring sex/gender,

minority status, and socioeconomic status remain significantly related to plans for attending college. The findings for Models 10 and 11 answer research question 4, but do not support my hypothesis regarding the three-way interaction effect between English-language proficiency, school engagement, and community engagement.

## **Chapter 6**

### **DISCUSSION**

The new assimilation theory (Alba & Nee, 2003) builds off of prior existing assimilation theories. Ultimately, the new assimilation theory suggests that the overall well-being immigrant youth depends on acquiring and maintaining various forms of social, human, and cultural capital. In general, my findings support my hypothesis for research questions 1 and 2, and partially support my hypothesis for research question 4. My results demonstrate that school and community engagement variables have independent effects on plans to go to college, and that community engagement in sports activities have a moderating effect on the relationship between school engagement and plans for attending college. However, my findings did not support my hypotheses for research question 3 and the part of question 4 pertaining to English language proficiency, derived from the new assimilation theory, which explains how various types of social capital effects educational well-being in individuals' lives when comparing U.S. born and immigrant youth. My findings are therefore contrary to the theoretical framework of the new assimilation theory and therefore, provide an opportunity for major critique towards previous assimilation theories.

In reformulating the segmented assimilation theory, however, Alba and Nee (2003) do not address how social and cultural capital gained through school and community engagement can affect specific areas of well-being such as education. My study highlights an important relationship between students acquiring social capital through participatory engagements in their communities, and their schools, and its

effects on educational wellbeing upon graduating high school. My findings revealed that out of all the two-way school and community engagement interactions, only interactions between participation in college prep programs and participation in out-of-school sports activities have a significant effect on students' plans to attend college.

This effect remained significant in the 3-way interactions showing that community engagement in sports activities, participation in college prep programs, and U.S. born status together are significantly related on plans to attend college. This finding makes an important contribution to the theoretical literature on assimilation into the U.S., and how direct interactions in various social locations (i.e. schools and communities) can affect plans for continued education post-high school graduation. It also suggests that there is a unique relationship that exists between U.S. born status, student participation in college preparatory programs, and student participation in sports that produces a significant effect on high school students' plans for attending college—one that does not exist between other interactions of school engagement, community engagement, U.S. born status, or English-language proficiency.

Furthermore, the result of this three-way interaction effect between U.S. born status, participation in sports, and school engagement can be explained by the new assimilation theory. That is, the significant three-way interaction effect supports the notion that the acquired social and cultural capital has different effects on plans to attend college when comparing U.S. born and immigrant youth. However, the insignificant relationship between U.S. born status, English-language proficiency and all school and community engagement were contrary to the relationship discussed in the new assimilation theory regarding social capital and wellbeing when comparing immigrant and U.S. born families.

My findings regarding the relationship between race-ethnicity, gender, and SES support prior studies demonstrating that such factors have significant effects on educational outcomes (Hu & Kuh, 2002; Perreira et al. 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2009; Swigart & Murrell, 2001). Also, even though the *optimism hypothesis* suggests that students with better English-language skills are more successful academically, my findings show that for high school students, there is no significant relationship between English-language proficiency and plans for attending college. Thus, while students with low English-language proficiency may experience communication difficulties with teacher and peers in their schools and communities causing negative academic outcomes (Hill and Torres 2010; Ruiz-de Valasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000), my findings suggest that such adversities do not significantly affect academic outcomes (Callahan, 2005), which in this case is students' plans towards attending college.

### **Limitations**

Although my study makes a relevant contribution to the literature, there were a few limitations as well. As with many longitudinal samples, attrition between the base year and the first follow-up survey can create a bias in the sample. The issue with attrition thus poses the question of whether students who dropped out or transferred schools are different than those who remain in the in-school sample, and if that difference affects the analyses. In addition, unlike prior studies, the data were also limited to only allowing me to measure high school students' *intentions* towards getting a college education as opposed to actual enrollment in college from a quantitative stance. Therefore, this study was limited because it is difficult to operationalize what is considered planning to go to college, which should not be

confused with how school and community engagement may affect students' actual enrollment into college, and/or academic *achievement or success* while college. As noted, this limitation is connected to a separate relationship that I hope to explore further using the final wave of this dataset, which should be available in the near future. It is possible that some students may have become ineligible for attending college right away due to adverse condition, and/or other types of community and school engagement that may have affected their plans. Therefore, the last wave of the dataset, once released, will allow me to examine information regarding changes in students' plans during the summer months between high school graduation and the following fall/ potential first semester of college.



## **Chapter 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

My study underscores that the planning process is important too, since in order to enroll in college, individuals must take steps that involve planning (i.e. applications, financial, etc.). The results of my study will provide insight to educational policy and program makers by capturing how a particular kind of process, the planning process for continued education, is influenced by students' school and community participation during their high school years. Acknowledging an under-discussed planning process involved in preparing for attending college introduces a step that adds to the contextualization of other studies whereby scholars suggest that high school experiences and pre-college course enrollment also predict college attendance (Eccles and Barber, 2004). It shows that planning for college is also connected to college attendance, and that planning process in itself is also influenced by social capital gained in schools and communities which include other social structures, experiences and conditions that may affect educational outcomes.

For this study, I used a variable measuring U.S. born status as an alternative to accounting for specific generational differences like prior studies do, since the dataset did not include a variable that was conducive for measuring generational status differences or time in the U.S. I used the variable measuring U.S. born status to examine the level of influence that cultural values maintained from individuals' birth country may have on students' educational intentions, a relationship that is equally important in aiding the theoretical and empirical literature on U.S. assimilation and

education. In addition, the social capital variables used in this study make unique and personal connections to individual adolescents' experiences, and therefore can be used in further research opportunities to study how other social structures and conditions like school exclusion or incarceration may produce elements of social capital that affects youths' decisions towards continued education.

More importantly, the results of my study will be useful for future empirical research, and for developing guidelines and implementing evidence-based programs geared towards helping immigrant students assimilate to U.S. school. My results demonstrated that participation in college preparatory courses and sports are a mechanism for aiding immigrant youth's assimilation into the U.S. Therefore, educational policymakers should use these findings that reveal the significant relationships between social capital gained in schools and communities and plans for attending college when formulating pre-college programs in ethnically and socioeconomically diverse communities. With further research, these findings could aid in supporting the accreditation of both national- and international-level educational programs that specialize in using relational engagement to help non-native students adjust to the education system not only in the U.S., but in other non-native countries as well.

Though this study focused on how social capital engagements and interactions in school programs affect plans for attending college, additional research needs to be conducted examining how the acquisition of social capital may affect other school outcomes when comparing immigrant youth to their U.S. born counterparts. Future research should use qualitative methods to help eradicate inevitable limitations to using quantitative approaches, whereby unmeasured or latent factors may exist that

effect educational outcomes being examined, but may be difficult to conceptualize or capture quantitatively. This includes factors such as resilience, levels of determinism, or motivation which can arise through life altering adversities, traumas, and other events. Using qualitative methods will allow future researchers to engage in direct interactions with research subjects providing access to the social worlds of both U.S. born and immigrant students.

## TABLES

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<b>Dependent Variable</b>				
Expect to continue education	0.87	0.34	0	1
<b>Independent Variables</b>				
<i>School engagement</i>				
Positive feelings towards school	3.32	0.52	1	4
Enrolled in English Learning	0.08	0.27	0	1
Participation in college prep programs	0.13	0.33	0	1
<i>English-language proficiency</i>				
English as primary language	0.89	0.31	0	1
<i>Community Engagement</i>				
Music	0.36	0.48	0	1
Sports	0.5	0.5	0	1
<b>Demographics</b>				
Male	0.5	0.5	0	1
Minority status	0.47	0.50	0	1
U.S. Born	0.92	0.27	0	1
Puerto Rico or other U.S. territory	0	0.06	0	1
Non-U.S. Born	0.08	0.27	0	1

Table 2 Multivariate Logistic Regression of students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLs 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp(B))

Variables	<u>Model 1</u> Odds Ratio	S.E.
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.29***	0.09
Participation in Sports	1.92***	0.12
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.19***	0.13
Participation in college prep programs	1.45***	0.14
Enrollment in English Language Learner Program	1.04	0.13
<i>English- language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.88	0.1
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.40***	0.03
U.S. born	1.05	0.15
Minority status	1.35***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.89***	0.08

*Note. t test or chi-square significant at \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

Table 3 School & Community Engagement 2-way Interaction Effects on students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLs 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp (B))

Variables	<u>Model 2</u> Odds Ratio	S.E.
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.29***	0.09
Participation in Sports	1.99***	0.14
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.26***	0.18
Participation in college prep programs	1.67***	0.24
<i>English-language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.92	0.1
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
Positive feelings towards school x participation in music or dance	1.1	0.14
Positive feelings towards school x participation in sports	0.87	0.1
Participation in college prep programs x participation in music or dance	1.07	0.21
Participation in college prep programs x participation in sports	0.66*	0.13
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.40***	0.03
U.S. born	1.06	0.15
Minority status	1.36***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.89***	0.08

*Note. t test or chi-square significant at \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

Table 4 Birth status & School Engagement 2-way Interaction Effects on students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLs 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp (B))

Variables	<u>Model 3</u> Odds Ratio	S.E.
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.29***	0.09
Participation in Sports	1.92***	0.12
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.23***	0.51
Participation in college prep programs	2.59*	0.99
Enrollment in English Language Learner Program	0.98	0.23
<i>English-language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.93	0.12
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
U.S. born x participation in college prep programs	0.53	0.21
U.S. born x enrollment in English Language Learner Program	1.13	0.3
U.S. born x positive feelings towards school	0.99	0.23
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.40***	0.03
U.S. born	1.11	0.87
Minority status	1.38***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.88***	0.08

*Note. t test or chi-square significant at \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

Table 5 Birth status and Community Engagement 2-way Interaction Effects on students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLs 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp (B))

Variables	Model 4 Odds Ratio	S.E.
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.09	0.27
Participation in Sports	2.11**	0.51
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.20***	0.13
Participation in college prep programs	1.45***	0.14
Enrollment in English Language Learner Program	1.06	0.13
<i>English-language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.93	0.12
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
U.S. born x participation in music/dance	1.2	0.31
U.S. born x participation in sports	0.9	0.23
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.40***	0.03
U.S. born	1.01	0.18
Minority status	1.38***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.88***	0.08

*Note. t test or chi-square significant at \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*



Table 6 English-language proficiency & School Engagement 2-way Interaction Effects on students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLs 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp (B))

Variables	<u>Model 5</u> Odds Ratio	S.E.
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.29***	0.09
Participation in Sports	1.92***	0.12
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.60***	0.49
Participation in college prep programs	1.48	0.42
Enrollment in English Language Learner Program	1.06	0.13
<i>English-language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.9	0.12
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
English as primary language x participation in college prep programs	0.98	0.3
English as primary language x positive feelings towards school	0.83	0.16
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.40***	0.03
U.S. born	1.03	0.15
Minority status	1.38***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.88***	0.08
<i>Note. t test or chi-square significant at *p&lt;.05, **p&lt;.01, ***p&lt;.001</i>		

Table 7 English-language proficiency & Community Engagement 2-way Interaction Effects on students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLS 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp (B))

Variables	<u>Model 6</u> Odds Ratio	S.E.
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.27	0.28
Participation in Sports	1.73**	0.35
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.20***	0.13
Participation in college prep programs	1.45***	0.14
Enrollment in English Language Learner Program	1.06	0.13
<i>English-language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.89	0.14
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
English as primary language x participation in music	1.02	0.23
English as primary language x participation in sports	1.12	0.24
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.40***	0.03
U.S. born	1.02	0.15
Minority status	1.38***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.88***	0.08

*Note. t test or chi-square significant at \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

Table 8 U.S. born status, School, & Community Engagement 3-way Interaction Effects on students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLs 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp (B))

Variables	<u>Model 7</u> <b>Odds Ratio</b>	<b>S.E.</b>
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.28***	0.09
Participation in Sports	2.02***	0.13
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.20***	0.13
Participation in college prep programs	1.68***	0.23
Enrollment in English Language Learner Program	1.06	0.13
<i>English-language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.93	0.1
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
U.S. born x participation college prep x participation in music/dance	1.12	0.22
U.S. born x participation college prep x participation in sports	0.61*	0.12
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.40***	0.03
U.S. born	1.06	0.15
Minority status	1.38***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.88***	0.08

*Note. t test or chi-square significant at \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

Table 9 U.S. born status, School, & Community Engagement 3-way Interaction Effects on students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLs 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp (B))

Variables	<u>Model 8</u> <b>Odds Ratio</b>	<b>S.E.</b>
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.26***	0.09
Participation in Sports	1.95***	0.13
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.20***	0.13
Participation in college prep programs	1.45***	0.14
Enrollment in English Language Learner Program	1.07	0.16
<i>English-language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.93	0.12
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
U.S. born x participated in ELL program x participation in music/dance	1.48	0.46
U.S. born x participated in ELL program x participation in sports	0.74	0.2
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.40***	0.03
U.S. born	1.03	0.15
Minority status	1.38***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.88***	0.08

*Note. t test or chi-square significant at \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

Table 10 U.S. born status, School, & Community Engagement 3-way Interaction Effects on students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLs 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp (B))

Variables	<u>Model 9</u> <b>Odds Ratio</b>	<b>S.E.</b>
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.31***	0.09
Participation in Sports	1.89***	0.12
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.23***	0.17
Participation in college prep programs	1.45***	0.14
Enrollment in English Language Learner Program	1.06	0.13
<i>English-language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.92	0.12
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
U.S. born x positive feelings towards school x participation in music/dance	1.19	0.16
U.S. born x positive feelings towards school x participation in sports	0.84	0.1
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.40***	0.03
U.S. born	1.04	0.15
Minority status	1.38***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.88***	0.08

*Note. t test or chi-square significant at \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

Table 11 English-language proficiency, School, & Community Engagement 3-way Interaction Effects on students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLs 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp (B))

Variables	<u>Model 10</u> Odds Ratio	S.E.
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.29***	0.09
Participation in Sports	1.99***	0.13
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.20***	0.13
Participation in college prep programs	1.62***	0.22
Enrollment in English Language Learner Program	1.06	0.13
<i>English-language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.94	0.12
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
English primary x participation in college prep program x participation in music/dance	1.05	0.21
English primary x participation in college prep program x participation in sports	0.7	0.14
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.40***	0.03
U.S. born	1.06	0.15
Minority status	1.36***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.89***	0.08

*Note. t test or chi-square significant at \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

Table 12 English-language proficiency, School, & Community Engagement 3-way Interaction Effects on students' likelihood of planning to attend college (HSLs 2009-2013, BY and FF) (Exp (B))

Variables	Model 11 Odds Ratio	S.E.
<i>Community Engagement</i>		
Participation in Music or Dance	1.29***	0.09
Participation in Sports	1.99***	0.12
<i>School Engagement</i>		
Positive feelings towards school	2.30***	0.17
Participation in college prep programs	1.45***	0.14
Enrollment in English Language Learner Program	1.04	0.13
<i>English-language proficiency</i>		
English as primary language	0.88	0.1
<i>Interaction Effects</i>		
English primary x positive feelings towards school x participation in music/dance	1.08	0.15
English primary x positive feelings towards school x participation in sports	0.82	0.1
<i>Demographics</i>		
Male	0.41***	0.03
U.S. born	1.06	0.15
Minority status	1.32***	0.09
Socio-economic status	1.89***	0.08

*Note. t test or chi-square significant at \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001*

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