CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the literature that informs this study is reviewed. First, a comprehensive review and synthesis of educational research literature that utilizes the social capital concept is presented. The synthesis is organized into three sections; intellectual history, relationships between social capital and educational outcomes, and methodological gaps. This synthesis was published in the *Review of Educational Research* (Dika & Singh, 2002a). The subsequent sections of the review are organized to mirror the proposed conceptual framework. Each section reviews research linking the particular model component with social capital and also with academic achievement.

Social Capital in Educational Literature

*Intellectual History*

There is a growing body of literature on social capital and its relationship to educational development. Interest in the concept was stimulated largely by the work of James Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu in the late 1980's. Social capital is one of sociology's most popular theoretical exports, and the concept has captured the attention of educational researchers and policy makers aiming to improve America’s schools.

Although the term “social capital” originated as early as 1920, the initial theoretical development of the concept is attributed to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and American sociologist James Coleman (Portes, 2000). Bourdieu (1986) wrote about the interaction of three sources of capital; economic, cultural, and social. Coleman (1988) focused on the role of social capital in the creation of human capital. Although both scholars concentrate on the benefits accruing to individuals or families by virtue of their ties with others, there are significant variations in their theories. While Coleman's model has structural-functionalist roots (going back to Durkheim), Bourdieu's conceptualization is grounded in theories of social reproduction and symbolic power. As a result, social capital has been elaborated in two principal ways: norms versus access to institutional resources. This differentiation is apparent in theoretical interpretations and resulting empirical work.
The explanation of social capital as access to institutional resources has its roots in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1986) was the first sociologist to systematically analyze the concept of social capital. He defines social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to possession of a durable network of essentially institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. This group membership provides members with the backing of the collectively owned capital. Relations may exist as material or symbolic exchanges. Social capital is made up of social obligations or connections and it is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital.

Bourdieu (1986) proposes that the volume of social capital possessed by a person depends on size of the network of connections that he or she can mobilize and on the volume of capital -- economic, cultural, and symbolic -- possessed by each person to whom he or she is connected. Thus, Bourdieu’s social capital is decomposable into two elements: first, the social relationship that allows the individual to claim resources possessed by the collectivity, and second, the quantity and quality of those resources (Portes, 1998). Ultimately, Bourdieu sees social capital as the investment of the dominant class to maintain and reproduce group solidarity and preserve the group’s dominant position (Lin, 1999a).

Bourdieu's concept of social capital is not complete without a brief explanation of other central concepts in his work, namely cultural capital, habitus, and field. Cultural capital can exist in three states; embodied (dispositions of mind and body), objectified (cultural goods), and institutionalized (educational qualifications). Certain forms of cultural capital are valued more than others, and each person brings a different set of dispositions (habitus) to the field of interaction. Social space is a field of forces and struggles between agents with different means and ends (Bourdieu, 1998). The field is characterized by the "rules of the game", which are neither explicit nor codified. Because the field is dynamic, valued forms of social and cultural capital are also dynamic and arbitrary.

The second principal way that social capital has been elaborated; as norms and social control; is exemplified in the theoretical work of James Coleman. Coleman’s (1988) interpretation of social capital is the most frequently cited in the educational
literature related to social capital. Coleman proposes that social capital is intangible and has three forms: (a) level of trust, as evidenced by obligations and expectations, (b) information channels, and (c) norms and sanctions that promote the common good over self-interest.

Social capital inheres in the structure of relations between and among actors. It is defined by its function, and it concerns structures and actors across a variety of different entities.

(S)ocial capital constitutes a particular kind of resource available to an actor. Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure. (Coleman, 1988, p. S98)

Like Bourdieu, Coleman also highlights the importance of social networks. Particularly, he emphasizes intergenerational closure – parents know the parents of their children’s friends – as a social structure that facilitates the emergence of effective norms. Coleman's later work (e.g., 1992) continued to focus on the role of parental involvement in developing social capital, and consequently, his work is usually cited in support of a particular kind of community – strict, traditional values; rigorous discipline, and hierarchical order and control.

Two major differences are evident between the contemporaneous definitions of social capital by Bourdieu and Coleman. First, as noted by Portes (1998), the distinction of resources from the ability to obtain them in the social structure is explicit in Bourdieu, but obscured in Coleman - “Defining social capital as equivalent with the resources thus obtained is tantamount to saying that the successful succeed” (p. 5). The second difference stems from the authors’ differing orientations. Bourdieu sees social capital as a tool of reproduction for the dominant class, whereas Coleman sees social capital as (positive) social control, where trust, information channels, and norms are characteristics of the community. Thus, Coleman's work supports the idea that it is the family's responsibility to adopt certain norms to advance their children's life chances, whereas Bourdieu's work emphasizes structural constraints and unequal access to institutional resources based on class, gender, and race (Lareau, 2001).
Portes (2000) notes that “(t)he concept of social capital is arguably one of the most successful ‘exports’ from sociology to other social sciences and to public discourse during the last two decades” (p. 1). The span of this exportation includes anthropology, business, economics, education, development/planning, and political science. In particular, the celebration of community in Coleman’s interpretation caught the eyes of scholars in other disciplines. Robert Putnam (1993), a political scientist, proposes that social capital can be viewed as an attribute of community; a property of cities or nations. This usage of the term has become extremely popular in public discourse and has been used to support the idea of loss of community or social decline in America.

Social capital did not travel far in its journey to education. Theoretical development of social capital by both Bourdieu and Coleman has its origins in the explanation of educational achievement and attainment; however, these explanations were very different. Bourdieu’s theories of cultural reproduction and of cultural and social capital were developed as alternative explanations of unequal academic achievement to skill deficit and human capital theories. Coleman (1988) used High School and Beyond (HSB) data to show that greater amounts of social capital; presence of two parents in the home, lower number of siblings, higher parental educational expectations, and intergenerational closure; lead to lower incidence of dropping out of school. Once again, the two different conceptualizations of social capital resulted in markedly different types of exportation to the educational literature.

The use of a Bourdieuan approach has been adopted in many areas of educational research, including language in the classroom, career decision-making, academic discourse, and family-school relations (see Grenfell & James, 1998). Sociolinguists, notably Basil Bernstein and Jenny Cook-Gumperz (e.g., 1986), have extended Bourdieu's notions of cultural reproduction to study the social construction of literacy and how pedagogic discourse is an instrument of class reproduction; specifically, "how … power and control translate into principles of communication… (that) differentially regulate forms of consciousness with respect to their reproduction…” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 4). Surprisingly, Bernstein's theory is not referenced in most current educational literature on cultural and social capital of linguistic and cultural minorities.
Sociologists of education have extended Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital to explain differential experiences in schools based on class, gender, and race/ethnicity. Lareau and Horvat (1999) developed a framework of moments of inclusion and exclusion, emphasizing the role of the school in accepting or declining the activation of social and cultural capital by families. Lareau (2001) has been one of the only authors to explicitly incorporate Bourdieu's idea of field into educational research on social and cultural capital. Stanton-Salazar (1997) developed a social capital conceptual framework for studying the socialization of racial minorities, and identified intrinsic mechanisms of mainstream institutions that account for the problems in accumulating social capital for low-status and minority children and youth. This framework was further articulated and elaborated in his recent study of the school and kin support networks of Mexican American youth (Stanton-Salazar, 2001b). His model highlights the embeddedness of the adolescent in a social network, affected by counterstratification and stratification forces.

Coleman's work has influenced educational research since the publication of Equality of Educational Opportunity in 1966 (The Coleman Report). As will be seen later in the review, mainline educational research has mainly employed a Colemanesque approach to the conceptualization of social capital. In contrast to the research that employs Bourdieuan frameworks, this research is uncritically accepting of Coleman's social capital concept. Most of the current research linking social capital and educational outcomes is based on large U.S. data sets, namely the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88). Educational researchers have generally not strayed far from the social capital indicators proposed by Coleman in his original work; mainly family structure and parent-child interaction variables.

The theoretical reach of Coleman and Bourdieu is clearly quite extensive. The differences in the two original elaborations of social capital remain in the extensions of the work of these two theorists, and they are evident in resultant empirical research. Coleman’s theory suggests that social capital is instrumental in the development of human capital, that is, high school graduation and college enrollment rather than dropping out of school. This theory also suggests that family norms and intergenerational closure (forms of social capital) promote educational achievement, school-related
motivation, and engagement. Thus the literature on the relationship between social capital and three outcome areas; educational attainment, educational achievement, and psychosocial outcomes; guide this literature review.

**Social Capital and Educational Attainment**

The relationship between social capital and educational attainment is generally significant in the expected direction. Rates of dropout are positively related to nontraditional family structure and number of siblings (Israel, Beaulieu, & Hartless, 2001; Smith, Beaulieu, & Israel, 1992), and negatively related to parental expectations and aspirations, parent-teen connection, parent monitoring, number of moves, church attendance, involvement in other activities, parent communication with school, and intergenerational closure (Carbonaro, 1998; Israel et al., 2001; Smith et al., 1992; Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1996; White & Glick, 2000). Similarly, social capital is positively associated with high school graduation and college enrollment. Traditional family structure, parents’ expectations and encouragement, and parent-teen interactions are positively related to these two outcomes (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Yan, 1999). Other positive relations include intergenerational closure, strong help network of the parent, number of friends known by parent, parent involvement in the school, seeing close friends weekly, and friends’ educational expectations (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Yan, 1999). Moving is negatively related to these two outcomes (Hofferth Boisjoly, & Duncan, 1998).

Some studies examine the relationship between social capital and years of schooling. Like the results for the other attainment variables, years of schooling are associated with family structure, family discussion, parents’ influence and expectations, parents’ cultural capital, parent-school involvement, and parent monitoring (De Graaf, De Graaf, & Kraaykamp, 2000; Dyk & Wilson, 1999; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996; Lopez, 1996). The influence of interactions with others outside the family is also significant, including discussions about jobs and education with other adults, teachers’ expectations and influence, and teacher interest in student (Dyk & Wilson, 1999; Lopez, 1996).

**Social Capital and Educational Achievement**

Several studies have explored the relationship between social capital and educational achievement. Studies that specifically link achievement test scores with
social capital have generally used the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) database. Four achievement tests were completed by NELS:88 respondents; math, science, reading, and history. Overall, relationships were significant in the expected direction. Achievement on these tests is negatively associated with family size, moving, and nontraditional family structure (Sun, 1998; Sun, 1999). Achievement is generally positively related to parent-teen discussion (McNeal, 1999; Pong, 1998; Sun, 1998; Sun, 1999), parents’ expectations (Carbonaro, 1998; Sun, 1988), parent monitoring (Sun, 1998), parent-school involvement (Carbonaro, 1998; Pong, 1998; Morgan & Sørenson, 1999; Pribesh & Downey, 1999; Sun, 1999), and intergenerational closure (Carbonaro, 1998; Morgan & Sørenson, 1999; Pribesh & Downey, 1999; Sun, 1998; Sun, 1999). One study, however, found an inverse relationship between achievement and two of these social capital indicators, parent-school involvement and parent monitoring (McNeal, 1999).

Achievement test scores have also been linked to social capital indicators where the adolescent, not the parent, is the actor. Participation in organizations in the school and community (Sun, 1998; Sun, 1999), number of close friends attending the same school (Morgan & Sørenson, 1999), and ties with peers (Pribesh & Downey, 1999) are all positively associated with achievement scores.

Achievement in terms of grades and/or GPA has also been studied in relation to social capital. Grades were negatively related to nontraditional family structure, family size, and moving in one study (Israel et al., 2001). Grades are generally positively related to parent-teen discussion (Israel et al., 2001; Lopez, 1996; Wright, Cullen, & Miller, 2001), parents’ expectations (Israel et al., 2001; Lopez, 1996), parent monitoring (Israel et al., 2001; Lopez, 1996), parent-school involvement (Israel et al., 2001; Lopez, 1996; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994), and intergenerational closure (Israel et al., 2001). In two studies, cultural capital variables were significantly related to grades; Vietnamese reading and writing ability (Bankston & Zhou, 1995) and cultural classes and educational resources in the home (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). In research with Mexican-origin youth, Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) studied institutional-based social capital as an outcome of grades. Grades were positively related to three different
informational network variables – number of school-based weak ties, number of non-kin weak ties, and proportion of non-Mexican origin members.

Social Capital and Psychosocial Outcomes

A small body of research has explored the relationship between social capital and psychosocial factors related to education. Overall, these studies indicate positive relationships between educational aspirations and social capital, including parental expectations (Muller & Ellison, 2001), parent-teen discussion about school (Muller & Ellison, 2001; Pribesh & Downey, 1999; Smith-Maddox, 2001), parent-school involvement (Pribesh & Downey, 1999; Smith-Maddox, 2001), study resources in the home (Qian & Blair, 1999), and intergenerational closure (Muller & Ellison, 2001). Relationships and activities outside the family, such as involvement in organizations (Pribesh & Downey, 1999) and peer group values (Muller & Ellison, 2001), are also positively linked to educational aspirations. One study found a negative relationship among educational aspirations, family size, and nontraditional family structure (Qian & Blair, 1999). In another case, a network indicator of social capital - proportion of non-Mexican in the informational network - was seen as an outcome of educational or status aspirations (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

School-related effort has also been linked to social capital. Homework effort is positively related to parent expectations, parent-teen discussion about school or class, intergenerational closure, and peer values for adolescents (Muller & Ellison, 2001). Vietnamese reading and writing ability, a form of social and cultural capital in Bankston and Zhou’s (1995) study of Vietnamese youth, is also related to time on homework. Children’s time spent studying, reading, or being read to is positively associated with parental education level (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997). Time studying is also associated with parent-teen discussion, family attachment, and family disapproval of delinquency (Wright et al., 2001). In addition, two studies examined the relationship between engagement/motivation factors and social capital. Class cutting is negatively related to parent-teen discussion, intergenerational closure, and peer group values (Muller & Ellison, 2001). Parent-teen discussion, parent-school involvement, and monitoring are negatively related to truancy (McNeal, 1999).
Taken as a whole, the research shows that social capital and psychosocial factors are positively linked. The direction and nature of the relationship between them, though, is not entirely clear. Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) found that educational aspirations are related to the formation of ties with institutional agents in schools. Other psychosocial factors in these studies were viewed as outcomes rather than explanatory variables. Further research is needed to understand the interplay of factors and the access to and mobilization of social capital.

**Methodological Issues and Gaps**

The original conceptualization of social capital by Coleman is problematic (Morrow, 1999; Portes, 1998; Portes, 2000). Although thus far described as a theory, the delineation of social capital by Coleman (1988) is too vague to develop testable hypotheses. Social capital is a fuzzy concept as developed by both Coleman and Bourdieu (1986), however Bourdieu views his social capital as an open concept designed to guide empirical work (Grenfell & James, 1998) rather than a causal model. Coleman’s concept assumes family mediation of social capital, ignoring the agency of the adolescent in accessing social capital. The concept emphasizes the virtues of parental involvement, and implies a top-down view of the parent-child relationship (Morrow, 1999).

Coleman defines social capital as the resources inherent in the structure of relationships. This leads to two conceptual problems. First, the sources (relationships) of social capital are confused with the benefits (resources, opportunities) derived from it, leading to circular reasoning: e.g., The student who stays in school has social capital; the dropout has none (Portes & Landolt, 1996). Second, the disentanglement of the possession of social capital from its activation becomes difficult. It is unclear whether the ability to access social capital (in the home or community) or the ability to activate this social capital in the institutional context (the school) is associated with desirable outcomes.

The designation of social capital as a ‘catch-all’ for the positive effects of sociability has clouded the intersection of race, class, and gender in schools and society. The positive effects of participation in a particular community are emphasized without considering possible negative implications, such as the exclusion of outsiders and downward leveling pressures (Portes & Landolt, 1996). Groups and communities may
make demands that compromise rather than facilitate opportunity and mobility (Morrow, 1999). The basic question of how race and social class affect parental involvement is ignored (Lareau, 1989), and women’s work in creating and maintaining networks remains invisible (Morrow, 1999). As shown through the research by Lareau and Horvat (1999) and Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995), the directionality of the relationship between social capital and educational outcomes is blurry.

Thus, the current social capital framework serves to describe rather than explain the effects of inequality on educational outcomes. Social capital has the potential to become part of a ““deficit theory syndrome”, yet another ‘thing’ or ‘resource’ that unsuccessful individuals, families, communities and neighbourhoods lack” (Morrow, 1999, p. 760). These theories are faulted primarily because they obscure issues of power and domination; that is, they do not address links between lack of ties to institutional agents, macro forces, and institutional-discriminatory patterns. Bourdieu’s notions of social and cultural capital represent a way to avoid this, but these notions have been only sporadically incorporated into the research in the United States, and only by certain authors (e.g., Lareau, 1989; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; 2001b).

The measurement issues for the body of research on social capital and educational outcomes stem from the issues and gaps in the conceptualization of social capital. Morrow (1999) notes that most of these measures (e.g., number of parents, number of siblings or household size, church attendance) are crude and arbitrary. The selection of these types of measures reflects those used by Coleman (1988) in his original study, which used data from the HSB study of 1980 and 1982. The HSB was not designed to measure social capital, nor was the NELS, although most measures of social capital come from these data sets. Furthermore, some of these variables function as proxies for wealth or family background, and it is obvious that "manipulating such a variable will not produce the presumed effect" (Pedhazur, 1997, p. 287). Only a few researchers specifically designed and implemented their own studies to understand social capital, including all of the studies using qualitative methods (Fritch, 1999a; Fritch, 1999b; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Morrow, 2001; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 2001b).
Conventional statistical measures of supportive ties (e.g., number of parents, parent-child discussion) are poor and unreliable indicators of social capital, and they give little information about relationship dynamics or the quality of the resources accessed (Stanton-Salazar, 2001b). In most of these studies, prior measures of academic resources, academic performance, and social capital are not taken into consideration. Longitudinal studies are necessary to understand the direction of the relationship between educational outcomes and social resources.

Although the processes measured as social capital have been studied for years under other labels (Portes, 1998), most of the research does not acknowledge the potential ‘jangle fallacy’ (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991) inherent in the concept of social capital. For example, the level and type of parental involvement in children's schools has been studied by some researchers as parental involvement and by others as social capital. Validity is a primary concern in the measurement of latent variables. Validity evidence, particularly construct validity, is strikingly absent in a good portion of the research reviewed herein. When this evidence is included, it is usually in the forms of confirmatory factor analysis and correlations. Only one study used a path model to look at the relationship between social capital indicators and attainment (Dyk & Wilson, 1999). Although authors are cautious not to make causal implications, few acknowledge the metaphorical and elusive nature of social capital as conceptualized by Coleman. Why and how is family social capital different than family background? Parent involvement and school engagement indicators comprise many indicators of social capital used in the studies reviewed. It has not been verified that something different than these is indeed being measured. Educational researchers have shown little interest in departing from Coleman's framework and exploring how social ties and social networks are studied in economic sociology (e.g., Borgatti, Jones, & Everett, 1998; Burt, 2000; Lin, 1999a; 1999b).

The quantitative literature in this body of research has relied on regression-based analyses to show the relationships between social capital indicators and education-related outcomes. More sophisticated methods, namely HLM, are used in only a couple of studies (Pong, 1998; Sun, 1999). In three of the five qualitative studies, researchers predetermined themes of trust, information channels, and norms (Fritch, 1999a; Fritch,
This method can lead to the phenomenon of ‘finding what you are looking for’. On the other hand, Lareau and Horvat (1999) focused their attention on three themes related to Bourdieu’s notions of social reproduction – compliance with school standards, intertwining of race and class, and variations in parent perceptions by race. Morrow’s (2001) themes emerged from the writing, photos, and discussions of the young adolescents in her study. These themes; friendship, use of neighborhood space, and public space; give a salient perspective of the meaning of social capital for children in their lives.

Large-scale panel studies have provided educational researchers with remarkable opportunities to study educational processes and outcomes. Increased public interest in social capital has caught the attention of educational researchers who have, in turn, used the large-scale panel data to understand the role of social capital in education. Unfortunately, the conceptualization of social capital in these studies is narrow and restricted by the variables available in the data sets. The conceptual umbrella of social capital has been stretched to include a variety of social factors that do not coherently hang together. Problems in the conceptualization and measurement of social capital have resulted in a body of research that, save a few studies, does not acknowledge differential access to social networks and social resources. Fascination with the idea that we are in social decline leads to the argument that the source of our discontent is found in lack of social control and cohesion versus increasing inequality. The importance of developing and applying alternative conceptualizations of social capital is apparent. Educational sociologists Lareau (1989; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) and Stanton-Salazar (1997; 2001b) incorporate largely qualitative methods to reveal how social capital is accessed and utilized by youth and families in educational institutions. However, quantitative analysis of access to and mobilization of social capital may be possible using principles of social network analysis.

**Future Directions**

Recently, several scholars in sociology and organizational theory have emphasized the role of social networks in social capital (Adler & Kwon, 1999; Borgatti, Jones, & Everett, 1998; Burt, 2000; Lin, 1999a; 1999b). Essentially, these scholars agree that social capital can be defined as resources embedded in a social structure. Lin (1999a)
adds that the resources are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions. For example, social networks have been studied as creating an environment for processes such as social support, social exchange, feedback and social reflection, information gathering, and stress reduction. These processes have been further linked to meaningful outcomes of developing trust, self-esteem, social skills, and norm internalization (Cochran, Larner, Riley, Gunnarsson, & Henderson, 1990). These concepts, although very relevant to adolescents’ educational and other developmental outcomes, have not been explored in educational research.

Adolescents' social networks have been studied in relation to deviant behavior (e.g., Ennett & Baumann, 1993; Vondra & Garbarino, 1988) and self-esteem (e.g., Blyth & Traeger, 1988; Feiring & Lewis, 1991), mainly within the context of social network as a social support structure. Emergent theorizing of social networks as social capital in the educational sphere has been outlined by Stanton-Salazar (2001b). His model highlights the principal factors affecting the network development of low-status youth. These factors include stratification forces, counterstratification forces, subcultural forces, and societal hierarchies. Stanton-Salazar focuses on network or help-seeking orientation and its role in the formation of networks. This line of work represents one of the few departures from Coleman's conceptualization of social capital as normative pressure and social control rather than as an institutional resource.

Family Background

The relationship between family background or social class and education in the American context has been well documented, beginning with some of the classic studies in the 1940's. Research in the 1960s, largely influenced by the Civil Rights movement and the “War on Poverty,” revealed the extent of educational inequality in the United States (Ornstein, 1974). Educators and politicians, seeking to find the causes of unequal opportunities and results, launched the Equality of Educational Opportunity Report as a provision of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The study was led by James Coleman, and became known as the Coleman Report. The results of this study suggested there was a functional relationship between the social class of a student body and the academic
success of the students. This report became the reference point for debates and research on schools and their impact on students (Sorenson, Dumais, & Morgan, 1999).

Family Background and Self-Processes

The negative effects of poverty and low socioeconomic status on perceptions of self have been established, particularly through research from the perspective that meaning and identity is created, at least in some measure, through social interaction and environmental contexts. However, this relationship is clearly not mechanistic, but complex due to the interacting systems that shape perceptions. Research that incorporates family background and self-processes in more complex models of educational outcomes may advance our understanding of the interaction of these important antecedent variables.

Family Background and Social Capital

In both elaborations of the social capital concept, there is a positive relationship between family background and social capital. In Coleman’s work and subsequent work using his social capital concept, family background is conceived as one major indicator of social capital. This is due to the focus on forms of social capital, including family structure. However, despite this acknowledgement of family resources as social capital, work based on Coleman’s concept often fails to contextualize or interrogate the relationship between the two, exhorting that anyone can have social capital with the right family forms. Bourdieu theorizes that social capital is as unequally distributed as financial capital, and is fairly deterministic in the sense that lower family resources are related to lower levels of social capital. Recent work by other theorists (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 2001b) has characterized the relationship as jagged and more complicated.

Most of the educational research on social capital incorporates family background variables, mainly as control variables. DuBois (2001) indicates that social capital might be viewed as a component of family background. However, based on the work of the theorists mentioned above, it might be more appropriate to view family background or parental resources as one component of potential social capital. This static or dormant form of social capital has the potential to help the individual obtain benefits. Qualitative research on social class and social capital, which is mainly informed by Bourdieu’s framework, has illustrated the differential experiences of working class or minority
students and their families as compared to middle class or dominant culture students and families. These studies highlight the process of social capital mobilization as “moments of inclusion and exclusion” (Lareau & Horvat, 1999) where individual actions and interactions can mediate the effects of static social capital indicators such as family structure or resources.

**Family Background and Achievement**

Extensive research has been conducted on the influence of parental socioeconomic status (SES) on the academic achievement of students, as mentioned at the beginning of this section. SES is usually comprised of parental education and occupation measures and family income, and in some cases, only mother’s education and father’s occupation. Consistently, SES explains a statistically and practically significant proportion of variance in academic achievement. Based on this well-known fact, studies on academic achievement control for socioeconomic status in order to explain the influence of particular factors over and above SES.

**Self-processes and Social Capital**

While previous research has not explicitly explored the links between self-processes and social capital, there are intuitive connections between the concepts. Thus, we studied the relationship of self-esteem and trust to network support and network qualities in the pilot study for this project. We hypothesized that network qualities and network processes would explain a significant amount of variance in both self-esteem and trust. While network qualities (e.g., size, heterogeneity) taken as a group did not explain significant amounts of variance in self-esteem and trust, network processes (e.g., academic support, interpersonal support) fared better. For self-concept, the only significant process was academic support provided by the network, whereas for trust, both emotional and interpersonal support were significant. These results suggest that actualized social capital may be related to self-processes, although it is unclear whether the relationship is unidirectional or reciprocal. Again, intuitively, we propose that self-processes and network processes may create a feedback loop where high levels of support affect enhanced self-processes and vice versa.
The relationship between ethnic identity and social capital is not clearly interpretable based on the available research. While maintenance of ethnic behaviors may be viewed as a form of social capital in some contexts (Bankston & Zhou, 1995), an other-group orientation and inclusion of non-ethnic resources in the informational network is associated with greater social capital in school settings (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). This relationship deserves further research attention.

Self-processes and Achievement

Previous research on the effects of self-concept on academic achievement is inconclusive. Self-concept and/or self-esteem have been emphasized as desirable educational outcomes in their own right, and in turn as essential to academic success. Several studies have explored the connections between ethnic identity and achievement. In the view of schooling as cultural reproduction, the maintenance of ethnic identity (other than identification with the dominant European-American culture) is incompatible with achievement in mainstream institutions. This relationship needs to be much more seriously explored to understand how ethnic identity as a self-process, rather than the social address of race/ethnicity, plays out in school experiences and outcomes.

Engagement in School

Although school engagement has been a topic of interest to educational researchers since the early 1980's, the concept has not been consistently conceptualized and operationalized in educational research. The interest in engagement is related, at least in part, to the popularity of constructivist learning theories (Cothran & Ennis, 2000) and to the effective schools movement. Both affective and behavioral components of the educational experience have been studied empirically under the concept of engagement (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001). Early studies were focused on behavioral indicators of disengagement with school, including absenteeism, low-level participation, and participation in negative activities. Until the mid-80's, engagement was not studied directly, rather inferred elliptically from indicators of disengagement. Theory, direct assessment tools, and systematic research were not yet developed to understand the concept of engagement (Mosher & McGowan, 1985).
Theoretical development of the concept of engagement received a great deal of attention in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Finn (1989) developed the participation-identification model to explain student dropout and withdrawal from school. At the same time, researchers from the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools (NCESS) and the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools (CORS) were studying the use of high school resources to improve student achievement through enhanced student engagement.

Since the completion of the NCESS and CORS projects, there has been little further conceptual development of engagement. Models of engagement developed by Finn (1989), Wehlage et al. (1989), and Newmann et al. (1992) emphasize both psychological or affective and behavioral dimensions to school engagement. Finn's (1989) model hypothesizes a direction between these dimensions (i.e., behavioral engagement leads to emotional engagement) whereas the other two models simply indicate that the two are highly related. Johnson et al. (2001) distinguish between the two components as conceptually different aspects of the educational experience. They label the affective component "school attachment"; the extent to which students feel embedded in the school community. They further distinguish attachment from valuing education or academic orientation (Crosnoe, 2001; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). The behavioral component represents true engagement or participation in school, through behaviors such as participation in discussion, attendance, completing homework, and extracurricular involvement.

**Engagement and Self-Processes**

Many models of engagement and achievement recognize the role of self in the process linking social context and outcomes. In research with elementary and high school students, perceived control and perceived competence demonstrated a direct effect on emotional and behavioral engagement (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990). Beliefs that one can do well in school appear, then, to be related to enhanced effort and persistence in schoolwork. In the pilot study for this project, we found significant direct effects of self-concept on academic orientation and academic effort (Singh, Dika, & Fikretoglu, 2002). Like many other relationships described in this review, this relationship requires further research attention to understand...
exactly how self-processes contribute to and interact with school engagement in the pursuit of desirable educational outcomes.

**Engagement and Social Capital**

Although the concepts of school engagement and social capital both gained currency in the early 1990's, very few studies incorporate both of these concepts. This is curious, particularly because both factors are proposed to counteract school dropout. A small group of studies has linked social capital and behavioral indicators of engagement, namely homework effort (Bankston & Zhou, 1995; Muller & Ellison, 2001), time spent studying (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997; Wright et al., 2001), and truancy and skipping (McNeal, 1999; Muller & Ellison, 2001).

In a recent volume on social capital, Lauglo (2000) examines the relationship between engagement and social capital. In research with Norwegian youth, he found that immigrant youth from developing countries displayed more positive engagement with school than ethnic Norwegians, evidenced in valuing school, accepting orderly learning conditions, prioritizing school work, and enjoying school. Over and above parental nationality, social capital indicators explain a significant amount of variance in valuing school and in positive behavior. Social capital in Lauglo’s study included indicators of cohesive family relations, parental monitoring, involvement and support of school, religious participation, and intensity of peer relations. When class and cultural capital were added to the model for each measure of engagement, no additional variance was explained. While Lauglo concludes that social capital "trumps" class and cultural capital in the explanation of school engagement, it is not clear that the amalgam of indicators used in the study indeed measure social capital. This is the endemic problem of social capital research, described more fully in the previous section.

The lack of research linking these two concepts is perhaps associated with increased attention on easily measurable and tangible educational outcomes. While both concepts may be perceived as resources for long-term learning, they lack the immediate gratification to which quantifiable test scores and attainment outcomes appeal.

**Engagement and Achievement**

In theory, higher levels of engagement lead to higher achievement. While several studies focus on relationships between engagement, achievement, and other factors (e.g.,
few studies focus specifically on the impact of engagement on achievement (Connell et al., 1994; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Singh, Granville, & Dika, 2002; Smerdon, 1999). Overall, studies have documented positive associations between engagement and achievement. Over and above background factors such as race, SES, gender, educational track, and family cultural capital, behavioral engagement explains a modest but significant amount of variance in school achievement (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Singh, Granville, & Dika, 2002; Smerdon, 1999). Smerdon (1999) notes that the weak relationship between engagement behaviors and achievement may be due to the use of measures of obvious or procedural engagement; such as attendance and completing homework; rather than in-depth psychological investment.

Engagement has a significant direct effect on achievement in path analyses of context, self, engagement, and achievement (Connell et al., 1994; Skinner et al., 1990). A couple of studies have used teacher-reported behaviors as indicators of engagement (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Skinner et al., 1990). Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) refer to teacher reports of hard work and attentiveness as micropolitical evaluative processes that have implications for students' school outcomes. Smerdon (1999) notes that conceptualizations of engagement generally focus attention on individual behaviors rather than educational processes as the cause of achievement.

The lack of empirical research relating engagement and achievement is a possible consequence of the current political emphasis on high-stakes testing and accountability. This emphasis has necessarily drawn educators' and researchers' attention away from the study of engagement. While engagement may be a much better predictor of lifelong learning and adaptability in a world where knowledge is dynamic and ever changing, narrowly defined indicators such as grades and standardized test scores have captured the imagination of politicians looking to evaluate the success of public education.

Educational Aspirations

Models of status attainment specify the educational and occupational attainments of parents as major determinants of their children's educational and occupational
attainments. The Wisconsin model of status attainment introduced social psychological variables; including adolescents' educational aspirations for themselves and the educational aspirations that their parents have for them; into the model as mediating factors. Early research used the terms "aspirations" and "expectations" interchangeably, whereas other authors have differentiated aspirations as abstract and hopeful and expectations as reasoned appraisal of personal chances (e.g., Agnew & Jones, 1988). The terms will be used interchangeably in this document.

Educational Aspirations and Family Background

Status attainment models often assume that educational aspirations are influenced by family background characteristics; that is, adolescents from a high socioeconomic background should have higher expectations than those from a low socioeconomic background. Previous research indicates that students living in rural, economically depressed areas of the United States have lower levels of educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment than their non-rural counterparts (Blackwell & McLaughlin, 1999; Roscigno & Crowley, 2001). Research also suggests that adolescents from low socioeconomic status families both perceive and achieve lower returns to education; that is, further education does not translate into a significantly improved standard of living (Blackwell & McLaughlin, 1999; Roscigno & Crowley, 2001). Blackwell and McLaughlin (1999) found that family background characteristics matter more to girls than boys when it comes to educational aspirations and eventual attainment.

In a pilot study for this project, Singh and Dika (2002) found that parents and students had uniformly high expectations for educational attainment across socioeconomic levels. That is, the majority of students and their parents expected that they would graduate from a four-year college program, and a significant group expected graduate program completion. This suggests that the link between social class and aspirations may be less deterministic than hypothesized in many status attainment models.

Educational Aspirations and Self-processes

Overall, existing research indicates there are positive links between self-processes and aspirations (e.g., Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprar, & Pastorelli, 2001; Sirin & Jackson, 2001; Young, 1997). Bandura et al. (2001) tested a structural model of sociocognitive
influences on career aspirations of young adolescents, and found that self-efficacy rather than academic achievement was the key determinant of career aspirations. Sirin and Jackson (2001) used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to examine the relationships between engagement, achievement, self-esteem, and aspirations of African American high school students, and found that self-esteem was linked with future educational aspirations. In Young's (1997) research with rural and urban high school students, self-concept had a direct effect on educational aspirations for both groups.

**Educational Aspirations and Social Capital**

As outlined in the previous section on social capital literature, previous research has indicated positive relationships between educational aspirations and both family and community social capital indicators. Parental expectations, parent-teen discussion about school, parent-school involvement, study resources in the home, and intergenerational closure are positively linked to educational aspirations (Muller & Ellison, 2001; Pribesh & Downey, 1999; Qian & Blair, 1999; Smith-Maddox, 2001). Relationships and activities outside the family, such as involvement in organizations (Pribesh & Downey, 1999) and peer group values (Muller & Ellison, 2001), are also positively linked to educational aspirations. In a study by Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995), higher educational aspirations were seen as a precursor to students seeking to include high status others in their informational network.

**Summary**

Far from being conclusive, existing educational research nevertheless provides some theoretical and empirical support for hypotheses about positive relationships among self-processes, social capital, and educational outcomes. The need for further exploration of the relationships among these variables is evident. The research has measured social capital mainly as social control rather than as social resources, and for the most part, has ignored the role of the adolescent as actor in maintaining and utilizing network resources. The intent in the proposed study is to utilize network measures of social capital; as both potential forms and actualized benefits of social capital; to examine the relationships among self-processes, social capital, and educational outcomes.