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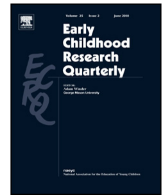

The emergence of social capital in low-income Latino elementary schools

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ABSTRACT

Scholars suggest that racial/ethnic and class disparities in school-based social capital contribute to educational inequalities. Previous studies demonstrate that social capital (relations of trust, mutual expectations, and shared values) between parents and schools supports children's development. Yet we know little about the emergence of social capital, that is, the processes through which it develops. In this study, we explore mechanisms of social capital emergence in predominantly low-income Latino school communities. We draw data from an experimental study that manipulated social capital through an after-school family engagement program. Based on interviews and focus groups with participating parents, teachers, and program staff in two elementary schools, we identified four types of interactions that act as mechanisms of social capital emergence: (1) responsive communication; (2) reciprocal communication; (3) shared experiences; and (4) institutional linkage. The article connects these mechanisms to theoretically linked sources of social capital and discusses implications for theory and practice.

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Introduction

Community engagement and interaction with key social institutions shape family functioning and individual outcomes in important ways (Mancini, Bowen, & Martin, 2005). A growing body of research suggests that social capital among parents and between parents and teachers supports children's educational development (Dika & Singh, 2002). By social capital, we mean relations of trust, mutual expectations, and shared values (Coleman, 1988; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999). Such relations have value for individuals because they provide an avenue for information exchange and facilitate the establishment and enforcement of social norms (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Social capital between families and schools may be particularly consequential for children's development because it bridges two main social contexts in which children learn and grow (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Although the concept of social capital has been widely used in social science research, less attention has been paid to how it develops. It is important to gain insight into this process because it may be implicated in educational inequality (Bourdieu, 1986; Kao, 2004). Minority students and those with fewer socioeconomic resources, who tend to be disadvantaged in academic contexts, are also more likely to face barriers to building strong school-based relationships (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2011). Whereas the networks of White and middle-class families tend to include more professionals and experts, Latino and working-class or poor families typically have stronger familial ties but are more isolated from schools (Gamoran, Turley, Turner, & Fish, 2012). Hence, we know that social capital varies across social class and racial/ethnic groups, but the process of social capital emergence that may explain this variation remains an unopened black box.

This paper provides an important first step toward better understanding social capital emergence. To do this, we analyze data from an experimental study of an after-school program designed to build relationships in the school community. We explore how participants developed relationships in the program, and how this relationship development connects to extant theory on social capital emergence. Our data come from focus groups and interviews with parents, teachers, and program staff in two predominantly low-income Latino elementary schools.

We find evidence of four types of social interactions through which social capital emerges: responsive communication, reciprocal communication, shared experiences, and institutional linkage. These constitute the mechanisms that gave rise to social capital

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within the context of the after-school program and the targeted schools. As such, our findings not only inform our understanding of social capital more broadly, but also specifically how schools can structure interactions among parents and between parents and schools to facilitate trust, mutual expectations, and shared values in communities where school-based social capital tends to be weak.

What is social capital?

Researchers across the social sciences have employed the concept of social capital to understand and examine a variety of social phenomena; however, its definition remains actively debated. Both Coleman (1988, 1990) and Bourdieu (1986) define social capital in terms of the resources it provides. For Coleman, "social capital is defined by its function" in that it encompasses aspects of social networks that aid individual action by providing access to otherwise unattainable resources (1988, p. 98). He also proposes three main forms: levels of trust, as evidenced by mutual obligations and shared expectations; information channels; and norms and effective sanctions that promote the common good. Bourdieu (1986) similarly describes social capital as "the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 248).

To understand and empirically examine its development, it is necessary to conceptually distinguish social capital from its causes and effects (Durlauf, 1999; Portes, 1998). Thus, rather than defining the concept in terms of its function, as Coleman does, we focus on "the resource potential of personal and organizational networks" (Sampson et al., 1999, p. 635). We view social capital not as an individual characteristic but as a property of networks, a collection of relational qualities, through which individuals can access resources (Bowen, Martin, Mancini, & Nelson, 2000; Carbonaro, 1999; Sampson, 1999). We expect that trusting relationships characterized by shared beliefs and expectations facilitate feelings of social belonging, information sharing, and the enforcement of common norms (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Therefore, we agree that levels of trust, mutual expectations, and shared values in a network are indicators of social capital (Coleman, 1988), but we contend that information channels and effective norms are two of its potential effects. Thus, we define social capital as trust, mutual expectations, and shared values embedded in social networks, as these are the relational qualities that influence the ability with which individuals can access resources through their social connections.

Although we believe that social capital can benefit families, we recognize that it is neither inherently good nor bad because the content and use of resources accessed through it will vary across contexts (Sampson et al., 1999). Even when social capital promotes desirable outcomes in children, its social functions are complex if not conflicting. On the one hand, relations of trust, mutual expectations, and shared values can serve as a public good by increasing access to childrearing resources like information, assistance, social support, and consistent norms in a community (Coleman, 1990; Sampson, 1999). Yet the opportunity and ability to build such relations also differs systematically across families as a function of social background (Lin, 2000). Bourdieu (1986) goes so far as to label social capital a form of symbolic power wielded by the dominant class to maintain advantage and reproduce social inequalities. Hence, while social capital has the potential to serve as a resource for all parents, the processes through which it typically develops likely exacerbate social inequalities among families.

Social capital in educational context

Measures of school-based social capital have been positively linked to various academic outcomes, including children's attitudes and behaviors, achievement, and attainment (Dika & Singh, 2002; Woolley & Bowen, 2007; Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009). These effects manifest through various mechanisms. For example, greater connectivity between parents and school staff promotes mutual awareness of children's needs, provides an avenue for parents to advocate for their children, and may encourage teachers to amplify their efforts with particular students (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007). In addition, families with strong school-based parent networks can draw on these relationships as a resource for addressing day-to-day challenges associated with child development and educational success (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003).

Contemporary scholars argue that social capital holds promise for understanding educational inequality, in particular when attention is given to "issues of power and domination" in interactions between individuals and institutions (Dika & Singh, 2002, pp. 45–46; Noguera, 2004). The unequal distribution of school-based social capital by race/ethnicity and social class reflects patterns of inequality in academic outcomes (Bankston & Zhou, 2002; Kao, 2004; Ream & Rumberger, 2008). Limited access to school-based social capital may perpetuate Latino educational disadvantage (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2011). When Latino children's academic resources include social support from parents, teachers, and peers, they tend to exhibit higher levels of school engagement, academically-oriented behaviors, and positive attitudes toward learning (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Garcia-Reid, 2007; Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2005; Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowen, 2000). Yet low-income, Latino, and immigrant parents often experience cultural dissonance and discomfort in interactions with their children's schools (Ramirez, 2003; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Consideration of both Latino families' access to social capital and the processes through which it emerges in school networks may provide much needed insight into how best to structure schooling conditions to promote achievement for this historically disadvantaged group.

Theoretical insights into the emergence of social capital

Despite a long history and continued efforts to advance social capital theory, surprisingly little attention has been paid to understanding how it develops. All theories assume that social interactions must occur in order for social capital to arise. But not all social interactions yield social capital, and the specific mechanisms through which it is created remain in doubt. Coleman characterizes the development of social capital as a "prototypical micro-to-macro transition" that occurs "under certain conditions" and through "purposive actions at the micro level" (1990, p. 244). Recent theories of social organization similarly assert that both structural features of communities and social processes shape community social capital (Mancini et al., 2005; Small, 2002, 2009). Therefore, we distinguish two elements of social capital emergence: interactional processes among members of a social network, and structural conditions that shape those interactional processes.

Structural conditions refer to the "interconnecting parts, a framework, organization, configuration, and composition" of a social network and the social context(s) in which it is embedded (Mancini et al., 2005, p. 573). Social capital accumulation is responsive to the structural characteristics of both the local network (e.g., among parents in a school) and the communities and institutions that make up the larger social context (e.g., surrounding neighborhoods, school district, state or national policy context) (Sampson, 1999; Small, 2009). Coleman's (1988, 1990) foundational theory provides examples of structural conditions he expected to facilitate its emergence but not how these actually produce social capital. For example, he argues that social capital is more likely to develop in networks that are stable over time and those

characterized by social closure (including "intergenerational closure," or the extent to which parents know the parents of their children's peers). However, we are left to assume that networks built under these conditions are strong in social capital, without knowing how this comes to be. Likewise, whereas empirical research has linked structural conditions such as intergenerational closure and network stability to social cohesion and individual outcomes (Carbonaro, 1999; Sampson, 1988), we know less about the mechanisms through which these generate social capital (Sampson, 1999; Small, 2002).

What types of individual actions and social interactions produce social capital in the community? This paper focuses on this second element of social capital emergence: the mechanisms that generate trust, mutual expectations, and shared values in school communities. These interactional processes encompass "a course of action, functions, operations, and methods of working" among members of formal and informal networks (Mancini et al., 2005, p. 573). Theoretical and empirical work on social exchange, social integration, and community social organization provides some insight into the potential mechanisms of social capital emergence. Collectively, these literatures propose various social-psychological motivations that encourage actors to participate in social networks and develop trust, mutual expectations, and shared values in communities.

Portes (1998) identifies four specific motivational "sources" of social capital in social networks: *value introjection*, *bounded solidarity*, *reciprocity exchanges*, and *enforceable trust* (pp. 7–8). Value introjection results when people internalize others' values after being exposed to them, which in turn promotes shared values within a network. Enforceable trust arises when mechanisms of compliance enable members of a social network to trust others in the group. In particular, the "power of the community" provides assurance that obligations will be honored because the community is able to impose them (e.g., by threatening to exclude rule-breakers) or guarantee them (e.g., by promising the group's respect or affirmation). Bounded solidarity is a sense of group membership or 'we-ness' that grows from shared circumstances or experiences. Whether adverse or favorable, common conditions can produce social cohesion and define the limits of the community by distinguishing 'us' from 'them.' Finally, reciprocity exchanges refer to the norms and obligations that develop through social exchange. Unlike negotiated market exchange, social exchange occurs without a specific repayment schedule and involves a currency of exchange that is general rather than strictly fiscal, for example including social support, information, or assistance. Repeated give-and-take actions create an environment where people feel a general sense of obligation to one another and believe that debts will be repaid, which allows for the development of trust and shared expectations.

According to Portes (1998), these sources of social capital motivate individuals to share resources with other members of a social network. That is, people make resources available to others in a social network when it is the expectation that others hold for them and which they have internalized (value introjection), when they feel a sense of connection to others (bounded solidarity), when they feel that they must repay debts or that others will surely repay theirs (reciprocity exchanges), or when they are made to do so (enforceable trust). These motivational sources provide insight into the types of social environments that yield social capital. However, it remains unclear what specific interactional processes—that is, what mechanisms—give rise to these motivational sources, and thus to social capital.

To understand how social capital emerges in school communities, a more complete exploration is needed: one which not only links motivational sources of social capital to effects of social capital (as in Portes' [1998] theoretical exploration), but which also explores what types of social interactions lead to these sources, and what structural conditions promote those mechanisms. In this paper, we draw on interview and focus group data that offer insight into changes in real-life social networks in predominantly low-income Latino school communities. We examine how trust and shared expectations and values developed in two schools through participation in an after-school program.

An intervention approach to studying social capital emergence

As a naturally-occurring process, social capital emergence is difficult for researchers to 'spot' in context. A program that effectively induces change in school social networks provides an opportunity for researchers to examine how relationships are built. Given the difficulty of trying to capture social capital development as it naturally occurs, we instead take advantage of data collected in a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of an after-school program known as Families and Schools Together (FAST). The experiment utilized the program to manipulate social capital in the school community.

Description of the FAST intervention

FAST is an after-school program designed to promote healthy child development by empowering parents, increasing parental involvement in the school and wider community, and reducing stress, social isolation, and family conflict (McDonald, 2008). FAST consists of an eight-week program of weekly multi-family group meetings (FAST Nights), followed by two years of monthly parent-led meetings. In this paper, we focus on the FAST Nights, which last about two and a half hours each and are held in the evening at the school. The whole family is invited to attend, and families experience the program in groups ('hubs') of about eight to twelve families. Sessions are led by a trained team of local community members, including at least one school employee. Additional school personnel are invited to observe or volunteer at FAST Nights, for example by supervising children while parents engage in adult-only discussions.

FAST Nights incorporate twelve core activities that work in confluence to engage families with each other and with school personnel by structuring interactions in ways known to facilitate social bonding. These activities were designed on the basis of family systems theory, social-ecological theory, family therapy techniques, delinquency prevention strategies, and research on group dynamics and community development (McDonald, Billingham, Conrad, Morgan, & Payton, 1997). Around one-third of the core activities target relationships within families, while two-thirds center on building and strengthening school-based networks. Activities include participatory music, a family meal, family games, and a parent support group (see Table 1, for a brief description of each FAST core activity; for an in-depth description of the program components, see Kratochwill, McDonald, Levin, Bear-Tibbetts, & Demaray, 2004).

The FAST program is also designed to address some of the barriers to involvement typically faced by low-income, minority, and immigrant parents (McDonald et al., 1997). These include inflexible work schedules, transportation or childcare needs, lack of information about opportunities, restricted access to the school building or school personnel, absence of a common spoken language or translators, and feeling unwelcome or unwanted at the school (Lamb-Parker et al., 2001; Lareau, 1987; Ramirez, 2003; Williams & Sánchez, 2013). Outreach efforts to publicize and invite families to the program are comprehensive and include visits to families' homes. The provision of childcare and a free meal also helps address needs that might otherwise prevent families from attending school events. The program staff is also culturally representative of the school population, for example reflecting its racial/ethnic or

Table 1
Description of FAST core activities.

Family Flag (20 min) and Family Hellos (5 min): At the first FAST Night, each family works together to create a small flag to place on their family table. Parents direct the process and ensure that each family member adds to the flag. In subsequent weeks, these flags designate family tables, from where families introduce themselves to the larger group at the start of each session.

Family Music (10 min): Families sing the FAST song and other songs that families are invited to share and teach to each other.

Family Meal (20 min): Each family shares a meal at their table. Parents direct their children to serve them first before serving themselves. The main dish is planned and prepared by the host family for that week. The host family is thanked openly by all participating families at the end of the night. The family who won the lottery the previous week serves as the host family the following week and receives money and support needed to provide the main dish.

Scribbles (12 min): In this drawing and talking game, each member of the family creates a drawing then family members ask questions about what others drew and imagined. Parents are in charge of enforcing a turn-taking structure and ensuring positive feedback.

Feeling Charades (12 min): Parents and children take turns acting out feelings depicted on a drawn card while other members of the family attempt to guess the emotion. The parent is in charge of ensuring turn-taking and facilitates discussion of emotions.

Kid's Time (75 min): Children from different families engage together in supervised developmentally-appropriate organized activities without their parents.

Parent Time (55 min): Parents connect with one another through one-on-one adult conversation ("buddy time") followed by larger-group parent discussions ("parent group") facilitated by a member of the FAST Team. Parents direct the topics of conversation.

Special Play (15–20 min): Parent and child engage in child-directed one-on-one play. The parent is coached to follow the child's lead and not to teach, direct, or judge the child in any way. FAST personnel do not engage with children but offer support to parents through discrete coaching.

Lottery (5 min): Each week, one family wins a basket filled with prizes specifically chosen for that family (valuing up to $50). The winning family is showcased during closing circle. Each family is guaranteed to win once, a secret known by parents but not children.

Closing Circle and Rain (5 min): At the conclusion of every FAST Night, families and FAST Team members create a circle and share announcements. Rain is a non-verbal game requiring turn-taking and close attention. It is designed to visually and actively reinforce status as a group.

Serious Family Communication: In week six, a special guest presents on a topic relevant to families. Example topics include early-childhood pregnancy, gangs, drugs, and violence.

Family Graduation: At the last Fast Night, a ceremony is held to commemorate completion of the program. This is a special event where each family is announced in front of the group, and school representatives are invited to participate. FAST Team members write affirming messages to parents, and families often dress up, receive diplomas, wear graduation caps, and take photos.

Note: Although up to 60% of program components may be locally adapted, the information in this table reflects guidelines provided in the CFS study FAST implementation training manual (McDonald, 2008).

language composition, and the team works collaboratively to adapt the program as needed (up to 60% of the components) to ensure cultural sensitivity to the specific school/community context (Kratochwill et al., 2004).

FAST has been successfully replicated in urban and rural settings within 45 U.S. states and multiple countries, as well as with participants from diverse racial/ethnic and social class backgrounds (McDonald et al., 2006). Four previous independent RCTs (see Table 2, for details) demonstrate that FAST engages socially marginalized families with schools, improves academic performance, reduces risky behavior, and plays a role in preventing special education referrals for participating children (Kratochwill et al., 2004; Kratochwill, McDonald, Levin, Scalia, & Coover, 2009; Layzer, Goodson, Creps, Werner, & Bernstein, 2001; McDonald et al., 2006).

FAST and social capital emergence

Although the program was not specifically developed to build social capital, we argue that FAST provides an ideal platform for studying its emergence. According to the program developer and colleagues, FAST activities focus on "fostering feelings of affiliation, mutual respect, and reciprocity among the various players in children's family, neighborhood, school, and community environments" (McDonald et al., 1997, p. 141). Strategies include opening and closing routines to emphasize the group's status as a bounded community, singing and games to build unity through shared positive experiences, and adult-only discussion time for parents to build support networks by sharing and listening about their lives. Moreover, FAST Team members are trained to ensure that families follow behavioral norms for participating in activities in ways that facilitate social bonding.

Previous studies indicate that FAST effectively intervenes on school-based social networks and is likely to induce the social-capital-generating processes in which we are interested. A study of 1988–1994 parent participants in Madison, Wisconsin finds evidence of long-term positive program impacts on supportive relationships, feelings of affiliation among parents, and partnership in the school community (McDonald et al., 1997). An interview-based study of participants at a national conference for FAST program staff also explicitly concludes that social capital is a key outcome of the program (Terrion, 2006). Exploring the FAST effects most salient to program stakeholders and staff, including former graduates of the program, the study finds consensus around the theme of FAST contributing to community building, social connectedness, and parental involvement in schools. Terrion concludes that FAST helps develop school-based social capital through "bridging" among participating families and "linkages" created between families and the institutional agents involved in the program (i.e., community agency members and school staff) (2006, p. 171).

Finally, studies based on the same RCT from which we draw our data indicate that FAST increased social capital in predominantly low-income Latino elementary school communities. After the intervention, parents in treatment schools knew more parents on average and were more likely to share expectations with other parents in their schools as compared to parents in control schools (Gamoran et al., 2012; Turley, Gamoran, Turner, & Fish, 2012). In addition, FAST was most effective in connecting the group historically most isolated from the school, the least acculturated Latino families (Valdez, Mills, Bohlig, & Kaplan, 2013). While these papers use rigorous quantitative methods to examine whether the program impacts school-based networks, they do not explore the processes by which the program achieves these effects. Consequently, while providing strong evidence that FAST builds school-based social capital, prior studies have not examined the mechanisms of social capital emergence nor utilized qualitative data collected from families about their experiences with the intervention.

Table 2
Summary of prior experimental evaluations of FAST.

Citation: Author (year)	Region	Sample focus	Sample size	Study consent rate	FAST graduation rate	Study focus	Study findings: FAST effects
Layzer et al. (2001)	South	Black, Inner-city	9 schools; 400 families	64%	53%	Targeted 2nd–4th grade children with behavioral and academic problems	Reduced children's externalizing problems and increased their social skills; increased parent volunteer work and leadership involvement in the school
Kratochwill et al. (2004)	Midwest	Native American, Rural	3 schools; 100 families	100%	80%	Targeted K-3rd grade children with the goal of preventing school failure and dropout	Reduced children's problem behavior, aggression, and social conflict; increased children's teacher-reported academic competence
McDonald et al. (2006)	Midwest	Black and Latino, Inner-city	10 schools; 485 families	89%	78%	Targeted at-risk low-income 2nd grade children with the goal of preventing drug abuse	Reduced aggressive and delinquent behaviors, particularly among Latino children; increased children's teacher-reported academic competence
Kratochwill et al. (2009)	Midwest	Universal, Metro-area	8 schools; 134 families	100%	90%	Targeted K-3rd graders at high risk for special education services or with emotional disabilities with the goal of preventing special education referrals	Reduced special education referrals, aggression, and somatic complaints among children

Method

Children, families, and schools study

Our data come from the first year of the Children, Families, and Schools (CFS) study, a cluster-randomized controlled trial of the FAST intervention targeted to first graders and their families in 52 low-income schools in Phoenix, Arizona, and San Antonio, Texas. The study was implemented in partnership with local social service agencies in each city and sought to test the causal effects of social capital on early educational outcomes among predominantly low-income Latino students (Gamoran, McDonald, & Turley, 2005). To be eligible for the study, schools were required to have student bodies that were at least 25% free or reduced-price lunch eligible. Half of the schools in each city were randomly assigned to receive the FAST program while the other half served as controls. Given the large number of schools participating in the study, a staggered implementation approach was used. Schools were randomly assigned to one of two consecutive cohorts, beginning the study during the 2008/2009 or the 2009/2010 school year. Within each cohort, schools were divided among three seasons (fall, winter, and spring). Appendix A provides additional details on study recruitment at the family level and the implementation of the FAST program in treatment schools.

Data sources

We analyze data drawn from interviews and focus groups conducted during the first year of the CFS study at two randomly selected treatment schools. In each school, CFS staff conducted semi-structured in-person focus groups and interviews with study participants representing a range of experiences in the program. In this paper, we focus on three types of respondents: (1) "high attending" parents, who went to the majority of the FAST Nights offered at the school, (2) "FAST Team members," who implemented the program at the school, and (3) first grade teachers. The purpose of targeting high attending parents and FAST Team members was to consider multiple perspectives of the program's impacts on children, families, and interactional processes in the school community. The rationale for interviewing first grade teachers was to assess their perceptions of how the program impacted students, families, and parent–teacher relationships.

Interviews lasted 30–60 minutes while focus groups lasted 60–90 minutes, and both were conducted in English or Spanish, according to respondent preference. These occurred in person, with the exception of one teacher interview which was conducted over the phone. Separate protocols were developed for each type of respondent. Each protocol included four to six standardized open-ended questions about participant experiences with the FAST program and its impacts (see Table 3).

Sample

We randomly selected two FAST schools (one from each city) for qualitative data collection from the four treatment schools in the winter 2009 study cycle: Mount Dana Elementary in San Antonio and Brazos Elementary in Phoenix (school names have been changed). To provide insight into the study context, school profiles are provided as online supplementary materials (see Online Appendices A and B). In these schools, recruitment of families into the CFS study began in January 2009, and the local service agencies subsequently ran the eight weekly FAST sessions. After the final session, CFS staff recruited focus group and interview participants using purposive and snowball sampling techniques with assistance from the local FAST Teams and partnering social service agencies (see Appendix B, for a description of the sampling procedures).

Our analytic sample includes three focus groups and one interview with high-attending parents ($n = 15$), two focus groups with FAST Team members ($n = 12$), and two interviews with teachers ($n = 2$), for a total of 8 focus groups or interviews with 29 persons. Spanish-speaking as well as English-speaking parents were targeted, given that parental language dominance may have implications for both program attendance and parent experiences in the program. However, the majority of respondents were interviewed in English, including 80% ($n = 12$) of the high-attending parents.

Table 3
Interview and focus group question protocol.

High Attending Parents
(1) How did you become involved in the FAST program? What made you decide to join FAST?
(2) What was it like for your family to be in FAST?
(3) What components of FAST stand out in your mind? What was your favorite part about FAST? What was your least favorite part about FAST?
(4) What impact, if any, has FAST had on your lives/family/school/community?

FAST Team Members
(1) Please describe in detail your experiences with FAST at [school name]. How did you become involved in FAST?
(2) What aspects of FAST stand out in your mind at this school? What were some challenges you experienced and how did your team address these challenges?
(3) How could recruitment, coordination, and implementation be improved in the future?
(4) What was the impact of FAST on parents and the school? What was the impact on the surrounding community?
(5) What were some things you got out of FAST that you weren't anticipating?
(6) What are some of your ideas about continuing FAST in your school (logistically and financially)?

First Grade Teachers
(1) What strategies were used in recruiting FAST participants and how were they effective or not effective?
(2) How was school personnel involved in FAST? What were some positive and negative examples of their involvement?
(3) What did you think about the resources needed to run FAST?
(4) If any, what were some problems with the implementation of FAST?
(5) What was it like for your school to be in FAST? What was the impact on the school/families/surrounding community?
(6) What would it be like to continue FAST in your school?

According to self-reported racial/ethnic background on written questionnaires, more than 75% of the parents in the focus group/interview sample self-identified as "Hispanic or Latino," and nearly 80% were female. As indicated by site visit reports, FAST team members were similarly predominantly Latino and female. At each school, the participating team members included parents from the school who did not have a child in first grade, parents with children at other schools in the community, and the school representative. Team members from both English- and Spanish-dominant hubs (the latter of whom were bilingual) participated in the focus groups. The first grade teachers were both female, with one identifying as Hispanic/Latino and the other as White.

Analysis procedures

All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded then transcribed and translated into English when necessary. This analysis focused mainly on responses to three questions: (a) What was it like for your family/school to be in FAST; (b) What components of FAST stand out in your mind; and (c) What impact, if any, has FAST had on your lives (see Online Appendix C, for how the question phrasing varied by respondent type). The questions intentionally used broad wording to allow participants to identify factors most salient to their FAST experience, and to avoid leading questions. While these questions do not directly ask about social capital development, as detailed in this section, we analyzed the data for evidence of parent–parent and parent–school relationship changes related to aspects of FAST, sources of social capital as outlined by Portes (1998), and social capital, which then allowed us to identify previously unknown mechanisms of social capital emergence. After reviewing the transcripts, our analysis proceeded in four stages: data reduction through focused coding, data display, data reduction through inductive coding, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The first data reduction stage consisted of coding the data relevant to a pre-determined conceptual framework so we could then identify patterns of social capital emergence in later more inductive analysis. The transcript data were imported into the NVIVO qualitative software program (QSR International Pty Ltd, Version 8.0, 2006). We conducted focused coding by developing a preliminary coding scheme, based on prior theory and research, consisting of the "FAST components," "sources," and "social capital" portions of the conceptual model shown in Fig. 1. This yielded over 30 descriptive and interpretive codes, where *descriptive codes* are used to group text into descriptive categories that closely reflect participants' own words, and *interpretive codes* are more inferential (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57). The descriptive codes in our preliminary coding scheme identified data selections about different components of the FAST program, such as Parent Time or Family Flag (see Table 1, for additional components), and types of relationships (e.g., among parents vs. between parents and school personnel). The interpretive codes indicated social-psychological sources of social capital (i.e., bounded solidarity, value introjection, reciprocity exchanges, and enforceable trust) and evidence of social capital (i.e., trust, shared values, and mutual expectations).

In the second stage of analysis, "data display," we created a "thematic conceptual matrix" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 131). We plotted the descriptive codes indicating FAST components by the four interpretive codes denoting sources of social capital. We then organized coded data selections into the chart to help us visualize intersections in the data between aspects of FAST and sources of social capital, and to help identify key patterns or relationships between them.

We then moved to our third stage of coding: data reduction through inductive coding. New themes were explored through open-coding in which researchers added *pattern codes* to the coding scheme. Of the three types of codes used, pattern codes are the most inferential and are used to identify patterns, relationships, or explanations in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Pattern codes were identified by exploring the data for new themes relevant to social capital emergence that could not be explained by prior theory. Specifically, we examined coded selections where social capital sources (e.g., bounded solidarity) and FAST program components (e.g., parent time) intersected and looked for evidence of mechanisms of social capital emergence; that is, we examined the data for evidence of what interactional processes, conditioned by the structure of program components, appeared to generate the sources of social capital. Next, the authors met to share new pattern codes and reach consensus on their definitions. We agreed on four new codes: responsive communication, reciprocal communication, shared experience, and institutional linkage. Each transcript was then independently coded by two authors using the final coding scheme of descriptive codes, interpretive codes, and pattern codes.

Lastly, we moved to the "conclusion drawing and verification stage" where all four authors met to discuss disagreements between coders and reach agreement on coded units, resulting in complete agreement between the four coders (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12; Terrion, 2006). To better ensure the

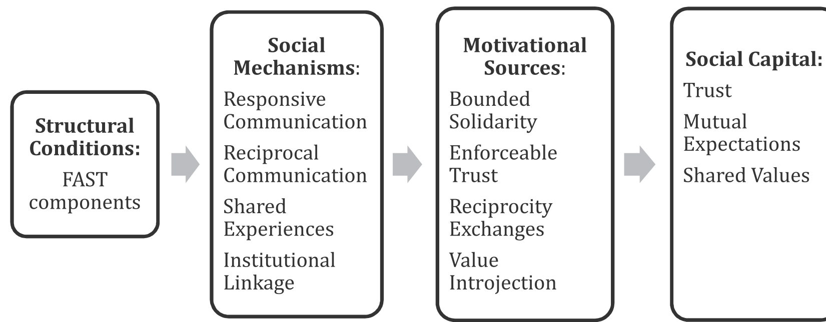

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework for the emergence of social capital through FAST.

reliability and validity of our themes, we also employed triangulation; we coded our data making note of the extent to which different types of respondents (i.e., parents, teachers, or FAST team members) corroborated or went against the statements of others. We did not find evidence of contradictory statements relevant to the codes we identified across the different types of respondents. Finally, to determine the theoretical implications of the findings, we then compared the resultant codes to an interdisciplinary literature review (summarized above in the sections on the definition of social capital, social capital in educational context, and theoretical insights into the emergence of social capital). Based on this review, we interpreted the four interactional processes summarized in the results section—responsive communication, reciprocal communication, shared experiences, and institutional linkage—as mechanisms of social capital emergence (as indicated in Fig. 1).

Results

Reports from parents, teachers, and program staff provided insight into how social capital emerged in relationships among parents at the school or between parents and school personnel through participation in the FAST program. Participant descriptions clustered around four interactional processes, which we interpret as mechanisms of social capital emergence in these schools: (1) responsive communication; (2) reciprocal communication; (3) shared experiences; and (4) institutional linkage. Below we use participants' own words to describe these mechanisms in detail and, as depicted in Fig. 1, to discuss how they are linked to bounded solidarity, reciprocity exchanges, and value introjection, all sources of social capital identified by Portes (1998).

Responsive communication

We define *responsive communication* as communication in which the listener(s) react readily and with interest or enthusiasm. This mechanism was salient in participant reflections about building relationships in the FAST program. Parents referenced opportunities for open communication with other parents mainly during the activity known as Parent Time, consisting of parent-led discussions both one-on-one and then as a larger group. For example, parents explained that, in these discussions, they "were able to be open and talk about anything," "to see what other parents are into," and to discuss issues such as, "Okay, what problems are we having?" or "What problems do any of the kids have?" Reports from parents and FAST Team members also portray parents as engaged listeners, who found the communication interesting and enjoyable and who helped each other solve problems that were raised. As one parent described it, ". . . if you were having a problem with a teacher, if you were having a problem with your kid, if you were having whatever it was, you talked about it and then you figured out how to do it." Parents also indicated that the discussions were a way to "actually be able to know more about the parents [at the school]," whom they sometimes see but ". . . we all go our different ways, you know what I mean? Who knows who that is? Where they come from and stuff" (original in Spanish).

Parent Time is designed to create a respectful environment where parents feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and stories. Our analysis suggests that this was achieved over time, as summarized in one parent's explanation that, "The first night was stressful because everyone was nervous. And the rest of the weeks it was very cool because we were all more comfortable. Everyone said what they wanted to say" (original in Spanish). A team member who facilitated the group discussion similarly described this development, saying, ". . . at first it was hard because I had to get them going, and I constantly felt like I was doing the talking." Eventually, however, ". . . watching them just pretty much come out of their shell and be more comfortable to say things that they wanted to say,. . . That was the best [part of FAST] for me."

For parents, we found evidence that Parent Time provides opportunities for responsive communication in which parents feel valued by others. For example, in describing a memorable one-on-one discussion with a particularly shy parent, one Team member recalled:

> . . . I thought I would be doing all the talking, but once I sat down and talked to her, she opened up and started talking and talking. . . about the things that she said she is trying to accomplish and what she is going to do for her family, and I was very impressed. I thought, "Wow, she is a neat lady, you know? She really is."

Parent reports similarly imply that they found a sympathetic audience in the group discussions, as seen in one parent's experience of telling the group about a bad interaction she had with a teacher. As she described it, "[The teacher] screamed at me in front of everybody. And she told me, 'Well, it's not my fault that your son doesn't listen or tells you what's going on.' So I started crying that day" (original in Spanish). This parent stated that she found it helpful to share this story with the group. Moreover, she expressed that, while she felt able to discuss such incidents in Parent Time, ". . . before FAST, I was unable to talk to other parents about problems that we were having in school" (original in Spanish). This suggests that, at least for some parents, the program may create a unique social space for responsive communication.

Parents further articulated that this process of sharing and being heard allowed them to identify common circumstances in their lives. As one parent explained, "Well, [FAST] let me realize that I wasn't the only one going through certain situations." Another parent reported that the group discussions revealed that ". . . a lot of parents were having the same problems." Commonalities

discovered through responsive communication became a basis for bounded solidarity among parents, as we see in the words of another parent graduate:

> . . . When FAST came, we [FAST parents] all got to spend a lot of time together and we all got to know each other. We got to know each other's kids and the parents, and everything that she [referencing another parent] was going through with her daughter, I was going through with my daughter. Everything that you were going through with your grandson, I was going through with my daughter, and it gave us all a chance to get together and kind of figure, not only as individual parents but, "Okay, how can we help our kid" as a group. I mean, we all can figure it out as a group. . .

This suggests that the shared circumstances that parents discovered through responsive communication during Parent Time fostered a sense of group membership among them. As one parent put it, "We all talked and became friends because we were all going through the similar things." In this case, the group's ability to agree on the important issues facing their children and how best to address them further suggests that their sense of solidarity promoted shared values. One reason for this may be that parents recognized the benefit of a unified voice. During one focus group's discussion of the group problem-solving that emerged through Parent Time, a parent reflected, ". . . as parents when we have individual concerns, well you can voice it, phone it, but as a group when we present it, there is power in numbers though. I think it's also a benefit."

The establishment of a parent network for collective problem solving also may have impacted how parents interacted with school personnel. For example, one teacher felt FAST boosted parents' confidence in approaching her. In discussing her rationale, she reflected:

> In the beginning it was kind of like, "She's the teacher." You know, 'cause there's this wall between teachers and parents. Nobody wants to say it. There is this wall that some teachers think they're better than the parent. And you know what? We're not. I'm just like you. Maybe I don't have children, but I'm just like you. . . They [parents] kind of put me on the pedestal, but then they don't want to talk to me when there is an issue. So being involved in FAST, you [parents] feel comfortable expressing yourself, and I think that's really helped. You know, not just with the child doing whatever you do and how you teach them to be, but I mean being comfortable talking to me and telling me.

She goes on to explain that, despite telling parents, "I'm here, I'm open" at the start of the school year, many parents were still tentative about approaching her. After attending FAST, she felt that parents were more communicative and felt more "free" with her. A similar assessment was offered by a parent, when asked about the program's impact on her relationship with the school. This mother reported that, before the program, she had "not had much relationship with the teacher" (original in Spanish) because the teacher spoke only English while the mother spoke only Spanish. However, she explained that, after FAST, "I was more confident in asking her how my girl is doing at school" (original in Spanish).

Reciprocal communication

A second mechanism of social capital emergence identified in our analysis is *reciprocal communication*, or communication that is characterized by give and take. For example, when discussing favorite aspects of the program in one focus group, a high-attending parent said:

> You talked about your things, your experiences. And from those families you get experience. . . Because you share with your children, share with families, with other people. Even with the FAST people, they would talk to us, and we would ask them too. For example, "How many kids do you have? How old are you? How long have you been married?" (original in Spanish).

Most often, participant comments reflecting reciprocal communication occurred with reference to the adult discussions which occurred during Parent Time.

Parent Time is designed to engage parents in reciprocal communication practices, which are to be encouraged and enforced by FAST Team members through modeling, verbal instructions, and coaching as needed. In describing her experience facilitating the larger group discussions, one FAST Team member recalled:

> I had some families that actually called me [at] my house and they said, "You mentioned to us during parent group something about different resources, and you mentioned counseling, and you mentioned this, and you mentioned that. What are the time frames for those?" And I let them know during parent group like, "We can help you with uniforms. We can help you with school supplies. We can help you with, you know, all kinds of good stuff." So they were absorbing it, and they'd call me at home.

This example illustrates how reciprocal communication occurred not only among parents but also between parents and program staff.

We found evidence that a more generalized context of reciprocity exchanges emerged from this reciprocal communication. There was consensus in the high-attending parent focus groups at both schools that the parent discussion time became a forum for the exchange of information, so that "FAST was a bridge to knowing what was going on." Parents gave examples such as learning about school events where "one [parent] knew, but nine of us didn't," identifying that "my kid's not the only one having the problem with the teacher," and gaining "information about things that were going on in our neighborhoods that were beneficial to us."

Parents and FAST Team members also indicated that these discussions provided a context for parents to develop social networks that they can draw on for social support and more concrete favors. A member of the FAST Team who facilitated the group discussions in one hub reported feeling that parents had "formed a little network" through the parent group so that "they call each other and talk to each other" outside the program. In describing how her relationship with another FAST parent had evolved after the program, a parent similarly explained that, "she called me for my birthday and, you know, Father's Day for my husband." This woman also laughingly explained that she had not known how to get to the focus group location and ". . . actually she was the one that helped me get here."

Another parent explained the impact of getting to know other parents through the discussions as follows:

> . . . When my baby was born, I couldn't go on Fridays because of my baby boy, and I could tell one of them [the other FAST parents], "Can you pick up my daughter? Can you bring her home?" You know what I mean? And if I hadn't met them [FAST parents], it would have been more trouble (original in Spanish).

This mother's willingness to entrust her child with the other parents also suggests that the relationships she developed with them were characterized by trust. This was further revealed in her discussion of another benefit of these relationships, which she described as follows:

> . . . if a parent sees that something is happening to your kid at school, maybe they can help him, because they say, "I know that one.". . . Or pass a complaint about your child, or a good note, or things like that. . . And if you don't know anyone, who is going to tell you? (original in Spanish).

She spoke of how this helped her with a recent incident, in which her daughter had reported some peers to the teacher for breaking a rule, causing the mother to feel "afraid" and "worried for days" about potential retaliation. In the end, however, she expressed that she "was comforted" by knowing that, thanks to FAST, other parents who know her were "probably watching that nothing happens to her" (original in Spanish).

Participating in reciprocal communication through Parent Time also appeared to expose parents to values about communication practices that they then internalized and carried over into other contexts. For example, in the following excerpt, a parent explains how she applied the communication practices she learned in Parent Time to her communication with school staff:

> You have to just learn to listen and to talk to them [school staff] and you have to slow it down a little bit and try and understand what they're saying. It [FAST] really taught a lot of us communication with our teachers, with our kids, with the FAST Team, with our principals, with everything.

If this style of communication is preferred by school personnel, then adopting the interactional style modeled and structured by FAST would promote shared expectations between parents and the school staff. At the same time, even if the school did not prefer this style of communication, this example suggests that parents' sense of shared expectations is enhanced. Either way, it illustrates how parents may adopt ideas about how to communicate with others in ways that support strengthened relationships between families and schools.

Shared experiences

We found evidence that FAST also helped strengthen solidarity among parents at the school by engaging them in shared experiences. *Shared experiences* are encounters, circumstances, or other occurrences, either adverse or favorable, that are communal, collective, or cooperative in nature. Parents commented on many aspects of the program, in which they jointly participated as a group, that they found "fun," "exciting," and memorable. One parent explained that FAST became such a special occasion for her family that her children would get dressed up "like they were going out to a big event." Parent Time also created a shared experience that was unique for many parents who expressed that, typically, they don't get much time to talk with other adults "without having the children, you know, pulling and tabbing and tugging and stuff like that." High-attending parents indicated that this bounded space promoted a sense of solidarity among parents. As one parent described it, "We all talked about whatever was on our minds or whatever, and it was just going to be just for us to hear, no one else." Another parent explained that "you get to know more people" because "you were in FAST and you start talking; you have something in common with that person" (original in Spanish).

We also found evidence that FAST created meaningful experiences shared by parents and school personnel. FAST brought parents to the school, which they reported increased their direct and indirect contact with school staff, who attended FAST Nights as volunteers, team members, or even participants. When discussing the importance of the school's involvement in FAST, a teacher who was also on the FAST Team at one school lamented, "I would have felt so left out if I wouldn't have been a part of this [the program]."

Many parents revealed that recognizing school staff from FAST sessions helped them feel "more familiar" and "friendly" with staff and more "comfortable approaching" them. The following words of a participating parent provide insight into this process:

> . . . It [FAST] helped you to get to know a lot of the staff. I know before I wouldn't go to the school really,. . . like every time I'd go I was like, "Oh god. I have to go to a parent conference," or it was just interaction like that. And after this FAST program, you get to know everybody and you feel more comfortable going and talking to them about, like asking them, "Is my child doing okay?" Or, "Do they need help in a certain subject?" It makes it a little bit more open. . . Just getting to be around them more, and I guess it made me feel like they were taking an interest in my child and it wasn't just, you know, they weren't just saying, "Oh, well she's failing—it's something that you're doing wrong at home."

Parents may feel vulnerable, and therefore uncomfortable, when they are unsure whether the school views them as partners. But as this parent indicated, parental discomfort and perhaps even feelings of intimidation toward the school were reduced through the program.

When asked what it was that caused this change, this parent reflected, "I guess the more time you spend with people, the more comfortable you feel around them, so it gets a little bit easier to talk to them [school staff] about things." There also may be a symbolic importance of school staff's presence at the program, as "just getting to be around them" at FAST appeared to make this parent "feel like they were taking an interest" in her child. A monolingual Spanish-speaking parent similarly expressed that one reason FAST made her feel more comfortable with the teacher was ". . . because she [the teacher] was there every night, even though it wasn't like we were talking because we couldn't understand each other" (original in Spanish). For their part, both teachers also indicated that it was important for teachers to participate in the program to provide a "friendly face" for families or at least "just to say hello to the parents" and to let them know that "I support them for whatever they did." The program also provided parents the opportunity to observe how school personnel interact with their children and, as one parent expressed, "If they treat my kids nice, they're being nice to me." A similar idea was expressed by a teacher who reflected on the meaning of "literally" serving food to her students at a FAST Night, saying, "I serve them every day as a teacher. . . but tonight felt more intimate. I don't know why, but it really hit me as I'm doling out salad and chips and soda. I'm like, I just love these kids."

Institutional linkage

In parent focus groups at both schools, building institutional linkage appeared to be a particularly important mechanism of social capital emergence in these school communities. We define *institutional linkage* as connection to an institution via social ties to institutional agents, or people with knowledge of, access to, or control over institutional resources. In our case, the focal institution is the school. By attending FAST, parents noted that their contact with various school personnel increased, but their comments suggest they got to know one member of the school staff particularly well: the person serving on the FAST Team as the 'school partner.' At Mount Dana and Brazos, the school partner was a teacher at one school and a community liaison at the other. One parent described the role of the school partner by saying:

> She's like the one that parents could talk to. She was always there. So it was really nice when you go to school. You already know her and know her name, and you just go up to her, and,

> "You know what, I have a concern or question" (original in Spanish).

FAST Team focus groups similarly revealed that the school partners viewed their participation as a chance to "know the families" "so that way they'll feel comfortable to come to you if they have a question."

Parents also described the school partner as a "go-between", "bridge," or "liaison" between families and the school or other school personnel, such as teachers or the principal. This took the form of advocacy, for example when one school partner petitioned teachers on parents' behalf to help their children access tutoring services. Parents expressed that their schedules often prevented them from addressing issues with the school themselves, "But you know [the school partner] is working behind the scenes and you're still getting everything done through [her]." Institutional linkage also took the form of information channels, for example as in the case of one parent who used the school partner to immediately access information during a swine flu outbreak. Parents identified the school partner as a fund of institutional knowledge, saying, "She knows what's going on in the school all the time. It is the truth. . .. I just go up to her because she's always, she knows the dates, the times, and stuff like that" (original in Spanish). The school partner at Mount Dana similarly reported that, while facilitating parent discussions, she "always let the parents know" about resources available to them at the school that could help them address issues they raised. For example, she explained that when parents with children in the dual language program said they were struggling to help their children with homework in a language they did not speak, she told them about English and Spanish language classes held at the school for parents.

As a member of the FAST Team, the school partner is trained to build rapport with families by repeatedly engaging them in responsive communication and reciprocal exchanges. For example, they greet families at the beginning of every FAST session, share a special personalized message with them on graduation night, and, as part of the FAST Team, provide lottery winnings to families in exchange for dinner at the next FAST Night. For those school partners who participated in Parent Time, the adult discussions were regularly mentioned by both parents and FAST Team members as a means for building relationships. One parent, who was paired up with school partners during the one-on-one discussion time, reflected on her experience by saying, "Other than my child's teacher, to get to talk to somebody else that actually worked there [at the school] and was a part of that school, so I kind of enjoyed that." As she describes it, in these conversations, "We were just the mom and mom, talking about either our kids, or school, or that day, or work."

Parent reports indicated that they strongly valued this relationship. They were effusive in their praise of the school partners and the importance of their role on the FAST Team, calling them a "blessing," a "big influence," and a "saving grace," for example. Parents seemed to have developed trust in the school partners, feeling that they could count on them. They noted that the school partners consistently followed through with their promises to look into issues for parents and even "took that extra step." One mother explained the impact on her child's experience at school, stating:

> Now my daughter can go to [the school partner] for anything she needs to, or to the other [school partner], if she has a problem or she needs someone to talk to, they're there, and knowing that kind of personnel is there to help my daughter if she can't talk to anyone else – that is a godsend.

For this parent, her trust in the school partner seemed to provide emotional relief, strengthening the feeling that she could rely on someone to watch out for her child at school.

A trusting relationship with the school partner also may have helped to emotionally connect parents to the school, as seen in the words of parents such as one mother who said:

> Before FAST I didn't know a lot of, all the volunteers. . . You know, being able to actually go in every morning and say 'hi' to the ones that I see in FAST made me involved a little more in the school. . .

School partners also directly recruited parents for school activities. One school partner reported telling parents that the school was in need of parent volunteers and "started recruiting them to come and help us out." As a result, she reported, "We got some parents to actually come in and start helping out and stuff, and [they] started finding out about different resources, just by coming in to volunteer." In this case, the school partner relayed that parents told her, "We used to not come here [to the school] because we're afraid of the staff. . ." to which she replied, "The program is to empower you not to be afraid to come in and talk to these people." This suggests that meeting school staff, so that parents felt "we had someone that we knew we could talk to at the school," may have reduced parents' sense of vulnerability in approaching the school.

For the parents we interviewed, institutional linkage through the school partner seemed to be all the more important because they perceived a need for it. For example, one parent explained that it was helpful to have an intermediary because, "It's hard to tell a teacher that they're not doing a good job because they've been taught and all this other stuff. . ." Respondents also noted that while "obviously as parents we all have concerns about our kids," communication with the school was limited due to "everyone's busy work schedules" and the fact that "a lot of parents here work until five-thirty, six and by then schools are closed and you can't get a hold of teachers." The school partner helped them "maintain that communication." Perhaps because of this perceived need, parents recommended that the program should recruit additional school partners, including "at least one person out of the school system or the school curriculum, like a counselor or a vice principal or someone up the chain in power so that they can hear the concerns of the parents. . ."

Discussion

This study contributes to our understanding of social capital and its relevance for young children by considering how it is created. Using data from an experimental study that manipulated social capital through an after-school family engagement program, our analysis provides insight into how social capital emerged in two predominantly low-income Latino school communities. We found evidence that social-psychological motivations, identified by Portes (1998) as sources of social capital, are foundational to its emergence. Specifically, a sense of group membership and belonging (bounded solidarity), repeated and reciprocated social exchange (reciprocity exchanges), and the adoption of values to which one is exposed (value introjection) all appeared to encourage social capital in these school communities. From the data, we also identified four mechanisms that illuminate how these sources of social capital arise: responsive communication, reciprocal communication, shared experiences, and institutional linkage. We interpret these themes, identified in the analysis, as mechanisms of social capital emergence, as they elucidate the pathways by which social interactions result in trust, mutual expectations, and shared values among members of the school community.

Our analysis indicates that responsive communication fostered social capital in the school community by enhancing a sense of connection and shared identity among parents and schools. This finding is consistent with Bryk and Schneider's (2002) conclusions about a case study of Chicago public schools, in which they argued that responsive communication is critical to establishing relational

trust between families and schools. As they explain it, sincere listening and consideration of others' perspectives is an expression of respect that makes people feel personally valued. This helps alleviate vulnerabilities and reinforces collaborative action because it "involves recognition of the important role each person plays" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 23). Our study suggests that trust and respect can be nurtured in the school community through regular, structured opportunities for responsive communication. Moreover, this is possible even in communities historically isolated from schools and other social institutions, such as the low-income minority families who participated in our study. Targeted efforts to nurture responsive communication are especially important for schools in these contexts, where cultural and structural barriers may otherwise impede this kind of communication.

We also found that reciprocal communication (i.e., listening and sharing) opened avenues for social exchanges among parents and between parents and school staff. This fostered a sense of mutual obligation that helped build trust and shared expectations in school networks. When one person gives to another (whether through sharing about themselves, providing social support, or granting some favor), it is understood by both parties that the recipient becomes indebted to the grantor in some way. Repeated and reciprocated social exchanges of this sort give rise to interactions that move beyond tit-for-tat transactions to more generalized exchange in a network (Portes, 1998). This type of social environment fosters trustworthiness, mutual expectations and obligations, and positive affective feelings toward others in the group (Coleman, 1988; Molm, 2010). Like responsive communication, structured opportunities for reciprocal communication may be most important in contexts where this type of communication is least likely to occur organically. For example, teachers may be less likely to engage in reciprocal communication with parents if they feel stressed, overworked, or undervalued in their jobs, which may be more likely in under-resourced and urban schools (Abel & Sewell, 1999). Reciprocal communication also may be less likely if teachers do not view parents as their equals (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001), or vice versa, for example if parents are intimidated by or deferential toward teachers.

Shared experiences were another mechanism that appeared to enable the emergence of school-based social capital, in this case by strengthening solidarity among parents and staff in the school. Families jointly engaged in family bonding activities they found to be fun and memorable, and they especially appreciated the adult-only discussion time, which was rare for many parents. The FAST program also created a context where parents were more likely to see and come in contact with school staff. In some cases, the visibility of school personnel seemed to be enough to create a sense of shared experience for parents. They may have viewed teachers' presence at FAST Nights as going above and beyond their official obligations, which parents interpret as a sign of genuine caring from a teacher (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Expressions of personal regard such as these promote a sense of self-worth in others and mitigate uncertainty and dependence inherent in social exchange, thus fostering reciprocation and trust between actors (Blau, 2002; Bryk & Schneider, 2002). This process may be more impactful in contexts of heightened vulnerability, for example due to power imbalances (such as between a college-educated teacher and a less educated parent) or when past experiences intensify fear of rejection. For example, psychological factors such as general awareness of racism in society, negative childhood experiences in school, or feeling disrespected by teachers are known to discourage parents from interacting with schools (Crozier, 1999; McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn, 2003).

Finally, we found evidence that institutional linkage was a particularly important mechanism for building social capital in the predominantly low-income Latino schools we examined. Families in these communities tend to be socially isolated from school social networks, and cultural distance and discomfort often strain parent–school interactions (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Others have argued that institutional agents play a key role in the empowerment of youth from low-status communities because they can connect them to valuable knowledge and resources that they otherwise tend to lack (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2011; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009). Even in communities with "strong Latino roots," Latino immigrant parents may feel ignored by schools or "abandoned and helpless when trying to gain information regarding their children's education" (Ramirez, 2003, p. 93). In our study, by making institutional linkage an explicit role responsibility of the school partner and reducing structural barriers to involvement, the FAST program enabled the development of trusting relationships between low-income minority families and schools.

Taken together, the study findings enhance our understanding of social capital and how it can be utilized as a resource for families and schools. The analysis is informative for school leaders and educational innovators by illuminating specific ways that social interactions can be structured to strengthen community ties. Awareness of these processes should be cultivated among future educators and within school communities, particularly in multicultural contexts where barriers tend to be heightened. Teacher education and professional development programs can incorporate insights from this study into curriculum on family engagement and dimensions of power and diversity in elementary education. More broadly, by incorporating both deductive and inductive analyses, we advance a theoretically and empirically driven model of potential pathways of social capital emergence, summarized in Fig. 1. The model proposes how, under certain structural conditions (in this case, those imposed by the FAST program components), particular social mechanisms (in this case, the four types of social interactions) can generate motivational sources (e.g., bounded solidarity) which are foundational to social capital. We hope this conceptual model may serve as a starting point for understanding not only the creation of social capital through school programs such as FAST, but also how it may be developed in other contexts.

Limitations and future research

The findings of this study should be interpreted in light of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the data and methods used. Its methodological limitations reveal a number of future research needs. First, the focus group data may provide limited coverage of individual experiences that would be more fully illuminated through in-depth interviews. The focus groups allowed parents to discuss issues as a group and corroborate others' reports about the most salient aspects of the FAST experience. This approach yields data on a range of ideas but perhaps at the expense of depth. Future research could employ individual interviewing to achieve more in-depth coverage of topics and perhaps expose additional, more unique mechanisms experienced by particular parents.

Second, it is difficult to interpret the different amounts of coverage in our data across Portes' (1998) sources of social capital. There was a lack of evidence for enforceable trust, and only minimal evidence for value introjection. One might conclude that these sources were less salient aspects of social capital emergence in our sample. Alternatively, the weak evidence may result from our reliance on self-reported data if these processes are unconscious or taken for granted by participants. Future research using methods such as ethnographic observation or direct quantitative measures may be more effective at uncovering such processes.

Lastly, our study considers social capital emergence drawing on a small sample in a particular context: school-based social networks, as manipulated by the

FAST program, and in predominantly low-income Latino communities in Southwestern states. Our work raises many questions to be taken up in future research: Does the process of social capital emergence in low-income Latino communities look similar in other regions of the country? Do these processes differ for other social class and racial/ethnic groups? When social capital unfolds naturally, are the same mechanisms at play? Future research should also explore the development of social capital both on larger samples and in other types of social networks, for example those based on employment, residence, kinship, or interest groups. At the same time, our analysis provides new insight into the FAST program as an educational intervention. Past program evaluations, largely using quantitative methods, collectively suggest that FAST effectively intervenes on school-based networks and a variety of child outcomes. Yet our analysis is unique in drawing on social theory and qualitative data to examine not only what the intervention does well, but also how it does so. That is, our approach reveals how particular program features facilitate specific interactional processes which generate theoretically consequential social resources.

Conclusion

This study addresses gaps in our understanding of social capital by exploring how social capital develops within low-income Latino school communities. To the extent that differences in school-based social capital are linked to educational inequalities (Bourdieu, 1986; Kao, 2004), this paper also provides insight into a stratifying mechanism early in the educational career. A detailed understanding of how social interactions become social capital through a particular family-engagement program can also inform social policy and practice. Our findings indicate that elementary schools can promote social capital development in historically disadvantaged communities by structuring interactions among parents and school staff in specific ways. At the same time, more work on these emergent processes is needed, and we hope our study both contributes to a better understanding of the formation of social capital and motivates additional questions.

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Appendix A. CFS study recruitment and program implementation details

Recruitment of families into the CFS study

At the family level, recruitment was targeted to all families of first grade students at participating schools in the first year of the study. Researchers and staff from the partnering social service agencies utilized various approaches to recruit families to the study, in all schools, and to the FAST program, in treatment schools. Efforts included hosting family events at the school, visiting with parents after parent–teacher conferences, working with teachers to distribute flyers or create incentives for families to enroll, and calling families or conducting home visits.

The 52 participating schools collectively enrolled over 5000 first grade students at the start of the study. Just over 60% of these families consented to participate, yielding a total sample of more than 3000 families. Of those who consented in treatment schools, 73% attended at least one FAST session and, among those who went at least once, families on average attended four of the eight sessions offered.

Implementation of the FAST program in the CFS study

Local social service agencies experienced in implementing FAST in San Antonio and Phoenix handled all aspects of program implementation. No changes were made to the normal operating procedures of the program by the research team or the agencies beyond the local adaptations necessary to meet the program standards mandated by FAST National, Incorporated. Due to the large number of first grade families participating in the study at each school, FAST was implemented in multiple hubs within each treatment school. This "multi-hub" model is the recommended adaptation for implementing FAST on a larger scale, with more than 8–12 families per school (McDonald, 2008, p. 75).

To meet the needs of participating parents, FAST Teams implemented the program in both English and Spanish as necessary. FAST Teams at each school decided how best to handle language diversity among families. In the two schools of focus in this paper, teams elected to deliver the program separately by language for some hubs (designated as either Spanish or English hubs) and in both languages in other hubs (designated as bilingual hubs). The FAST Teams at both schools met the program standard of cultural representativeness, appropriately reflecting the racial/ethnic and linguistic composition of the school. At least one leader in each city was bilingual, and all FAST Team members in Spanish hubs were bilingual. There is no evidence that the language delivery of the program undermined the program integrity; however, respondent reports indicate there were benefits and drawbacks of each approach. When hubs were separated by language, participants recognized the loss of opportunity to meet families in the other hubs. Yet participants from bilingual hubs also discussed how the time spent translating reduced opportunities for interaction and may have slowed down the rapport-building process.

To evaluate program integrity and implementation fidelity, certified FAST trainers conducted at least three site visits per treatment school during the eight-week implementation of FAST Nights. Consistent with program guidelines, trainers held debriefing sessions with FAST Teams following each visit to address any implementation issues. Trainers also used the Program Integrity Checklist (PIC) developed by FAST National to quantitatively assess 12 domains of program implementation. Possible scores range from 12, indicating "high integrity" along all dimensions, to 36, indicating "low integrity" on all dimensions. The treatment school mean score of 13.3 ($n = 24$, with two schools missing PIC data) indicates that FAST was implemented in accordance with FAST National guidelines in the CFS study.

Appendix B. Focus group and interview sampling procedures

Members of the research team contacted eligible parents by telephone to invite them to participate in a focus group or interview about their experiences participating in the program. Eligible

parents were identified using FAST attendance rosters. FAST Team members also helped publicize the focus groups to high attending parents. As a result, during recruitment phone calls, several parents indicated they had already heard about the focus groups from a FAST Team member and were willing to participate.

The focus groups with FAST Team members were coordinated by the partnering local service agencies, at the researchers' request. In one school, the focus group was conducted at the school following a FAST session. At the other school, the focus group was conducted at a local library on a weekday evening. To facilitate team member comfort in speaking openly and honestly about program implementation, the agencies' role in the focus groups ended with recruitment. Agency staff did not attend or otherwise participate in the focus groups. For the teacher interviews, CFS researchers emailed all first grade teachers at each school to invite them to participate. The email invitations yielded one first grade teacher interview per school.

Appendix C. Supplementary data

Supplementary material related to this article can be found, in the online version, at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.07.003.

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