DEVELOPING SOCIAL CAPITAL THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN ORGANIZED YOUTH PROGRAMS: QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS FROM THREE PROGRAMS

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Organized youth programs can serve as a context in which youth are connected to resource-bearing adults in the community who promote the development of social capital. This article explores the process of how this happens and what types of resources are gained by youth. Qualitative interviews were conducted with adolescents in three youth programs over a three- to four-month period. Two key findings emerged. First, relationships with community adults were found to develop in stages, with youth moving from a stage of suspicion and distrust, to a stage of facilitated contact, to a stage of meaningful connection. Second, these relationships provided youth with access to adult resources, such as information, assistance, exposure to adult worlds, support, and encouragement. The three programs facilitated this process of social capital development by linking youth to suitable adults, structuring youth–adult activities around common goals, and coaching youth on these interactions. © 2005 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

An important feature of adolescent development is the formation of personal relationships between youth and adults in the larger community. In making the transition through adolescence into adulthood, young people need and benefit from relationships with a range of engaged adults outside of the family. These relationships can provide resources and benefits—social capital—that helps youth connect to and eventually make the transition into the adult world (Benson, 1997; National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 2002). Adult investment in youth not only promotes individual adolescent development, but also ensures the continuation of a healthy civil society. Through relationships with prosocial adults, youth are socialized into shared norms, encouraged to develop meaningful social roles, and prepared for leadership roles within their local communities and the larger society (Putnam, 2000; Wynn, 1996; Zeldin, 2000).

Contemporary Western society, however, provides few opportunities for meaningful interactions between youth and adults in the community (Darling, Hamilton, & Shaver, 2003; Steinberg, 1991; Zeldin, Camino, & Calvert, 2003). The lack of contact between youth and community adults manifests itself in negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that adults direct toward young people (Camino, 2001). Youth notice these negative perceptions and behaviors, which, in turn, fuel their negative views of adults and reinforce their isolation from them (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). Without adult input, youth lack the full social, informational, and institutional resources necessary for optimal development (Jarrett, 2003). Moreover, when there are limited occasions for youth and adults to connect, societies miss an opportunity to move forward with a new generation of adults fully socialized for active community life and civic participation.

This article examines how organized youth programs can bridge this youth–adult divide. A small body of descriptive research has suggested that organized youth programs can link youth with community adults, and that these relationships can provide youth with social capital (Ball & Brice-Heath, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994). The purpose of this article is to explore more fully how this happens. We seek to illuminate the process by which youth programs can facilitate relationships between youth and community adults and to identify the types of social capital resources that youth gain from these relationships.

CONCEPTUALIZING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital provides a useful analytic framework for examining the intergenerational relationships that form in organized youth programs. Social capital has been conceptualized in various ways, and this article focuses on the work of three central figures—Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam.

Bourdieu defined social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (1985, p. 248). That is, social capital represents the sum of all the assets available to members of a network or group. According to Bourdieu, social connections benefited individuals in key ways. Affiliations with people having diverse "expertise" increase individuals' access to knowledge and cultural capital; social connections are also a source for obtaining economic resources. Indeed, for Bourdieu, individual profit—gaining access to rich resources held by others—is the major incentive for affiliation.

Coleman's (1988) view of social capital is more general. In his formulation, two key aspects characterize social capital. Social capital is embedded within social struc-

tures and it facilitates the actions of individuals or corporate actors within those social structures. For Coleman, social structures included dense, overlapping social networks characterized by common standards, trust, and reciprocity. In networks with high levels of social capital, individuals mutually benefit from relationships through access to information or other resources that help them to achieve their personal interests and advance their life chances.

Putnam (2000) represents a third prominent figure in discussions of social capital. According to Putnam, social capital is defined as "features of social organizations, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit" (2000, pp. 35–36). When individuals interact regularly and trust one another, social transactions are more efficient and communal problems are more easily resolved. For Putnam, the different types of social capital included civic engagement and volunteerism. Although Putnam's conceptualization of social capital is embedded within a community context, it nevertheless suggests benefits to individuals. Individuals with active and trusting connections to other community members develop positive character traits (e.g., civic-ness). Moreover, individuals living in communities with high levels of social capital can get things done more easily, including things that are personally beneficial.

These three perspectives on social capital differ with respect to their main analytic focus, distinctively focusing on individuals, groups, and communities. However, at the core of these conceptualizations is the idea of social capital as social relationships that entail the transfer of resources and provide positive benefits. For individuals, engaged social interaction with other individuals or groups provides resources to which they would not otherwise have access (Portes, 1998).

These types of resources are valuable for youth as they make their way toward adulthood: into college, other preparatory institutions, jobs, and careers. Unfortunately, as we mentioned above, the current cultural divide between youth and adults is a barrier to youth's formation of relationships with resource-rich adults outside the family. Most youth have few connections with community adults, either individually or as part of the collective networks that Coleman and Putnam described. They are outsiders to the social structures and networks they will need to join to become functional adults. This isolation can be particularly significant for low-income youth in urban neighborhoods (Wilson, 1987).

Several characteristics of organized youth programs suggest that they are well suited to facilitating youth's development of social capital. First, youth programs represent intentionally constructed social structures or groups that bring together youth and non-family adults. Several studies have described how youth in programs interacted with a range of unrelated adults, including not just program staff, but also adults from the local community and from other organizations (McLaughlin et al., 1994; Williams & Kornblum, 1994; Wynn, 1996). Second, these interactions between youth and adults are frequently supportive in nature. Youth and adults have described some programs as functioning like a family and adults functioning like mothers, fathers, or other kin (McLaughlin, 1993; Williams & Kornblum, 1985). Third, many organized programs are concerned explicitly with enhancing youth development through intergenerational relationships. Adults serve as mentors and role models and facilitate youth's social, interpersonal, academic, athletic, and artistic skills (McLaughlin et al., 1994; Williams & Kornblum, 1985, 1994; Wynn, 1996).

Although these studies describe positive youth–adult relationships in youth programs, less is known about the processes by which these relationships are formed,

especially with community adults from outside the programs. Furthermore, these studies suggest that youth gain resources through these relationships; however, the nature of the resources or social capital gained through these relationships has not been systematically examined. Therefore, as aptly noted by Wynn (1996, pp. 19–20), greater exploration is needed that illuminates "the circumstances and mechanisms through which [youth programs] enhance development and generate social capital." The current research focuses on that task, with a specific focus on youth's development of social capital in relationships with non-staff community adults.[1]

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to study the process of social capital development in young people, we intensively studied three organized programs for high-school–aged youth. These programs reflected our interest in studying high-quality programs in both rural and urban communities. We chose programs based on conversations with knowledgeable youth-development professionals in the local regions, preliminary observations of the programs, and discussions with program youth and staff. Programs were selected that: a) were well-regarded by professionals, b) appeared to meet the criteria of being youth centered as outlined by McLaughlin (2000), and c) engaged youth in working toward some goal or set of goals over a cycle of activity (Heath, 1998). These three programs also made a deliberate effort to connect youth with community adults.

Three Programs

Clarkston FFA: A Rural School-Based Program. The first program we studied was a local chapter of the National FFA Organization. FFA (formerly known as Future Farmers of America) is a U.S.-based after-school program designed to promote leadership and prepare participants for careers in agricultural, food, fiber, and natural resource fields. The adult leaders of this chapter have a reputation for effective mentoring and view the program as a venue for the development of leadership skills in youth participants. This FFA chapter is located in the small rural community of Clarkston, with a virtually all-Caucasian population. The incorporated high school out of which the program operated had a population of 495 students.

Clarkston FFA offered members a variety of youth-leadership opportunities that encouraged active participation among its members. We studied this program for sixteen weeks while they planned a summer day camp for local fourth graders. During this period, youth also participated in several regional and statewide competitions (e.g., poultry judging), attended conventions, and were engaged in community service projects. The competitions and conventions engaged the youth in interactions with agriculture teachers from other schools, judges, and FFA officers from across the state. However, the adults from outside the program who were most salient to the youth were those from the close-knit local community. Program activities often were designed to bring the youth into interaction with local business people, FFA alumni, and other community adults.

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[1]The relationship between the youth and adult leaders of these programs is described in the article by Larson, Walker, and Pearce (2005).

Art-First: An Urban Arts Program. Art-First is a well-respected, art education organization that provides arts programming for a racially and ethnically diverse group of youth in a large midwestern city. At Art-First, the community context goes beyond one geographic location. Youth who participated in the program live in different neighborhoods across the city and the program connected them into a network of individuals with a shared interest in art.

Art-First not only offers hands-on training and experience in the visual arts (e.g., painting, sculpture, animation, etc.), but also offers assistance for youth to prepare for college, obtain practical job experiences, and learn about careers and life in the arts. We followed youth participating in a two-part 12-week summer career-development program. The first six weeks of the program consisted of a course during which the youth interacted with guest speakers, visited work sites, and engaged in practical activities (e.g., writing a resume, participating in a mock job interview). The objective was to provide them with knowledge and skills for obtaining entry into the job market in arts-related careers. During the second six weeks of the program, youth worked for 20 hours per week, with this time split between an arts-related internship at a local business or non-profit organization and work on the Art-First group project. This year's group project was painting a series of murals that were to be displayed along a local train platform.

The program's organizer drew on the many ties that Art-First had with the city's arts community. Across the 12 weeks, the program was deliberately structured to bring youth into contact with adults from different networks in the art world. These included professional artists and designers, gallery owners, representatives from other art programs, and arts professionals at the various internship sites.

Youth Action: An Urban Civic Program. Youth Action is a youth-activist program that resides within a larger grassroots community organization. It is located in the same large midwestern city as Art-First. Youth Action, too, has a reputation as an excellent youth-development program. Participants are mainly persons of color, including African American, Latino, and mixed-race youth. Like Art-First, Youth Action drew young people from different geographic neighborhoods across the city. The program connected participants into a network of youth and adults with mutual interest in social justice issues.

Through Youth Action, young people engage in activist campaigns associated with issues of their choosing. Many of their campaigns have focused on changing policies in the public school system. Once youth identify an issue, they conduct in-depth research on the topic. After obtaining information, they develop and implement a plan of action. We studied this program during a time when they were organizing a citywide, day-long Youth Summit. The Youth Summit was organized into a series of youth-led workshops focused on various topics, including sexuality and inequities in school funding. Participants in Youth Action also were involved in organizing a rally for more equitable school funding and held a meeting with the superintendent of schools.

Through these activities, youth were brought into contact with a broad range of socially committed adults. These included school-board staff (e.g., the school superintendent), politicians and representatives of state government, teachers, school counselors, and adults in the parent organization. It also included adults in the community of other social activist organizations with whom Youth Action collaborated.

Data Collection and Analysis

Our primary objective was to understand youth's developmental experiences—in this case, social capital formation—over a three- to four-month cycle of program activity. At each program, we asked the adult leaders to select a sample of 10 to 13 representative youth, including an equal numbers of girls and boys. Members of the research team then conducted biweekly phone interviews with each youth, as well as longer face-to-face interviews at the beginning, midpoint, and at the end of the study period.[2]

The open-ended interview protocols were developed from focus groups conducted with youth workers, the youth development and social capital literatures, and a prior study with high school students (Dworkin, Larsen, & Hansen, 2003). The social capital section of the protocol focused specifically on interactions with adults within the program and in the community. Youth were asked to identify key adults and then to describe the nature of those interactions, how relationships with these adults developed or changed over time, the impact on the youth, and tangible benefits of the interactions and relationship. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Across the three programs, a total of 206 youth interviews were conducted with 34 youth.

The analysis was carried out by the authors and guided by the grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 1983; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). NVivo, a qualitative data management program (QSR International, 2001), was used to aid in this process. The first stage of analysis entailed coding and sorting out all material from the transcripts that fit into the domain of social capital (e.g., youth interactions with community adults).

In the second stage, we carried out a process of discovery. We read the interview text for themes and underlying concepts that were related to youth's relationships with community adults (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). We also kept notes and developed analytic memos on issues, themes, and ideas that addressed youth–adult relationships. Although initial second-stage analyses were done individually, we met as a group to discuss codes, issues, themes, and concepts and to resolve any discrepancies and inconsistencies.

FINDINGS

Two thematic areas emerged from the interviews. First, the youth's reports revealed three stages in the formation of relationships with community adults. Second, they illuminated how these relationships provided youth with social capital in the form of different resources and benefits.

Stages in the Development of Relationships With Community Adults

Theoretical discussions maintain that social capital develops through engagement in social relationships. Our findings elaborate on the process-oriented nature of social capital formation for youth in these three programs. They show how intergenerational

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[2]The study also included regular interviews with adult leaders and observations of program sessions. However, the reports from the youth were most illuminating for understanding social capital formation, and thus were our primary source for this article.

relationships that promoted the building of youth social capital unfolded over three stages.

Youth–Adult Disconnect. Coming into the programs, many youth brought negative pre-conceptions about the nature of youth–adult interactions. Youth in each of the three programs described the disconnection between adults and youth that we mentioned at the beginning of this article. For 15-year-old Susanna (pseudonyms are used through-out) from FFA, the disconnection was clear. She said:

> I think meeting peers is more important to me . . . [A]s far as becoming really close to [adults], and being best friends with them, that's not necessary. Because you really don't have time to go out and be buddy, buddy with other adults.

Susanna's comments suggest the firmly demarcated worlds of adults and youth.

Ricardo, a 15-year-old from Art-First, offered his feelings about adults: "[Adults] have this power struggle where they want to give you some freedom to be an adult, but they treat you like a kid." Ricardo's statement points to one of the major tensions youth faced when engaging in relationships with adults: the balance of power. Whereas youth appreciated being supported and guided by adults, establishing and maintain-ing a sense of autonomy also was important to them.

Of related significance to youth was having their ideas and input valued. Eighteen-year-old Xiamara from Youth Action described her experience interacting with flip-pant adults:

> Sometimes when you're in a meeting with adults and you talk to them, they just kind of look down on you, "What are you talking about? You're too young." I really hate when they say, "Well, you have a lot to learn." Like that's true, we do have a lot to learn. But, they're not telling you like in a good way, these things you could learn. [T]hey just tell you that because of your age. "You can't possibly know what I know."

Although Xiamara recognized that she did not bring the same level of knowledge to the table as the adults, she resented the feeling of being disregarded because of her age. Experiences such as these affected youth comfort level with adults, as illustrated by 16-year-old Donato, also from Youth Action. He said, "Usually, I'm really nervous around adults 'cause it always seems like they're higher up and like, 'Err, we know more than you.'"

These comments illustrate some of the barriers that create youth–adult discon-nection. In past interactions with adults, youth have found adults to be dismissive. Youth experienced clearly delineated power relations that undermined their auton-omy. Such experiences engendered feelings of nervousness and discomfort, leading youth to avoid and devalue interactions with adults or remain passive in adults' pres-ence.

Interacting with Adults. All three programs, however, engaged youth in activities that provided opportunities to interact with more supportive adults. At the Clarkston FFA program, community service projects allowed youth to become more familiar with local adults and to relate to these adults in ways in which they were valued. Seventeen-year-old Jeff remarked:

One good thing that we do is foundation collection—that's when we go around to all the agribusinesses and try to collect money for the state. I really didn't know anyone in this town until I [did that] . . . [I]t's let me meet new people and this past year as being president I talked to a lot more people in the community.

Similarly, 16-year-old Kay reported interacting with other adults in Clarkston:

We had our blood drive on Thursday and there were a lot of people that came . . . I definitely interacted with people that live here in town that I wouldn't have really got to interact with had I not been a part of [the blood drive].

For both Jeff and Kay, much of their contact with adults occurred when they were out soliciting in the community and attending or hosting local FFA events. The youth status as FFA members engaged in an FFA-sponsored activity appeared to provide a context for these adults to relate to them with respect.

At Art-First, career-related events served as the medium for positive youth–adult interactions. As 16-year-old Tien reported, "There's the whole career day and we'd be able to get to know more professional artists. And, we'd be going on field trips, and we would know others." Ricardo shared his experience on one of these field trips:

We went to different galleries, like John Lewis's Gallery. He talked to us about maintaining a gallery and running it . . . how he got started. And we went to see the Vernon Brothers. They're pretty well known artists. And they were talking about how they see abstract art . . . So, it was really neat.

Art-First brought youth into contact with adults from across a broad geographic area— the whole city. Ricardo's comments suggest that the favorable nature of these youth– adult interactions was fueled by a common passion for art.

At Youth Action, activist projects brought youth and adults together. Sixteen-year-old Donato reported interacting with adults at school board meetings: "We've gone to the Board of Ed[ucation] meetings and talked to . . . a lot of members of the board, face-to-face." Donato mentioned the citywide Youth Summit as another activity in which he interacted with adults: "[At the Youth Summit], I met a lot of teachers and a bunch of people from organizations I never heard of before. It was pretty cool." Like youth at Art-First, those at Youth Action interacted with adults from across the city. The positive connection Donato and other youth experienced were facilitated by common interests and reinforced by mutual respect.

All three of the programs created occasions for youth and adults to come together under favorable circumstances. Youth were placed in face-to-face contact with adults around a structured activity. In most instances, these were adults with whom the youth had a shared interest or goal. These transactions encouraged youth to begin to view adults in a complimentary light, and they set the stage for more meaningful inter-generational connections.

Connecting With Adults. As youth participated in activities with adults, they experienced changes in the ease with which they related to adults, as well as their perceptions of them. Jamie described the feeling of comfort with adults that was fostered through close interactions through the FFA. She said, "I've never really been uncomfortable with adults, but all of a sudden it goes from not interacting with very many, to just the

continual comfortableness." Jamie's observations also suggested that she was monitoring her own development in the progression of youth–adult relationships.

Through meaningful interactions with adults, youth came to see that, whereas adults often possessed authority over youth, they did not always assert themselves in that manner. Ricardo from Art-First illustrated this point:

> At the internship, they're fun . . . One of our bosses, she's 25. She has kids and stuff, but she's still kind of laid back. As long as we kind of act like adults, they'll treat us like adults, you know.

Ricardo experienced a quid pro quo in which his mature behavior led to him being treated like an equal. He also learned that adults have unique personalities and can be fun people to be around.

Donato from Youth Action provided another example of the breakdown of highly delineated, authority-based youth/adult roles and the development of more personal relationships. According to Donato:

> There's a lot of activist teachers in my school, and everybody wants to get students moving. It's great to see teachers that don't just wanna give out assignments and tell you what to do. They really want there to be change in the school.

Donato's further comments revealed that adults—in this case, teachers—had strong faith that students could effect positive social change. He learned that adults cared about youth issues and that they could be valuable allies in the struggle for social justice.

These opportunities for youth and adults to connect in meaningful ways were not accidental, but were fostered by the programs. Youth developed connections with adults who were willing to engage in relatively egalitarian relationships with young people. Although these adults had greater knowledge than youth, they were willing to share it and they did not use it as a way to establish their superiority or dominance. By opening up personal aspects of their lives and allowing themselves to be seen as real people, adults were able to further reduce intergenerational boundaries and create comfort. Youth developed greater comfort with them. Equally important for the development of positive intergenerational ties, adults demonstrated a sincere interest and concern with youth issues, in some cases viewing these as issues that they, too, could rally around.

These data, then, illuminate a three-stage process in the formation of positive relationships between youth and non-staff community adults. Youth prior negative views of adults were gradually broken down when programs brought them together with engaged adults. Youth and adults interacted around shared issues, which lead to the development of comfort, trust, and meaningful connections between their seemingly disconnected worlds. Next we look at the types of social capital that the youth obtained from these connections.

Social Capital Resources and Developmental Advantage

In the literature on social capital, relationships provide access to resources that can be beneficial to individuals. Our research reveals that the adults the youth met through

the three programs provided them with information, assistance, exposure to adult worlds, support, and encouragement.

Information. Through their relationships with adults, youth accessed a key resource—information. For example, 15-year-old Billy from Clarkston was working to prepare for a statewide FFA contest in carpentry. When asked if participation in FFA had brought him into contact with adults within the community he said, "Well, practicing for carpentry, we went to the local hardware [store] and got different things and talked to the people about what different types of tools to use." Through his preparation for the contest, Billy developed a friendship with adults at the local hardware store, and they provided useful information to help him do well at the competition.

Similarly, 18-year-old Valerie from Art-First gathered useful information from multiple adults during her internship:

> Everybody was so helpful . . . I worked in a really small office . . . Some people, they're just going to the same colleges as me . . . I asked them: "If you people have some free time, can I ask you a couple of questions?" They're like, "Yeah, okay." So, I asked them so many questions.

Sixteen-year-old Juan from Youth Action provided another example. In the process of one of their campaigns, he reported, "I've been talking to Mrs. Janes, a teacher who is against the yearly student proficiency exam. She's been giving me updates or telling me where I can get more information."

Access to information was a critical form of social capital that youth received in their interactions with community adults. It was strategic information that helped the youth complete carpentry projects, carry out social justice campaigns, and make informed choices about which college to attend. Without adult input, youth goals would have been more difficult to achieve.

Assistance. Direct help was another resource that youth had access to because of their relationships with adults. Seventeen-year-old Evan at Clarkston FFA envisioned how the assistance from adults he met through the program could facilitate his goal of being elected to a regional FFA office in the future:

> [I've connected] with other Ag teachers that are not from our school. That helps. If they get to know who you are, then come section officer election time, they could have their students vote for me.

Sixteen-year old Marco from Art-First described how the adults he became friends with on his internship could help him get into the college of his choice:

> My supervisor has friends at Dartmouth College, which is one of my college choices, and the fact that I'm creating connections—I don't mean to sound manipulative or anything—to people who know other people that can get to know me can help me achieve my goal of getting into the college that I want.

Seventeen-year-old Phillip from Youth Action provided still another example of youth drawing on adults to help them achieve individual goals. He had come to know Mr. Najarian, an adult volunteer at a community organization with which Youth Action often collaborates. Phillip said:

> Mr. Najarian does something with this thing called Scholars for Tomorrow, which is like a college prep program that helps you prepare for the ACT and SAT . . . I feel like if I needed help taking a test or something, he'd be a good person to talk to.

Well-placed adults, then, not only provided information, they also offered direct assistance to youth. They could help youth win an election, gain access to the college of their choice, or perform well on an exam. A developmental benefit of drawing on adult help was that youth learned that relationships could be an intentional and instrumental conduit for achieving personal goals.

Exposure to Adult Worlds. Community adults also exposed young people to previously opaque worlds of adulthood. Youth gained insights on adult careers and the functioning of other adult networks. For example, 15-year-old Dean from FFA saw the banking profession up close because of his relationship with Mr. Harvey, a local banker whom had been involved in past FFA fund-raising efforts. According to Dean:

> Mr. Harvey is the banker in town and I go and see him, and he asks me what stocks I think are good and everything. I always ask him a lot of questions about that 'cause I like money and how money works.

At Art-First, youth were exposed to many different careers in the arts and received an insider's look into artists' world of work. Tien described her experience on one of Art-First's field trips:

> The guy who was showing us around [at the animation studio] was very nice. We learned a lot about how the studio works, how you make animation, what the hours are, and how it is being an animator.

Sixteen-year-old Juan from Youth Action had an opportunity to spend time with Charles Handler, a nationally known actor and activist. Juan was greatly impressed by his activities: "I was in the same car as [Charles Handler] . . . He was talking about some stuff he did before, like with South Africa. It was really great." Juan was gaining valuable knowledge about how things work in the upper reaches of social activism. Through guided forays into adult worlds, youth learned about the nature of these worlds, such as what particular careers are really like. This exposure encouraged youth to realistically consider new and broader future career options. In some cases, youth–adult interactions provided anticipatory socialization as youth took apprentice roles in these different career worlds.

Support and Encouragement. Support and encouragement represented another resource provided by adults to youth. In various ways, community adults affirmed what the youth did. Consider the following examples. Jamie, a youth from the Clarkston FFA, received support from a respected teacher:

> At most of the competitions, there's this one teacher, Mr. Hunt, who is always there just giving me encouragement. [At one competition], he made a special stop just to say good luck to me.

At Art-First, adults showed support for youth work through a community display at an upscale department store. Youth work was showcased for all to appreciate. According to Marsha:

> The manager in charge of the display at Havers took pictures of us that he later put up in the window display . . . He was really supportive of our paintings because he has never had oil paintings in his display from an after-school group. He was really excited and so were we.

Nineteen-year-old Mateo from Youth Action provided still another example of adult support and encouragement. Adults displayed a sincere interest in the activities of Mateo and his collaborators at Youth Action. Expressing his appreciation of adult attention, Mateo said, "We talk to a lot of people . . . They're like, 'Oh we're interested in the work' . . . It's cool."

Adults demonstrated their support and encouragement of youth in key ways. This entailed verbal praise or encouragement, exhibiting their artwork, and enthusiastic acknowledgement of their activities. These often expressive or symbolic displays were well received by youth. From a developmental perspective, adult support and encouragement helped youth learn to value adult appraisals of their efforts and to use these appraisals to motivate continued hard work.

In sum, the youth in the three programs profited from their ties to these resource-rich adults. They gained knowledge, developed skills, and established connections that facilitated their steps toward further education and career opportunities.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The purpose of this article has been to examine youth programs as a context for young people's development of relationships with resource-bearing adults in communities. The research has demonstrated that youth programs can be effective venues for youth to bridge the divide with the adult world and build social capital. The three programs we studied connected youth to networks of community adults in which youth experienced trust and engaged in relationships of exchange. The contributions of the findings are, first, to illuminate the process whereby relationships were developed, and second, to better understand the types of resources youth gained from these relationships. We review those findings and draw out implications for practice.

The process we observed was not unlike that described for relationships of trust to be built between initially disparate groups (Allport, 1954). Youth from all of the youth programs tended to initially perceive adults as uninterested and dismissive of their ideas. However, program activities provided them with opportunities to interact with community adults around common goals: a charitable cause, a shared interest in the arts, or a shared commitment to social change. The mutual respect youth experienced in these interactions diminished the youth's wariness of adults. The youth gained increased connections and comfort in these interactions, and they showed a transformation in their perceptions of adults. They began to see adults as human beings who cared about them and their futures. They also began to see them as potential allies with a common cause.

Our study provided limited information on the specifics of what the program staff did to facilitate this process of change; nonetheless, the data provide some useful clues. Program staff reported that they were selective in identifying adults and net-

works of adults to which youth could be linked. They vetted adults who would relate to youth in respectful ways. The organizer at Art First described deliberately seeking out prestigious internship sites that would be rich in social resources for the youth. Staff in the three programs also helped arrange activities to structure these youth–adult interactions around common goals, such as the charitable campaigns at the FFA and the internships at Art First. In some cases, staff provided coaching to youth in how to relate to adults. For example, when members of Youth Action were writing a letter to the school board, the adult organizer read a draft and advised youth on wording that would be most effective. When they met with the school superintendent, he had them rehearse in advance and provided constructive feedback. In a sense, the staff and the youth programs gave the youth some of their own social capital. They drew on the program's connections to identify potential relationships, and they vouched for the youth to the community adults (putting their own reputations on the line). Further study is needed to understand this process from the point of view of program staff, as well as that of the community adults with whom the youth interacted.

Our second set of findings illuminates the types of resources youth gained from these relationships. The community adults whom the youth met became sources of social capital. They provided the youth with information, assistance, exposure to adult worlds, support, and encouragement. The youth described this social capital as helping them achieve current goals and prepare for transitional steps into adulthood. These resource-rich adults provided the youth with information about colleges and inside knowledge about career worlds that influenced the youth thinking about career paths. Because our data came only from the youth (not from the community adults), our findings have led us to focus on this social capital as an individual good for the youth. We do not know what capital the adults may have gained. Nonetheless, it can be argued that these relationships also have benefits for society as a whole. By creating networks of exchange between youth and adults, they strengthen the networks of trust that Putnam (2000) saw as essential for well-functioning communities. They also help integrate a new generation of youth into community and civic life.

An important question for practitioners is, where do you find highly resourced community adults with whom youth can make these connections? Again, this study provides only limited information. Nevertheless, we were struck by how each of the three programs adapted to their particular community context. In the Clarkston FFA program, youth were connected primarily to adults in the local geographic community. Given the small, stable, and close-knit nature of the community, suitable adults were identified easily. Some had been in FFA as youth, and most were familiar with the program and its positive reputation. It is likely that the close physical proximity of youth and adults will make it easier for the youth to sustain these intergenerational ties. In the two urban programs, connections were made not to a geographic community, but to communities of interest. At Art First, these were communities defined by arts-related activities. It did not include just adults, but also organizations in which adults worked. At Youth Action, these communities included school personnel and other activists, as well as the organizations to which these adults were connected. At both Art-First and Youth Action, program staff put in a lot of effort cultivating organization-to-organization relationships to support the development of social capital. Compared to the FFA chapter, these two programs facilitated social capital development across a larger set of networks; they provided more of what Putnam (2000) called "bridging social capital." Given the larger geographic reach of these networks, further research would be valuable, both to understand what the adults did to culti-

vate these relationships, as well as to follow whether and how youth continued to use the social capital they gained as they moved into adulthood.

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