

**THE NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE’S SOCIAL CAPITAL:
TRANSITIONS, CO-PRESENCE, SHARED INTERESTS,
AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS**

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Abstract: This paper presents findings from a study that explored the nature of social capital and how it is developed by young people. In-depth interviews with young people in Canada, aged 16 to 19 years, explored the development of networks of social capital as well as the changing nature of these networks over time. Narratives suggest that networks of social capital change in response to changing circumstances, transitions through life stages, and changing identities. They indicate also that social capital develops in networks in which there is regular face-to-face interaction, shared interests, and shared emotional experiences.

Keywords: social capital, mechanisms, social networks

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Over the past several decades, social capital has firmly established itself in the social science lexicon. Based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1986), James Coleman (1988, 1990), and Robert Putnam (2000), social capital is generally conceived of as a positive feature emanating from social interaction. Unlike personal economic capital (financial resources) or human capital (acquired education, technical credentials, or skills), social capital refers to resources embedded within the structure of people's relationships which can be leveraged to achieve desired ends (e.g., educational attainment, employment). These resources can include socially held knowledge, values or norms, and networks of reciprocity or trust.

Notwithstanding the widespread application of social capital in a number of disciplines, including political science, economics, sociology, education, and health sciences, the concept has been critiqued for its lack of definitional clarity (Fine, 2001); lack of relational clarity to other forms of capital (Arrow, 1999; Fine, 2002); and the lack of a distinction between its components (e.g., social solidarity, trust) and conditions of its development (Portes, 1998). Furthermore, traditional theoretical models of social capital have been critiqued for their conceptualization of youth as passive recipients of social capital within familial and community relationships with adults. Youth studies researchers have suggested that social capital, as it was conceived by the "theoretical fathers", was not conceptualized from the perspective of youth; that elements of social capital, such as civic participation (e.g., voting), are largely adult-oriented and necessarily exclude youth because of their age; and that youth are assumed to be passive recipients of social capital vis-à-vis the family and are further assumed to not form social capital amongst themselves, independent of adults (Leonard, 2005; Morrow 1999a, 1999b; Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). More recent social capital theorists have attempted to address these limitations by adding conceptual clarity and exploring the agency youth have in developing social capital themselves in their own relationships, as well as the mutual impact they have on adults' social capital (Leonard, 2005; Morrow 1999a). In particular, a growing body of research has attempted to uncover the nature of social capital for young people (Bassani, 2003; Gillies & Lucey, 2006; Holland, Reynolds, & Weller, 2007; Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005; Leonard, 2005; Morrow 1999b, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; Seaman & Sweeting, 2004; Weller, 2006). This research has explored the sources and forms of young people's social capital from their own perspectives rather than imposing understandings from an adult viewpoint.

Family and peer groups have been cited as central sources of young people's social capital. The emergent youth-centred literature points to the key role that interaction with parents – particularly mothers (Morrow, 1999b) – and siblings (Gillies & Lucey, 2007; Leonard, 2005; Morrow, 1999b; Seaman & Sweeting, 2004) play in forming social capital. The intensity and quality of relationships appear as significant conditions for the development of social capital. Within both the family and peer group network, youth articulate their social capital to be in the form of social support (someone to talk to and to share things with), information, guidance, and companionship.

School has also been discussed in this literature as a key site for social capital, though with mixed salience. Some studies suggest that school is a place where young people develop close bonds with friends, receive support and help from teachers and other mentors (Morrow, 1999b). Others suggest school may be a potential site for bullying and feelings of alienation, for example in not being respected by such authority figures as teachers (Morrow 2001b).

Participation in formal community activities has also had mixed salience in youths' experiences of social capital. Morrow (1999b, 2005) found that many youth have reported limited participation in formally organized leisure and community activities, as a result of limited overall self-efficacy and being devalued by adults in the community. Other research suggests that specific leisure activities and community organizations have been important sources of social capital for youth, including information, expansion of social networks, encouragement, motivation, a sense of identity and belonging, and emotional support (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Holland et al., 2007; Jarrett et al., 2005; Leonard, 2005; Morrow, 2003; Weller, 2006). These studies highlight the diverse forms that participation takes among youth including art clubs, sports teams, school councils, leadership groups, and ethnic clubs and the alternative ways that youth are engaged within their broader social contexts.

In a similar vein, informal modes of volunteering are important for fostering social capital by building social networks of support, assistance, advice, and information. Informal modes of volunteering which may lead to the development of social capital include helping neighbours and/or community members without pay (Morrow, 1999b), adopting a cause such as building a skate park in the community, and fundraising (Weller, 2006).

While several scholars have recently extended social capital theory to youth, there is room for further elaboration and definition of the concept as it relates to young people. To date, youth social capital studies have focused on young people up to the age of 16 years and there has been little attention to the nature of social capital for youth as they transition to adulthood, particularly as they approach the age at which they can be considered "full" citizens and as they acquire more freedom and mobility. Work is needed to understand whether and how social capital changes during these important transitions. This is particularly salient given the fact that young people's circumstances and surroundings change very rapidly as they continually (re)form identities and networks while moving through this life stage (Cairns, Leung, Buchanan, & Cairns, 1995). Additionally, little research has explored *how* social capital is formed in the course of routine daily interactions. Little is known about the processes and conditions under which social capital is formed by youth in family, school, peer, and community contexts.

This paper adopts from traditional conceptualizations the idea that social capital is generated in the routines of everyday social interaction (Bourdieu, 1986) by examining the everyday activities of young people and how social capital is developed in these routine contexts. The paper also draws upon the work of Randall Collins (2004) as a framework for understanding the development of social capital within youths' social networks. In his theory of interaction rituals, Collins provides a micro-social framework of the causal mechanisms of situations and interactions through which variations in solidarity, morality, norms, beliefs, and values are produced. Insights from this interaction ritual chain theory are used to highlight everyday interactions in the lives of youth that produce social capital through face-to-face reciprocal contacts, common interests, and emotional connections. Based on qualitative data collected with youth in Canada, aged 16 to 19 years, the paper uses descriptions of routine social interaction articulated by youth and the concept of emotional energy between individuals and groups within these interactions, to explore the ways in which social capital is generated by youth. This paper elaborates on the foundations of existing youth social capital research, similarly grounded in young

people's own perspectives of their relationships, by exploring on young people's understanding of social capital and their practices in relation to it.

The Research Framework

In order to capture young people's own perspectives and understandings, a qualitative methodology was employed using semi-structured in-depth interviews with youth. Interviews were conducted in the winter of 2007 in an area of central Canada. The region includes an urban core, as well as several surrounding towns and rural county. The economy in the region consists of manufacturing, tourism, and education. Over 20% of the area's population is foreign-born and visible minorities comprise nearly one-quarter of the population. These characteristics make the region desirable for conducting exploratory research since it provides access to a diverse sample of youth.

Given the exploratory nature of the research, non-probability, purposive sampling of youth aged 16 to 19 years was initially used to capture differing perspectives or "multiple realities" by increasing the diversity of the sample (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 177–193). The lines of diversity along which youth were recruited were informed by the youth-centred social capital literature as dimensions of difference in youths' social capital. These included gender (Morrow, 1999b, 2003), ethnicity and race (Morrow, 1999b), rural or urban residence (Farrell, Taylor, & Tennant, 2004), and age (Morrow, 1999b). Participants were recruited through their connection with community agencies, or their use of virtual networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. Snowball sampling was then used among these youth and continued until saturation was reached.

Eighteen young people comprised the final sample for this study. The sample was split relatively evenly among males (8) and females (10). The ages ranged from 16 to 19 years with five 16 year-olds, four 17 year-olds, five 18 year-olds, and four 19 year olds. The majority of participants were living in the urban core (9), with fewer in the peri-urban (6) and rural (3) outskirts. The sample consisted predominantly of youth identifying either as white/Caucasian or from European backgrounds (13), though there was some representation from the Black (1), East Asian (2), and South Asian (2) communities. Three of the youth were born outside Canada. The majority of the participants (10) lived in two-parent families with siblings; however, the sample also included an only child with two parents (1), youth living in a single-parent home with siblings (5), and those living independent of their parents either alone or with friends (2). The majority of participants were in school full-time and many had part-time jobs as well. Only one participant was out of school and in the labour force full-time.

The semi-structured interview protocol was guided by the existing youth-centred social capital literature. Youth were asked to identify key relationships and groups in their lives, to describe the nature of those interactions, how the relationships developed and changed over time, and the tangible benefits of the relationships and of group memberships.

The analysis was carried out solely by the author. NVivo, a qualitative software package (QSR International, 2001) was used to assist the analysis and to manage the verbatim interview transcripts and emergent themes. The first stage of the analysis entailed sorting and coding all of

the material from the transcripts that fit under the broad notion of social capital. The second stage involved a process of discovery in which the text was read for themes and concepts related to the nature of youths' social relationships and to the forms and sources of social capital. Analytic memos and notes were kept on themes and concepts as they emerged, including any text that contradicted the patterns and/or those that provided alternative interpretations.

The data used to support arguments presented below reflect the themes found across the corpus of text. Excerpts presented are verbatim from the interview transcripts in order to preserve the language of the youth, with only the names of people and places altered to maintain anonymity. The pseudonyms used for participants were chosen by the youth themselves.

Youth Transitions and Changing Networks of Social Capital

The narratives from the participants of this research point to the fluid and changing nature of the social networks from which youth mobilize social capital. As youth move through various stages of life and (re)formulate identities, their social networks likewise transition. Studies have examined the changing nature of young people's relationships among family, peers, and community as they move through key stages of life, such as transitioning from high school to university (Holland et al., 2007), or transitioning into the workforce (Raffo & Reeves, 2000). Participants in this study described the changing nature and importance of specific social relationships as they experienced life transitions and changing identities.

***Phoebe:** In England my best friend, I'm still friends with but it's hard to live so far away and they don't have any concept of life here. And so much has changed because you figure our life would change so much that a lot of my friends over there have changed like they all moved on and are older.... Plus when we went to high school we kinda grew apart too. We didn't have any classes together. And since we got older things have kinda changed.*

Phoebe (16 years) recognized that her changing circumstances – namely moving to a different country, and transitioning from elementary school to high school – altered her existing relationship with a close friend.

Similar experiences were articulated with respect to participation in leisure activities and groups. For example, Isaac (18 years) discussed how he was not as involved in leisure activities at the time of our discussion as he had been in the past. He gave the following rationale:

***Isaac:** Um, as of like now I'm not too involved cause I'm just trying to transition into the university. Like ah... pretty booked up on a lot of labs and lectures and um, with a part-time job on the weekends. So that's kinda not too much time for myself. But ah, in the past... ah, during the summer I, ah, volunteer... for the gardening program... ah, I've been pretty involved with, um, with the environmental side of things.*

Isaac's transition from high school to university and his attempt to acclimatize to the workload and class schedule prevented him from participating in volunteer organizations and causes that he had been involved in previously.

Transitions through life stages were not the only catalyst for changing social networks. The (re)formulation of identities and experimentation with various lifestyles was identified by some youth as the reason for altering social networks. For example, Britney (19 years) discussed how she had a friend who was very important to her, but with whom she very rarely spoke at the time of the interview. When asked what had led to this change in their relationship she responded with the following description:

Britney: Um, at the end of Grade 12, she got into a very huge party phase. And she was wasted every night and like slutting around [laughing]. And I don't know, I just didn't want to hang out with her anymore.... We all kinda...this is going to sound mean but we always kinda talk about the one friend. And I don't know... just they realized how much she changed and we don't like the way she is.

In this narrative we see that Britney's former friend was engaging in behaviours that Britney and other friends in the peer group did not want to participate in. As a result, the composition of the social network was altered. In addition, the identities of the girls remaining in the group were strengthened. According to Schaefer-McDaniel (2004), a sense of belonging and identity form a significant part of the conceptual framework of young people's social capital. As articulated by some of the youth in this study, identities are constantly being (re)constructed which has implications for the (re)formulations of peer groups and social capital. The social capital available to both the female rejected by the group, as well as the remaining group members, was altered as a result of the changing nature of this social network.

These narratives provide examples of how individual networks of social capital can change over time among youth. Youth's networks, from which social capital accrues, are quite fluid insofar as they exhibit significant dynamism and adaptability in response to changing circumstances and the changing biographies of youth. Youth are constantly reformulating networks and making new friendships as their circumstances change and as they transition through various stages of life.

The Formation of Sources of Social Capital in Routine Daily Interactions

In describing their daily routines and social interactions, the participants in this research highlighted three characteristics as important to the development of social capital: face-to-face interaction, common interests, and, in particular, the experience of an emotional connection with the individuals or groups with whom they interact in family, peer, and community contexts.

Face-to-face Interaction

In their descriptions of the people most important to them and on whom they could rely, and how these relationships developed into significant ones, participants described the necessity of face-to-face interaction. Almost all of the participants stated that spending more time with significant other(s) provided the foundation for developing important, strong relationships that they could draw on. For example, Jessica (19 years) discussed at length her relationship with a group of

friends that lived together in a house on her street. When probed as to whether she was always as close to them as she is now, she responded:

Jessica: No actually, ah, they lived in residence last year and that's when I met them. Like through a friend. And then that friend that we both knew, she lives out in [the county] so she's not that close, but we [the rest of the group] were closer so we'd all hang out more and that's how we became more closer.

Similarly, in a discussion about how she developed the close friendships with a group of school peers, Sarah (19 years) said:

Sarah: I met through my...well most of them through my ex-boyfriend. Well, we became mutual friends, especially like the people that come here now [referring to the university she attends] that we, the more the time we spend again we all got closer.

Face-to-face interaction, as described by the youth, creates a sense of solidarity and identity tied to the relationship. Many youth described losing a shared identity and feelings of solidarity, key elements of social capital (Putnam, 2000), and a diminished significance to relationships in their lives when face-to-face interaction was no longer possible. For example, in her explanation of why her former “best friend” was no longer someone she relied on, felt close to, or would claim as a significant person in her life, Phoebe stated the following:

Phoebe: In England my best friend, I'm still friends with but it's hard to live so far away... like I can still talk to her but it's probably more now just general conversation rather than like [pause] we used to.

In a similar vein, when asked to elaborate on why his family is not important to him and why he feels he doesn't turn to them, Ching (16 years) suggested:

Ching: Well, as you can see we're never home with each other, you know.... But like we never see each other. My mom comes home at 9:00. And I'm out and stuff a lot.

As described by the youth above, face-to-face interaction appears to be a necessary condition for the generation of social capital for young people. These findings support previous research results suggesting that relationships in which youth develop forms of social capital, such as emotional support, material aid, or information channels, are those in which they have regular face-to-face contact (Browning & Soller, 2014). The youth suggested that face-to-face interaction contributed to a strong relationship, a sentiment best articulated by Sarah: “... *the more time we spend again, we all got closer*”.

Nevertheless, the increased use of communication technologies and social media (e.g., e-mail, instant messaging, cellular phones, video conferencing), particularly among youth, raises the question as to whether this face-to-face interaction is necessary to produce social capital, or whether emerging forms of technology might be suitable substitutes. Previous research has suggested that communications technologies, including social media, are key in developing social capital in relationships that transcend place and geography, particularly for rural and disadvantaged youth (Clare, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009; Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007; Kavanaugh,

Reese, Carroll, & Rosson, 2005; Lam, 2014). While the youth in this study showed a clear and strong preference for face-to-face interaction with both family and friends, they did make reference to the use of distance media to overcome physical separation and to maintain their social networks in some instances. Though there were no questions pertaining to the use of the Internet in the interview protocol, some youth expressed the feeling that technological forms of communication became particularly important for them as a means to maintain their relationships with other youth or with an absent parent. As Ashley (17 years) stated:

Ashley: He [her father] actually... his job, like he transfers his job will move him all the time and he's in Georgia right now. So I don't know, it's just that...he'll e-mail. So he's always there, even though he's not physically here.

Britney further elaborated how she gets support from her cousin in an adjacent city:

Britney: Every time I do have a problem I'll send her an e-mail. Like if it's an e-mail, she'll reply the same day. That's how I approach her pretty much because she's not with me all the time.

Though the youth in this study showed a willingness to rely on distance media to keep in touch with friends and family, relationships maintained in this way were not discussed with the same significance as relationships involving regular face-to-face contact. Instead, the interaction appeared to involve bare utilitarian, mundane communication, limited to “catching up” on the state of each other’s social lives:

Jessica: It can help keep you in touch with people that moved far away or whatever that you don't get the chance to see very much, but it's also kind of a way to [pause] not see that person...and...which obviously, seeing them in person would probably be a lot better. You can actually interact. So it has its pros and its cons.

These narratives suggest that face-to-face interaction is a key element of the process through which social capital is generated by youth. Relationships identified by the youth as the most important for social capital were those in which they had regular face-to-face contact with other parties. In the absence of this face-to-face interaction, the youth described their relationships as being weakened, and/or not at all important sources of social capital. Though they demonstrated a propensity to rely on distance media to maintain social ties, the narratives of the youth in this study suggest that it is not an adequate substitute for face-to-face interaction.

Common Interests

Central to the process through which youth foster social capital is the development and awareness of common interests between youth and the individuals with whom they build their social capital. The youth in this study described many common interests with those they identified as significant sources of social capital for them, including meeting for meals, playing sports, attending a sporting event, shopping, watching television shows, or attending music concerts:

Sarah: So Saturday mornings I would bowl. And there was this one girl my age named “Catherine” and we hung out every Saturday and we would bowl.

Jessica: Um, we usually share a lot of the same things. We're all in debt and we all have not the greatest relationship with our family. Just life experiences we have I guess in common.... We like to do the same things, we all really like music, like movies, same shows...I think it's important and having things in common.... We got to, ah, concerts together. It's important to have things in common.

In playing sports, watching television shows with others, eating a meal, or attending concerts, these participants were part of a group with common interests. These objects became symbols of the group and formed a basis for individual and group identity, as well as group solidarity, both key elements to the formation of social capital (Putnam, 2000). These common interests among group members and their translation into shared symbols, produces a level of inter-subjectivity, a recognition of where one fits in the group and what distinguishes oneself as a member of it.

Emotional Connections

The participants pointed to a third element in the process of social capital development, namely intense emotional connections to the individual and/or group. Previous literature has pointed to the importance of psychological attachment or emotional engagement in developing and sustaining social relationships (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Dworkin et al., 2003; Reay, 2004; Rhodes, 2004; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). The youth in this study described having an intense emotional connection in their social encounters with people they identify as significant in their lives. Many of the youth remarked on the emotional “highs” experienced with these individuals. For example, when speaking of how her girl friends make her feel when she is with them, Sarah indicated:

*Sarah: Well, it's **excited** because there's like always new stories and it's, like, it's not really boring. I feel like I said before I feel **refreshed** because you can get everything off your chest so it's like [sighs and loosens shoulders]. Or [pause] how else do I feel? [long pause] I don't know I'm just **excited** because we always have fun. [Emphasis added]*

Similarly, when probed as to why he joined intramural volleyball at his university and how he feels when he is with his teammates, Brock (19 years) responded:

*Brock: I love it! It's a lot of **fun** and the social aspect. Like it's **fun** to play and to be with your friends....**Exciting** and [pause] I guess **comforting**. [Emphasis added]*

These emotional connections were sometimes expressed in the youths' narratives in the form of gestures, such as cheering. In her description of what gives her a sense of belonging to her dance group, Phoebe evinces such gestures:

Phoebe: When you achieve something. Whether it be we get a high score in a competition or you finish a routine that no one liked it and it seemed impossible, we'll all celebrate and we'll all hug each other like “we did it!”. We feel together. We accomplished something as a team.

The face-to-face interaction and common interests shared with others contribute to the emotional connection experienced by these youth.

These emotional connections need not always be positive ones. There were instances where youth discussed solidarity being fostered within an emotionally “negative” climate. For example, Jessica described how she and her fellow team members experienced feelings of injustice, cruelty and lack of respect as a result of the actions of team coaches. As described by Jessica below, team members pulled together as a group, and gained a sense of solidarity in the face of this perceived mistreatment:

Jessica: There’s just little things like administration and the coaches and um, just crap that you shouldn’t have to deal with...but we do. And so sometimes I’m thinking, why am I spending so much time...but I think mostly what’s keeping me there is the girls on the team because we’ve got so close. Also, I think that I’m afraid that if I do quit...also I don’t want to quit cause I don’t want to feel like I’m just leaving them behind.... We hang out a lot...as a team.

Likewise, Ashley described a home environment of “negative” emotional energy as her sister suffered from anorexia and her parents divorced, with constant fighting and feelings of sadness and hopelessness. This intense “negative” emotional energy, however, resulted in an increase of solidarity among family members to help her sister recover from her illness:

Ashley: It’s just like I saw the pain, like I wanted to be there for her kind of thing. So I kind of, I don’t know we just got closer because like we’d open up to each other. But when she was going through it, I didn’t want anything like...she was just like crazy.... We lived in the same house like, um, we’d be in the same room and we wouldn’t say one word to each other. And if she was saying something to any one of our family members, she’d be yelling like “I don’t wanna eat”.... And then after when she realized she did have a problem...then we started like...she just started opening up to me and we became closer.

The fact that a sense of belonging and solidarity was fostered within a climate of negative emotional energy suggests that it may be more the intensity of the emotion, rather than the form, that is important in the development of social capital by youth.

Discussion

This paper explored the nature of social capital for youth and the mechanisms through which youth develop social capital. The accounts of social capital from participants in this study emphasized the fluid nature of their social networks as they moved through various stages of adolescence. Youth described the changes in their social networks as they transitioned from grade school to high school, from high school to post-secondary education, and into the workforce. They also described changes in social networks and the reformulation of identities during this period. In response to changing circumstances, transitions through life stages, and changing identities, youths’ social networks demonstrated dynamism and adaptation.

This paper also explored the conditions under which social capital is developed in everyday interactions. In their attempts to construct meaning in their everyday interactions, the participants in this study described three factors as important conditions in which social capital was created: regular face-to-face interaction, common interests, and emotional connections. These descriptions highlight micro-level processes underlying the generation of social capital that closely resemble the components articulated in Randall Collins' (2004) Interaction Ritual Chain. Collins argues that corporeal co-presence, a mutual focus of attention, and emotional effervescence are characteristic of daily interaction that give an individual identity and purpose, without which people could not be readied for activity and resources could not be marshaled (p. 15; p. 235). His theory suggests that in routine daily interactions, individuals physically gather together (corporeal co-presence) and acknowledge a common undertaking (a mutual focus of interest or attention).

Almost all of the participants stated that spending more time with individuals provided the foundation for developing important relationships upon which they could draw for assistance, advice, or emotional support. Even among youth in this study who frequently used electronic communications to maintain contact with individuals, face-to-face interaction, articulated as "hanging out" or spending time together, was critical in creating a sense of solidarity and identity tied to the relationship. The importance of face-to-face contact was further confirmed by participants who described losing a shared identity, feelings of solidarity and diminished significance of the relationship when face-to-face contact was no longer possible.

Sharing common interests was also an important condition in the development of social capital as articulated in the narratives of the youth in this research. In watching television with friends, playing video games, or attending music concerts, the youth felt part of a group with common interests. These interests became symbols for the group and formed the basis for individual and group identity and solidarity. The common interests produced recognition among the youth of where one fits in the group and what distinguishes oneself as a member of it.

The essence of Collins' theory is that individuals are attracted towards some types of relationships and away from others on the basis of "emotional energy". Encounters that have a high degree of shared emotional energy or "effervescence" are formative experiences that result in an immediate sense of group solidarity, shared symbols of social relationships, and shared standards of morality (Collins, 2004, p. 45). Applied to our understanding of social capital, Collins' concept of emotional energy may shed light on why social capital within certain relationships is mobilized by youth, while in others it is not. In their narratives, the participants provided numerous examples of how strong emotional connections within the social relationship led to the development of social capital in the form of social support, shared norms and trust. These included both positive and negative emotions, as in teammates sharing exceptional accomplishments or feelings of mistreatment. While the youth social capital literature has not yet recognized emotion as a key explanatory concept in the development of social capital a retrospective analysis of early studies suggest further investigation of this concept may be useful in further understanding social capital and its role in the lives of young people (see, for example, Morrow, 1999a, 1999b; Gillies & Lucey, 2007; Weller, 2006).

The findings from this study build upon our understandings of young people's social capital by exploring the nature of social capital during this life stage and how it is developed. The

narratives of the participants in this research suggest a theory of the development of social capital by youth in which, not unlike Collins' interaction ritual chains, bodily co-presence, a mutual focus of attention (common interests), and a shared emotional energy, are processes of daily interaction in which networks of social capital are developed. This enhanced understanding is but one small step forward and many questions and challenges remain for future research on the social contexts of young people.

First, the findings suggest that social capital is renegotiated among youth in specific circumstances and cannot be approached as a static resource. Researchers examining social contexts, such as family, school, or community, and their relation to various outcomes for youth, including health, academic achievement, or involvement in crime, must consider the transitions of individuals in and out of numerous social capital networks over time. Second, further research exploring the impact of structural conditions on the development of social capital among young people is warranted. How does age, gender, or area of residence structure the possibilities youth have to develop and maintain social capital within families, schools, peer groups, and communities? This research is required in order to better understand the nature of social capital and its development. Finally, though there is a large body of literature examining the impact of social capital on various outcomes such as health, academic achievement, involvement in crime, or employment, few studies examine the mechanisms through which young people mobilize their social capital to certain ends. Understanding how relationships are developed and key elements of mobilizing networks of social capital will be critical for the development of effective policies to improve the lives and respond effectively to the needs of young people.

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