**Global Kids Organizing in the Global City: A Study of the Generation of Social Capital in Youth Organizing Out of School Time Programming**

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The greatest challenge young people face today are barriers to democratic participation due to economic isolation, lack of access to adequate education, social stigma, and pervasive racism (Ginwright & James, 2002). These experiences have mobilized youth to demand their inclusion in the policy making process as they hold institutions and policy makers accountable to their communities (Ginwright & James, 2002). Researchers have indicated that persistent oppression combined with an inability to confront and challenge oppressive forces constitute a devastating combination (Brooks-Gunn, Ducan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1997). Moreover, youth living in urban settings are more likely to lack access to meaningful opportunities for civic engagement or lack the knowledge that would facilitate their participation (Hart & Atkins, 2002).

 Youth organizing, an extension of strategies developed by adult organizing groups, is aligned with the tenets of positive youth development (PYD) that seeks to develop young people’s capabilities and interests to advance learning and growth (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). However, whereas PYD is focused on reducing the risks in young people’s environments that lead to negative outcomes, youth organizing engages youth to take action in addressing the social problems that cause risks (Ginwright, 2002; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Youth organizing is based on the assertion that positive youth development and social action can go hand in hand to create a new pathway for youth civic action and advocacy (Alexander, 2001, as cited in Camino & Zeldin, 2002).

Out-of-school time (OST) encompasses a comprehensive and holistic view of youth development services that provide youth with a sense of belonging, leadership skills, input, decision-making abilities, as well as challenging and interesting activities (Gambone & Arbreton, 1997). This article examines the ways in which an Out of School Time, Youth Organizing initiative fosters leadership, civic engagement and connection to community issues among immigrant youth in New York City. Using an analytical framework that synthesizes the literature on youth organizing, civic engagement and social capital this mixed methods study found that youth participants in the Global Kids Human Rights Activist Project (HRAP) demonstrated significant increases on social capital indicators on a pre/posttest instrument. In addition, interview participants suggested that their participation in HRAP influenced the development of leadership and organizing skills, and enhanced their civic participation and knowledge of community problems (such as environmental degradation), and policy solutions.

**Youth Organizing, Civic Engagement and Social Capital**

Youth organizing initiatives seek to foster civic participation and youth leadership through direct engagement with pressing community problems, action research and policy advocacy (Ginwright & James, 2002; Fox, et al., 2010; 2002; Kershner, Strobel, & Fernandez, 2003). Youth Organizing emerged out of critiques of treatment and prevention approaches to working with young people and stresses a holistic approach to engaging youth that is characterized by development, education and social justice (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). These initiatives emphasize the *sociopolitical development* of youth participants which Watts and Flanagan (2007) define as the “evolving, critical understanding of the political, economic, cultural and other systemic forces that shape society and one’s status in it, and the associated process of growth in relevant knowledge, analytic skills and emotional faculties” (p. 784). This dynamic developmental process occurs within the organizational and social context of Youth Organizing programming, especially the relationships developed between staff and youth participants as well as the networks of relationships formed between participants and the community leaders, experts and stakeholders who they engage. These overlapping processes are also reflective of the concept of *civic engagement* - an individual’s durable participation in local/national politics, cultural associations and/or neighborhood groups where they demonstrate an interest in issues beyond their private concerns (Triandafyllidou & Vogel, 2006; Janmaat, 2008). Civic engagement, as a function of Youth Organizing programming is instrumental tothe concept of *social capital* – which is broadly defined as a set of resources individuals derive from social networks (Bourdieu; 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putman, 1994).

While divergent and ambiguous views of social capital endure, as an overarching concept it has been alternately characterized as “networks that reproduce social hierarchies,” (Bourdieu, 1987) “effective norms and sanctions,” (Coleman, 1988); and “norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness” (Putnam, 1995); and provides a useful analytical frame with which to analyze relational development phenomena such as youth organizing. As Weller (2006) observes social capital “is not an ‘object’ but rather a set of interactions and relationships based on trust and reciprocity that have the potential to be transformative” (p. 874). In other words, by virtue of their participation in Youth Organizing programming, youth are provided with the opportunity to develop a range of organizational and critical thinking skills as their relative social capital grants (or alternately denies) them access to influential people and processes that enable change. Youth organizing program participants may also activate these resources on the behalf of others (in the form of justice oriented campaigns) but having acquired these resources they will also learn to use them to access additional opportunities for themselves and others.

Putnam’s (1995) discussion of bonding and bridging forms of social capital has been previously applied to the analysis of after school programming for immigrant youth (Camras, 2004). Bonding social capital is characterized by inward looking relationships that reinforce trust and reciprocity within homogenous groups whereas bridging social capital reflects relations of trust and reciprocity across heterogenous groups (Putnam, 1994; Reynolds, 2010). As Camras (2004) observes “while bonding social capital fosters connections to one’s own community, bridging social capital fosters connections to diverse others and to the society at large” (p. 22). These constructs are especially useful in understanding the ways that youth organizing programming may facilitate forms of social capital that facilitate immigrant youth engagement with the broader society even as they seek to improve conditions that negatively affect their own racial/ethnic and residential communities. Other studies, however, caution that the contextual features of distressed communities posed major challenges to the development of bridging and bonding social capital that are the sought after panacea for building social cohesion and promoting civic engagement. In Cheong’s (2006) study of Hispanic immigrant civic engagement for example, high levels of crime generated fear and distrust among residents; inaccessibility to governmental institutions caused competition for resources; and pervasive levels of racism further marginalized and oppressed immigrants. Understanding how these various dimensions of social capital are shaped by issues of race and immigration is critically important to understanding how civic engagement and social capital building within a youth organizing initiative are strengthened or constrained within immigrant communities.

Based upon this understanding of social capital, civic engagement and the goals of youth organizing initiatives this study endeavors to enlighten our knowledge of the ways that the Global Kids HRAP program enhances the resources available to immigrant youth and supports them in deploying these resources for the greater benefit of their communities. As a result, the following question guides this inquiry: *To what extent does an Out-of-School Time (OST) youth organizing initiative serve to increase the civic engagement of immigrant youth and connectedness to community issues as interpreted through the lens of social capital?*

**Setting and Context of Study**

 Implemented over a two-year period, Global Kids’ Greening Western Queens Initiative engaged over 100 young people residing in the communities of Astoria and Long Island City in a youth organizing out-of-school time program. For 25 years Global Kids has pioneered engaging and substantive programs in New York City and Washington, D.C. that develop young people as leaders in their schools and communities. Global Kids’ approach is grounded within a positive youth development framework (Benson, et al., 2006) that provides young people with a solid understanding of local and global issues, leadership skill development, and access to opportunities to engage as active citizens in their communities and beyond. Positive youth development first emerged as an approach used by youth practitioners that focuses on developing young people’s strengths, skills and abilities as a shift away from the deficit models developed in psychology and sociology that sought to reduce risky and aberrant behaviors in youth. According to Damon (2003):

“Positive youth development takes a strengths-based approach to defining and understanding how children influence and are influenced by their contexts over time; it holds up the centrality of community as an incubator of positive development as well as a multifaceted setting in which young people can exercise agency and inform the settings, places, people, and policies that in turn affect their development” (as cited in Benson, et al., 2006, pg. 1).

Using experiential learning Global Kids engages participants in hands-on skill building activities that focus on literacy, research, communication, critical thinking and team-based projects that maximize and build on their natural curiosity and untapped abilities. One of Global Kids’ core OST programs, the Human Rights Activist Project (HRAP), prepares young people to be human rights activists who tackle serious issues through the development and implementation of public policy campaigns. HRAP provides youth with the skills, support and opportunities they need to advocate for the human rights and social justice issues they care about. The program merges social action techniques with Global Kids’ unique youth development approach, to help youth develop the confidence and the communication skills necessary to research issues, articulate their views, and educate their peers and communities.

The Greening Western Queens Initiative was initiated to address pressing environmental concerns including poor air quality, water pollution, and lack of green spaces that have contributed to high asthma rates and other health problems in the communities of Western Queens. Seizing a significant opportunity to engage more young people in promoting the health and well-being of their communities, the Greening Western Queens Initiative sought to develop a cadre of youth activists for environmental justice. Through the Greening Western Queens Initiative participants learned about the policy making process, educated their peers on environmental issues, mobilized with cross-sector community groups, and launched successful public policy campaigns.

During the two years of the initiative from 2011-2013, program activities were conducted after school once a week for two and a half hours per session at William C. Bryant High School and Long Island City High School. Youth also participated in field trips to environmental organizations, retreats, meetings with elected officials, and community organizing events. Over 100 youth participated over the course of the initiative with a core group of 50 participants engaged during each academic year. Additionally, at the end of each academic year, Global Kids conducted an Environmental Justice Summer Institute. This intensive four-week summer program involved 25-30 participants in two weeks of intensive knowledge and skill-building activities focused on environmental sustainability that was followed by a two-week internship at a partner environmental organization. During the internship youth learned to directly apply what they learned while also gaining important career building skills.

**Methods**

The researchers used a qualitative case study design with a quantitative component consisting of a pre and posttest survey instrument, a modified version of the Youth Social Capital Scale (Yin, 1999; Onyx, Wood, Bullen, & Osburn, 2005). Data collection was conducted during the second year of the initiative in the late spring and summer of 2013. In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 participants using a semi-structured protocol that focused on three key domains of social capital (trust and solidarity, collective action and cooperation, empowerment and political) as developed by the World Bank (2006). Upon obtaining human subject approval six interviews were conducted with participants of the school-year program, and another six interviews were conducted with participants of the summer programming component. The researchers had initially planned to conduct six interviews with school-year participants, however, upon learning of the summer programming component they decided to double the number of interviews. In this way the researchers hoped to capture the experiences of youth that participated in this extended programming and capture the perspectives of students in both after school and summer HRAP programming.

**Participants**

Of the twelve participants recruited for the qualitative interviews, nine had been engaged in the initiative during the academic year and three had participated only in the summer programming component. Nine participants attend Long Island City High School and three attend William C. Bryant High School. The youth ranged in age from 15 to 17 and were enrolled in the ninth to eleventh grades. The sample was evenly distributed in terms of gender with six males and six females. There was a diverse range of racial and ethnic backgrounds. Four participants identified as Hispanic. Three participants identified as Asian. Two participants identified as South Asian. One participant identified as African American, another as African, and one identified as Middle Eastern.

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| Table 1. Characteristics of Interview ParticipantsParticipant                          Age        Gender          Grade         School             Background |
| Larry 16 M 11 Long Island City HS African |
| Linda 15 F 10 Long Island City HS Hispanic |
| Abby 16 F 11 Long Island City HS African American |
| Jenny 15 F 9 William C. Bryant HS Middle Eastern |
| Carl 15 M 9 William C. Bryant HS Hispanic |
| Connie 15 F 9 Long Island City HS South Asian |
| Fanny 15 F 10 Long Island City HS Hispanic |
| Frank 17 M 11 Long Island City HS South Asian |
| Justin 17 M 10 William C. Bryant HS Asian |
| Harry 16 M 9 Long Island City HS Asian |
| David 17 M 11 Long Island City HS Asian |
| Anna 16 F 11 Long Island City HS Hispanic |

 For the quantitative component of the study, a modified version of the Youth Social Capital Scale (Onyx, et al., 2005) was administered to participants of the Greening Western Queens Environmental Justice Summer Institute. The YSCS is a self-administered questionnaire designed to measure individual level social capital of youth aged 12 to 20 years old across seven factors including: participation in the community, youth social agency, trust and safety, neighborhood connections, family and friends, friends, and moral principles (Onyx, et al., 2005 as cited in Koutra, et al., 2011). There were a total of 32 participants in the four-week program. Twenty-three youth completed the questionnaire on the first day of the program and again on the last day. The pre and post questionnaire was only administered to the summer program participants due to timing limitations that precluded the researchers from administering the survey to school-year participants of the Greening Western Queens Initiative. See Table 2 for demographics and background characteristics of this group.

**Table 2. Characteristics of YSCS Respondents**

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| **Characteristic** | **N=23** |
|  | No. of Youth |
| **Gender** |  |
|  **Female** | 13 |
|  **Male** | 10 |
| **Age** |  |
|  **14 years old** | 3 |
|  **15 years old** | 10 |
|  **16 years old** | 6 |
|  **17 years old** | 4 |
| **Race/Ethnicity** |  |
|  **Asian/Pacific Islander** | 10 |
|  **Hispanic** | 8 |
|  **African American** | 3 |
|  **Other** | 2 |
| **High School Enrolled** |  |
|  **Long Island City HS** | 10 |
|  **William C. Bryant HS** | 12 |
|  **Other school** |  1 |
| **Length of Participation in Global Kids** |  |
|  **Less than 3 months** | 13 |
|  **1 – 2 years** | 6 |
|  **4 – 10 months** | 3 |
|  **Over 2 years** | 1 |

The Youth Social Capital Scale (YSCS) was originally developed by Onyx and colleagues (2005) in Australia as an adapted counterpart to the adult version of the scale. For the purposes of our study only three of the original survey items were omitted. The 32-item pre/post questionnaire that was administered to participants consisted of items on participation in community (7), neighborhood connections (4), trust and safety (2), youth social agency (7), friends (2), family and friends (5), and moral principles (5). Items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale (*No, never, Sometimes, Most of the time, All of the Time*) with scores summed for all items. A higher score indicates higher levels of social capital.

**Quantitative Findings**

The significance of the difference in total mean scores for each area (moral principles, youth social agency, participation in community, family and friends, neighborhood connections, and trust and safety) was analyzed using the Same Sample T-test. The findings revealed that there were moderate improvements in the average score for three areas from pre- to post-test.  Areas that showed notable increases include youth social agency (scale of 15), participating in the community (scale of 18) and moral principles (scale of 15). The differences in all three areas from pre- to post-test were significant at the .05 level. Youth’ reported participation in community increased from an average of 5.5 to 7.3; youth social agency from 6.2 to 7.6; and moral principles from 10.2 to 11.0.

**Table 3. Youth Social Capital Scale: Means and Same Sample T Test**

 **Pre-Test M Post-Test M P < .05**

Moral Principles 10.2 11.0 .035

Youth Social Agency 6.2 7.6 .006

Participate in Community 5.5 7.3 .017

Individual items that saw significant increases for youth included the importance of having their opinions count in school or the wider community, which rose from 52% in the pre-test to 65% in the post-test. Self-worth or the sense that youth felt valued or esteemed by their peers also increased from 26% in the pre-test to 48% in the post-test. Additionally, youth also demonstrated an increased sense of feeling at home in their local community from 26% to 48%. These increases may be attributed to the specific youth organizing activities that helped youth develop an increased sense of agency, as well as tolerance and appreciation for the diversity of backgrounds and views of their peers. Additionally, by working and depending on one another to create and promote their environmental justice campaign, youth were directly engaged in addressing environmental concerns in their community, thus contributing to the development of bonding and bridging capital. These findings are further substantiated by youths’ individual interview responses, which provided rich and nuanced descriptions of how HRAP and the Greening Western Queens activities fostered their leadership, civic engagement and connection to community issues. As youth gained knowledge of critical environmental issues affecting their communities, they worked collaboratively to identify policy solutions, educate and mobilize community residents. Thus, building bonding capital within their peer networks and bridging capital as they expanded their reach to other environmental groups and government officials to garner broad support for their proposed policy change. (I think here some claims can be made a little stronger and more elaboration of the findings could be done—explaining what substantiates the findings

**Qualitative Findings**

**Bridging Capital**

For the participants in the Greening Western Queens initiative, the group work experience was particularly significant in providing opportunities to access and build knowledge collectively. Their statements provided evidence of bridging social capital fostered through program activities. Youth valued the opportunity to work together in groups with diverse peers and staff, which provided exposure to different perspectives. Youth worked in small groups to conduct research on the benefits of the environmental policy recommendation they were proposing. They had to rely on each other to devise a campaign to achieve the policy goal of establishing one green roof on one NYC public school in each borough. Through group work youth learned to share responsibility, to experience leadership, address challenges, and expand their network of resources. Some youth described the group work experience as enabling them to connect with others both within the program and other groups that they encountered that also shared their passion for environmental justice. For example, Jenny shared her positive experience,

Well, I actually really liked working in groups or teams because if I work alone it's only, like my ideas, my point of view towards things, but working as a group you don't only receive one point of view but you receive many points of view. Many new ideas, new thoughts, how to solve problems…and not only one way, but many ways. So it's actually been very beneficial because I don't only see things or view things from my view but actually from other people's views. So it's been really good.

Youth gained access to new knowledge from the resources provided by Global Kids staff and other environmental groups and activists, as well as from the other participants. As David described, “We go to different schools, and different gardens, and worked with their workers. In my opinion, we got more power and more knowledge.” Another student, Linda, described the new organizations she had visited, “I have been introduced to… Build-it Green. They save up scrap and all that and then they make new things out of it. And then like the Brooklyn Grange, it’s an actual green roof.” Linda also spoke about how these visits helped participants make new connections and also instilled the confidence to reach out and speak about their work.

Youth also discussed the benefits of the new connections they were making for their future academic and career goals. For example, Fanny described how through Greening Western Queens she met more “important people of the government,” and how she and other youth were always asking about internship opportunities. For example, she commented about the contact information she has kept with the intent of applying for internships in the near future. By working collectively within their group and with groups across the city, youth participants suggested that they had the opportunity to extend outwards (make connections with communities and people they may otherwise would not have had the opportunity to) as they shared new knowledge, made important connections, and began to develop political power to influence policy change.

**Trust, Solidarity and Community**

To gain a greater understanding of youth’ experiences and views toward their communities, and how they engaged with others, youth were asked to define the term “community,” as well as describe the community in which they lived. All participants agreed on several aspects of community life that they identified as present or lacking in their communities - safety, family, unity and a trusting environment. Anna for example described community as “…where there is a diverse group of people, they can all come together even despite different cultures…and help out where they live.” For Connie, community meant, “…neighbors around my community…people with…stores, neighbors, friends and family around me.” Carl defined community as, “Everyone uniting for at least a problem, if they want to solve a problem…or helping each other.”

Participants’ views toward their communities varied. Their views focused mainly on issues of safety, trust, and diversity. Some youth felt safe within their communities while others did not. Youth also valued the friendliness of community members towards one another and willingness to help each other. This was especially salient as all the youth described their communities as ethnically diverse with Hispanics, Asians, African Americans, and Middle Easterners the predominant groups. Connie described that residents in her community “…they get along like…if there’s any kind of problem…they talk to each other, they come up with the solutions.” Even though participants had similar views on what a community was they did not believe that where you live defines your community. Community for them was largely where they felt the safest and most comfortable – where they could be themselves. Anna for example stated “I believe community is where there is safe space and where they can really come together.” She elaborated

Safe space is just being able to express yourself without being judged. I mean safe space in a room would be that - but safe space outside would be expressing yourself physically because people wouldn’t really be able to get to know you. Just like the way you come off or just like how you are outside. Being able to be accepted in that way.

While Anna described *safe space* as a place where she would be accepted and not judged, she did not consider the community where she resided a safe space and suggested that violence and drug use were major factors in creating these conditions. She observed that residents in her neighborhood “stay in their own lane,” and would not “mix in” or come together to help solve community problems. This sense of distance or apathy on the part of community residents was shared by many participants including Abby, who identified gang violence and high asthma rates as her community’s most pressing problems. She described that existing mechanisms in her community for addressing these and other community issues were underutilized,

Well, we do have like monthly meetings like with our community board but not a lot of people show up. So...I guess people don't care. But the community board… they're trying to like reach people but no one wants to take the time and you know solve these problems so - I don't think it's like our community board's fault or the (sic) officials, it's pretty much the community because (sic) they're not taking the time to go to the meetings and listen to what everybody has to say.

In her study of Hispanic immigrant communities, Cheong (2006) stresses the importance of contextual dimensions (social, cultural, political) that posed major challenges to the development of bridging, bonding, and linking social capital (connection to community institutions). Cheong’s (2006) findings revealed that these contextual dimensions “may limit the operation of cooperative norms, participation in voluntary associations and activation of shared values that are currently promoted as good social capital” (pg. 383). It may be that the unwillingness to engage in community building that Abby observed, which may also exist in other immigrant communities, are caused by structural dimensions that hinder the development of social cohesion and civic engagement. Youth identified a range of community problems including noise pollution, drug abuse, domestic violence, high rents and poor overall living conditions, truancy, health problems, particularly asthma and high rates of violence. Carl, for example stated, “…I just wish that we could do community services there and help clean the streets.” Youth also cited a general lack of environmental awareness among community residents, specifically the impact of air pollution and other environmental conditions that were affecting the quality of life. As Larry expressed, “…nobody actually has more knowledge about the environment and what causes pollution…I don't think anyone (sic) actually is more aware of the (sic) environment because you got a lot of things which you have to think about so like the environment is the last thing, which is on people's minds.”

For most of the youth, participation in Greening Western Queens inspired them to be more active in educating their family members, peers, and community residents about their community’s environmental problems. Youth were directly linking their experience in Greening Western Queens to actions they could take to make changes in their communities. Connie stated, “Like me being involved in this Global Kids program. I’m really thankful for (sic) that. So for my community if I know more about this I could spread the news around and they would be more engaged.” Participants reported that being part of the initiative made them feel involved with their community, helped build friendships among their peers, and gave them a broader cultural perspective stemming from the group’s diversity. Jenny, for example observed,

I've met people from different ethnicities, from different religions, and from different communities. It's actually like benefitted me a lot because I got to know more about the place they lived in or what has happened to them. And actually made me aware of…other things I didn't even know existed before.

Youth also developed a key insight regarding the need for increased cooperation among all community members to improve living conditions for all and expressed this was an important outcome of their learning experience.

**Empowerment**

 Over the course of a year and a half, participants in the Greening Western Queens initiative planned and developed a policy advocacy campaign that sought to persuade NYC education officials to install one green roof on at least one public school in each New York City borough, especially in communities with significant environmental burdens. The cornerstone of the campaign centered on obtaining signatures on a petition that would be presented to the Chancellor of the NYC Department of Education. A prevalent theme that emerged from the youth’ responses as they spoke about advocating for this policy change and obtaining supporters for the petition was a sense of commitment and solidarity to improving the quality of life within their communities. Linda keenly associated the outcomes the initiative sought to achieve as a way of addressing the problems of unemployment and financial insecurity in her community. She reflected,

Well, when it comes to employment and financial problems it would help a lot. Like Greening Western Queens would help them a lot cause it’s like, right now we’re thinking about green roofs and that would help because…to maintain green roofs, to even construct them would be a whole different area of employment, which would help a lot the people in my community to get some kind of employment. And…I know a lot of times like when you have financial problems, when you don’t know what to do, you get under a lot of stress. Having a greener area (sic) actually helps the mind relax.

The participant’s responses also promoted the value of advocacy, education, and the need for collective cooperation to effect change. As Larry aptly illustrated, “The more people know about certain things, the more curiosity it brings, the more curiosity, the more people will research. More research, more planning, more planning, more action.” In all of the interviews, youth participants presented a desire to educate family members, classmates, neighbors, and community leaders on the green roof initiative. Jenny expressed, “…the whole concept of green (sic) roofs, it actually made, not only, but other people mostly aware of what was happening…I actually saw how much of (sic) a difference, the idea and the concept did with not only me but many other people.”

The youth also demonstrated a common understanding of government and the process for policy change. Specifically, the majority of the participants demonstrated an understanding of civics by discussing their experiences meeting politicians, lobbyists, and government employees. The youth appreciated the interest, the positive feedback and encouragement they received from the representatives they met with. They also learned that implementing policy change was a difficult process that requires persistence and patience. The action of getting signatures on a petition also opened up opportunities for youth to reach out beyond their own communities and groups they regularly associated with. Jenny shared,

Petitions, if you actually get enough signatures you could make a change. So the idea of a petition was good in both ways that not only are you getting someone to sign without them knowing anything about the whole idea, but you’re actually informing them about what you’re talking about…So you’re basically not only getting a school, or a club, or an organization to participate in this act but anyone else who would like to.

Another valuable lesson that youth learned was the power of using their voice to advocate for change, as Fanny expressed, “…your voice can make a difference. Cause you wouldn’t think that some people are interested but sometimes when you would walk around your community, people feel really passionate about it, *‘Oh, my goodness, yes, someone is finally talking about this.’*” Using their voice within the structure provided through the Greening Western Queens initiative showcases the power that youth can have when engaged in meaningful and well-planned activities that connect them to resources, relationships and networks that support the development of new social capital.

**Conclusion**

In addition to significant increases on social capital indicators on a pre/posttest instrument youth participants in the HRAP Greening Western Queens initiative developed a knowledge base on the problems of environmental degradation and its impact on New York City’s communities as well as a number of skills related to engaging and persuading decision makers and community stakeholders to support the development of green roofs on several of the city’s schools. More importantly youth participants suggested that bridging social capital (I think the paper could emphasize this more in the findings sections—quanitative and qualitative as it is an important part of paper) is generated within the relationships established between youth participants, staff, stakeholders and other community residents who are touched by the campaigns and other program activities. This study illustrates that youth organizing initiatives develop within youth participants connectedness to community concerns but more importantly a sense of agency that they may act to address these concerns and improve their communities. The relational nature of these initiatives underscores an explicit focus on sociopolitical development through civic engagement.

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