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Youth Movement: Building on the Assets of Community for School Reform

Ethan Johnson and Andraé Brown*

I'm not racist or anything, but we heard that a Mexican kid was going to jump a black dude, one of my friends, so all the black kids went after him, and it turned into a big fight between us and the Mexicans.—Jason,¹ 11th-grade African American male student at East Oakland High School.

It's always the same *mayates* (a black insect) causing all the fights ... well, who knows, all black people look the same.—Nyalie, a 12th-grade Mexican female student at East Oakland High School.

Introduction

THROUGHOUT THE 1990s, VIOLENCE BETWEEN LATINO AND AFRICAN AMERICAN students occurred frequently at East Oakland High School (EHS), located in a low-income district of Oakland, California. Tensions between the two groups had been so pervasive for a number of years that many students viewed segregation and violence as facts of everyday life, as expressed by an African American student: "It's always been like this and there is nothing that could be done." Similarly, Tatiana, a Mexican American student who has been involved in several conflicts with African Americans, stated: "*Me pegaron otra vez. Ya va como cinco veces. Me estoy acostumbrando.*" (They hit me again. It's now happened like five times. I am getting used to it.)

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Realizing that interracial tensions among youth were reaching an extreme in the East Bay, leaders from nonprofit agencies created Youth Movement (YM), a university, community, and school collaborative designed to develop multiracial student teams to lead school-based reform efforts in the prevention and reduction of youth violence in the targeted high schools. The collaborative selected EHS as a site for a YM team, consisting of up to 10 students from various ethnic backgrounds (but mostly African American and Latino) and an adult coordinator. YM's strategies for change included leadership development of team members, advocacy, community education, and organizing.

In early October of 1998, interracial violence between African American and Latino youth peaked when an African American student stabbed a Latino student on campus. The stabbing appeared to be related to episodes of violence between African American and Latino students that occurred during the previous week. As a result, the police increased their presence in and around the school and did not allow students to leave or enter campus during school hours (SFGate, 1998). YM at EHS launched a school change campaign and focused on various strategies to reduce interracial tensions. The goal of the campaign was to mobilize students and staff to support a student center and oversee the implementation of additional resources and programs. YM's work resulted in noteworthy successes; however, the team encountered challenges and obstacles in establishing peace between the ethnic groups.

Traditionally, counselors and practitioners working within educational settings have approached problems such as violence at the individual and group levels. These interventions may include bullying education and training, conflict resolution, and expulsion and suspension policies. Although the people implementing these practices may acknowledge the historical, social, and economic context in which violence occurs, they rarely make this the foundation of their work. Moreover, research in the field of community psychology contends that such approaches do not result in long-lasting positive change because they are fundamentally limited and unsustainable (Perkins, Hughey, and Speer, 2002). The field of community psychology, adopting a social capital framework, integrates historical and contemporary racial and social class dynamics, both theoretically and practically. A social capital lens of analysis provides insights into how counselors and practitioners working in schools can rethink their ways of addressing violence and other long-standing issues that plague inner-city schools and communities. Through an ethnographic account² of a community organization's efforts to address interracial violence at Eastside High School in Oakland, this article attempts to reveal how such interventions can be developed and implemented.

A Social Capital Framework

Social capital theory and applications have gained in popularity and influence over the last few decades; however, as various scholars have argued, the concept remains

problematic at various levels. Theorists and practitioners have been unable to agree upon a definition. A further, and probably more important, debate concerns the relationship between social capital and racial and class-based forms of exclusion (Glanville and Bienenstock, 2009; Social Capital Research Initiative, 2005). Researchers frequently rely upon the basic concept of social capital expounded upon by sociologists Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and James Coleman (1988) and political scientist Robert Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000). Gamarnikow and Green (1999) provide a helpful definition of social capital and note the importance it has to social networks and policy at the local and national levels:

In essence [social capital] is about value and power to and gained from individuals of participation in social networks. Its attractiveness lies in its appeal to common-sense ideas about the good society of responsible and decent individuals, families, and communities, of social cohesion and security, and of the democratic engagement of citizenry in the communities of civil society and its local and national policies. Social capital is about the multifaceted benefits of “trust” (p. 107).

Further scholarship has endeavored to clarify the complexity of this concept. One explanation refers to the individual and collective levels at which social capital functions. *Individual social capital* involves the social networks through which an individual finds the resources he or she needs. *Collective social capital* refers to the networks formed by social groups within a community to achieve the resources needed to attain their goals (Frank, 2006). It is important to distinguish between the different forms of social capital (Derose and Varda, 2009; Woolcock, 2001; Green and Preston, 2001; Policy Research Initiative, 2005). *Bonding social capital* refers to the connections between and among people within a community, such as close friends, family, and neighbors, that enable them to gain access to resources. *Bridging social capital* refers to links that connect individuals and groups within a community to individuals and institutions outside their community that have access to economic and social resources (Woolcock, 1998).

Furthermore, Derose and Varda (2009) posit that social capital is comprised of cognitive, behavioral, and structural indicators/dimensions. The *cognitive* dimension refers to what people “feel”—for example, trust toward one another. *Behavioral* indicators include people’s actions that reflect social ties and resources within their communities. *Structural* indicators of social capital refer to the density and strength of ties and to the redundancy of interactions. These indicators can be applied on the individual and communal levels.

While all communities have varying degrees, levels, types, and dimensions of social capital, these distinctions do not address the question of how it is related to racial and class oppression. Building on the work of Bourdieu, Gamarnikow and Green (1999) write:

Unlike cultural and economic capitals, which are distributed unequally, social capital is ubiquitous, but class-specific forms of sociability and networks make social capital intrinsically unequal. Thus, the universality of sociability and networks obscures their differential effectiveness: lower class networks are plentiful and varied as middle class ones, but less productive of socially and economically successful outcomes (p. 112).

The field of community psychology provides a useful framework for conceptualizing the link between power and social capital. It highlights the problems of both psychology and social capital theory and practice, suggesting that their focus on the individual and bonding social capital obscures the larger and multiple contexts in which communities are embedded (Perkins, Hughey, and Speer, 2002; Stevenson, 1998). Indeed, Perkins et al. contend that inner-city environments where “liquor stores, check cashing offices, few affordable grocery stores, and ‘adult’ book stores abound make absent or weaken the possibility for the emergence of social capital” (2002: 45). In other words, the accumulation and maintenance of social capital is inextricably connected to larger socioeconomic forces (white flight, segregation, deindustrialization, and urban development) that contribute to the development of racially segregated, poor inner-city communities (Rothstein, 2005; Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005). This strongly suggests that inequality and discrimination have a causal effect in the demise of social capital and that counselors must take this into account when designing and implementing interventions.

Few scholarly studies explicitly address interracial conflict in high schools from a social capital framework. Our argument is that interracial conflict is a component and symptom of larger social forces; community psychology’s integration of social capital theory similarly takes this approach, which is supported by scholars of interracial conflict (Bobo and Hutchins, 1996; Sanchez Janckowski, 1995; Olzak, 1996; Blumer, 1958; Johnson and Oliver, 1994). For example, Johnson and Oliver (1994: 202) state that it is “our belief that solutions to the interethnic minority conflict problem must await the resolution of larger urban ills which are associated with the economic, social and demographic transformations occurring in American society.” We suggest that the work of Youth Movement is an intervention that attempts to address these broader urban realities.

The Destruction of the East Oakland Community and EHS

During World War II, many African Americans began moving out west because of the economic opportunities associated with the war, such as shipbuilding and other related industries (Lamke-Santangelo, 1998). By the 1950s, black people made up 12 percent of the population of the city of Oakland (Johnson, 1993). The Eastern District, like most other parts of Oakland, was predominantly white until the mid-1960s. Schools provide a lens through which to observe demographic shifts. EHS, the only public high school for the area, experienced dramatic changes over the last 50

years. In 1953, for example, EHS had only 12 black seniors (Pacific News Service, 1985). In 1965, 72 percent of the population was black, and by 1972, 98 percent (Annual Report to the Community, 1998) of the student population of EHS was African American. More recently, Latino immigrants have increased their presence in the school's total population from 10 percent in 1990 to 29 percent in 2000.

As in many large urban areas across the country, the segregation of black people in the Eastern District was no accident. Housing in suburban areas was severely restricted due to various racially biased practices that discouraged African Americans from leaving the city to the suburbs to follow jobs (Pacifica News Service, 1995). Through the practice known as redlining, banks would not make loans to people based on where they lived. Another tactic that limited which areas minorities could buy into was the Alameda County Board of Realtors' refusal to share their house listings with Oakland's more diverse board of realtors. Furthermore, the Federal Housing Authority and the Veterans Administration subsidized suburban housing "built and marketed on a discriminatory basis" (Lemke-Santangelo, 1996: 6). Data on the proportion of African Americans living in the outlying suburbs of Oakland are revealing. By 1966, the cities of Fremont, Newark, and Union City were 0.2 percent nonwhite out of a population of 122,000. In 1972, the population of Oakland's closest neighbor to the east, San Leandro, was 99.9 percent white (Lemke-Santangelo, 1996).

Another important contributing factor to the concentration of African Americans in the Eastern District is urban planning. Through the late 1950s to the mid-1960s the construction of the Shafter Freeway, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), and a large postal processing center displaced one-third of the black residents from West Oakland to East Oakland (PNS, 1985). Additionally, "by the late 1950s enough blacks had settled in East Oakland to establish it as a mecca for others looking for integrated communities in which to buy homes and raise their families" (*Ibid.*: 4). At the same time, most of the city's cheap public housing was built in East Oakland. As a result, East Oakland and the Eastern District, located in the easternmost section of Oakland, became a segregated African American part of the city.

A key explanation for the increased levels of poverty in the Eastern District is deindustrialization. Between 1960 and 1975, the city of Oakland lost one-third of its manufacturing jobs. The percentages of households living in poverty in an eastern neighborhood were 22.1 in 1970, 35.6 in 1980, and 35.8 in 1990. In contrast, the percentages of people living in poverty in the City of Oakland were 12.2, 16.0, and 16.7, respectively (U.S. census). Unemployment for young African American men jumped from 28.6 percent in 1950 to 50 percent in 1970 (Lemke-Santangelo, 1996). High crime rates are correlated with the removal of jobs in the Eastern District. The Oakland Police Department Annual Crime Reports from 1989 to 1991 indicate that the Eastern District had the highest number of arrests related to murder and crack cocaine compared to other parts of the city. In the 1999 report, three of the police beats that make up the district were in the top 10 of the areas

with the highest rates of violent crime in the city. Archival documents for the area indicate that street crime activity in the Eastern District was minimal prior to the 1970s, and it began to increase after this period.

The conditions at EHS have mirrored those in the broader community. In 1970, 1975, and 1981 the 12th-grade basic skills test revealed that EHS students performed worse in comparison with the state and the district in reading and math. Additionally, academic achievement data from 1982 to 1996 indicate that the school has ranked consistently low in comparison with the district and the nation (Annual Report to the Community, 1998). Graduation rate data also strongly suggest that the school was performing worse after the mid-1960s. In 2000, less than 10 percent of the student population graduated. The question thus arises about the difference between the school of the past and the school of the present.

Since the mid-1960s the decline of socioeconomic resources in the community was matched by a decline in social and capital resources at EHS. A review of EHS yearbooks from 1961 to 2000 reveals that support staff, courses, extracurricular activities and events, and links with community institutions and organizations gradually diminished. For example, in 1961 there were 13 counselors (four for each grade), four musical groups, numerous artistic and vocational education programs, 52 community sponsors of the yearbook, one nurse, and over 50 student groups in which to participate. By 1983, there were four counselors, 10 student groups, no yearbook sponsors, and no nurse. In the 1990s, the number of student groups began to rise, but many of them were race/ethnicity based or problem oriented.

In 2000, African Americans comprised approximately 65 percent of the student population at EHS, and these proportions are reflected in the community. As African Americans and Latinos have come together at EHS, tensions have risen and violence has ensued. The historical socioeconomic perspective provides a context within which to understand negative social-economic indicators such as (interracial) violence, crime, poverty, and low academic achievement, but it fails to explain what happens at the institutional and personal levels to cause such outcomes. A social capital perspective, notwithstanding its limitations, renders a clearer view. Social capital and its connection to the practices and processes of social exclusion are useful for understanding the increase in violence at EHS and the efforts of YM to diminish conflict.

EHS and Social Capital

In the past, social capital was vibrant at EHS and in the Eastern District; conversely, the more recent circumstances illustrate that it has drastically declined. Communities where there are high levels of social capital show certain characteristics—for example, high levels of participation in organizations that have horizontal forms of decision making, as opposed to hierarchical structures. Additionally, the citizens who make up these communities demonstrate that they feel empowered, trust their fellow citizens, and have come to accept the norms of society. Within communities marked by low

levels of social capital there are fewer formal and informal institutions in which individuals can participate, and the quality of relationships in these institutions is characterized as hierarchical. In addition, when citizens do not trust one another, they tend to feel powerless and see the laws of society as obstacles (Glanville and Bienenstock, 2009; Perkins, Hughey, and Speer, 2002; Social Research Initiative, 2005). Looking back, the key question is how individuals described EHS and the Eastern District in relation to the vibrancy of associations, the quality of relationships in them, and the level of participation.

Ms. Johnson was a school librarian in 2000 and a student at EHS in 1965. When asked about the conditions that characterized her school and community when she was a student, she stated:

There was a cohesive student government, which addressed community and school concerns. The school had interaction with college students, and students were very academically oriented.... There were no corner churches and there was a thriving business sector. Parents, churches, and the community were really involved.... In Brookfield, Arroyo, Temescal, and Defermery,³ there were full recreation programs, with arts and crafts. Little league and Pop Warner (football) were run through the recreation programs.

Ms. Johnson indicates a number of factors that are relevant to the functioning of institutions. First, many associations existed within the school and community, representing diverse interests. Additionally, the different associations coordinated with each other. The students at EHS were working with the community and with college students. The parents and the church were involved with the school. The thriving business sector shows that citizens supported their community economically. There appeared to be a mutually beneficial relationship among the various groups that made up the community, facilitating the functioning of institutions such as EHS.

Mrs. Decker, who was a secretary at the school in 2000 and a student at EHS in 1955, described her community and school while a student there: "There was a lot of community. You didn't have to go anywhere else to shop. There were rules for teachers. You could not leave your class or be late for class." Her first statement implies that people supported the community. People must feel connected to their community to support it economically, and they did so by reinvesting in it. School rules existed and were followed, suggesting that members of the EHS community trusted the institution. Both statements demonstrate that working toward mutual benefit was an aspect of daily life in the community and school.

In the past, the various and diverse ways in which EHS and the Eastern community functioned satisfied its members. In all interviews, members made few if any negative claims about their past community. Members participated in the many associations within and outside the school. Of course, not all community members were satisfied. The segregation between black and white people was

mentioned, but no negative statements about the community were made otherwise. In contrast, students, teachers, administrators, and community members expressed deep dissatisfaction with the present circumstances that revealed many characteristics of social capital in decline.

Mr. Quiñones was a student at EHS in the early 1970s and a Spanish Community Liaison worker at EHS in 2000. When asked about the issues currently facing EHS, he compared his memories of the past with his knowledge of the present: “Violence. We have a lot of gang problems.... Night and day. We had more respect back then. There were some rules to follow. We were scared about the rules and they applied them. Now there are more rules than before, and nobody follows up on them.”

Mr. Quiñones acknowledged the disappearance of internalized expectations that had once served to meet goals and objectives. Violence and gangs are signs of the absence of meaningful activities and the decline of the norms of behavior and trust that had existed in the past.⁴ Quiñones also notes an increase in discipline as a tool for controlling members of the school community; formerly, rules were second nature, making limiting behavior unnecessary. The school administration has enacted more rules and students have resorted to gangs. Both are forms of hierarchical structures, in the face of lost internalized norms. In the past, internalized norms oiled the wheels of the institution, and it functioned better.

Asked about the main problems confronting EHS, Mrs. Moore, a teacher at EHS for five years, listed “issues of attendance, absence, and tardiness. Getting kids to school. Having more activities that involve students, in order to feel part of something. If students feel a part of it, that will help with attendance.” Her theory that a lack of meaningful activities results in apathy resonates well with social capital theory. People are not interacting in substantive ways, and she understands that students need and want this. Students not attending school are in effect resigned to their circumstances; when lines of communication are top down, they have few allies within the school and give up.

Mark,⁵ a 10th grader at EHS, made the following comments concerning the school’s most serious problems:

There are not enough activities at this school. Not enough support, like off-campus lunch. If they had things that we liked on campus, we wouldn’t have to leave. Activities like dances, a lot more pumped up pep rallies. Activities and groups you can be in.... Students don’t have a voice. When we think something should happen, they say we should talk to them. If they make rules, we can’t resist them. We can’t sit down with people who make decisions.... We were supposed to have a twin day (during spirit week). The vice principal cancelled the whole day of spirit week because two kids got in a fight. That didn’t make anything better. They’re not dealing with two kids, they’re dealing with the whole school. If she can’t deal with certain problems, then why is she here?

In Mark's view, the school does not meet students' needs because there are not enough meaningful activities. He highlights relationships of power when social capital is lacking. In the past, administrators were more willing to listen to students. Ms. Johnson, the school librarian, stated that when she was a student the vice principal allowed black students to come to her office and talk to her. At that time, the black population was becoming the majority at EHS and in the Eastern District, and students and parents were demanding greater black representation in the teaching staff. Ms. Johnson described the vice principal as a "staunch white conservative"; nevertheless, she was willing to listen to the black students. This implies that in the past there was more trust between the administration and the students. The administration was at least willing to listen. But as Mark stated, today "students don't have a voice." Examples of power relationships are particularly revealing about the absence of shared norms of behavior. Lacking the thick overlay of various structures of inter-associational relationships that promote trust and common expectations concerning conduct, the administration and teachers resort to power to prevent anarchy.

The administration's no-tolerance policy went beyond violence. Students were being suspended for other issues, too. The tardy policy reads as follows:

All students need to be in class on time during every class period. Teachers need to stand at their doors during every passing period. When the tardy bell rings, teachers should close their doors. Students who are not in the classroom will be swept to the auditorium. Their names will be recorded. The consequences are as follows: *Students have been warned!!! Students will be sent home!!* (EHS No Tolerance Policy, 3/31/00).

State and district policy stipulates that students are not to be suspended for attendance-related reasons. The administration circumvents this policy by positing that tardy students are in defiance of authority, for which a student can be suspended. Students' experiences with teachers are another example of a last-ditch effort to control using authority.

Luis, a YM member, reported how his regular teacher left at the beginning of the year because "somebody wanted to beat him up or something." He had a substitute teacher for most of the semester. A regular teacher was finally placed in his class during the last week of the semester:

And this teacher just came in there and tried to take over the class, and told us this whole different thing to do and didn't even have enough time for the week to do our stuff. We had to write an essay. I didn't get to finish it. She just put our grades down.

This same student told of another teacher who could not control his classroom:

We would do the work that he told us, and then the rest of the class wouldn't do the work. Talking, fighting over there, giving him a hard time. And

then he just decided to give the whole class an “F,” including us, and we would do our work. He got fired from being a biology teacher and they turned him into a Spanish teacher.

This teacher blamed the entire class for the problems he was having with some students and gave everyone bad grades regardless of their performance/behavior in class. In both examples, students suffered from the indiscriminate application of punishment.

EHS community members describe various associations within and outside the school that in the past created a matrix of relationships that inhibited individuals from behaving irresponsibly toward their community. In the current situation, which lacks the former proliferation of associations, the relationships created within groups that facilitated the development of trust, cooperation, reciprocity, and norms of behavior among all members (i.e., teachers, parents, students, as well as the administration, the institution, and EHS) do not function well. Simply put, there were fewer problems because most community members completed what was expected of them. Without the trust and concomitant self-discipline, many members of the community defect from the expected norms of behavior. In effect, there is no reason to behave as one should, because there is no sure way of knowing that anyone else will.

Within the current political and cultural climate, state or local agencies and institutions will likely not invest in and implement the resources and policies needed to address urban abandonment and the subsequent loss of social capital. Creative responses are required (Noguera, 2004). The following analysis of the efforts of YM at EHS provides an example.

Youth Movement

The practices and processes of Youth Movement at EHS illustrate how to work creatively to develop social capital. To implement a school change campaign, the group met several times a week with an adult facilitator.⁶ During the 1996–1997 school year, YM students at EHS began their organizing campaign by initiating constructive dialogues between students of different ethnic backgrounds. YM students administered surveys in classroom presentations and during one-on-one outreach. Over 800 students who were surveyed identified racial violence as the number one school problem. The primary solutions were to increase safety and develop ethnic studies. The YM EHS team centered their school change campaign on these results, including an ethnic studies program.

By the fall of 1998, YM began to organize race- and ethnicity-focused conflict mediation sessions, along with staff from the West Oakland Health Clinic Conflict Resolution program. As YM mobilized the core students, solutions emerged from the mediations. From this activity a proposal emerged for what was to be called the EHS One Land, One People (OLOP) Student Unity Center. The center was

designed to address the causes of conflict and violence on campus. The first student collaborative effort was the One Land, One People conference in January 1999. The event consisted of teach-ins in classrooms concerning the roots of violence and the low academic achievement of poor and minority groups in the United States. YM also organized two assemblies in which cultural dance groups performed, along with presentations by guest speakers and educators. It held a press conference announcing its plans for a student center at EHS. Federal, state, and local politicians were present, and their commitment to YM objectives was solicited. Community organizations also set up information booths in the school courtyard. During the organization and planning of the event, YM students made presentations in classrooms, to parents and staff meetings, and in conferences with the principal.

For the remainder of the school year, YM students spent their Saturdays knocking on EHS neighbors' doors to gain more community support. As the school year was ending, they organized Peace and Dignity Days, during which they surveyed students again to assess which programs they would use in the Student Unity Center and recruited volunteers for future YM actions. By the end of the school year, they had collected over 1,000 signatures of key stakeholders in support of the proposal to establish a center, and involved over 50 volunteers, including students, parents, and university and EHS community members.

On the first day of the following school year, September 7, 1999, YM held an after-school press conference in the EHS library to call attention to the conditions at the different YM sites, to what YM was trying to do to improve the schools, and to the Weeks of Unity event. They also unveiled the Unity Mural, which YM participants had painted over the summer.⁷ Various local, state, and federal politicians were present, and their support for the Student Unity Center was requested. Representatives from each YM team⁸ spoke about conditions at their school and what they were trying to do.

Over the next two weeks, YM held Weeks of Unity. Violence at EHS during the previous year was at its worse at the beginning of the school year. To change the atmosphere at the school, YM developed its own security plan. Its goal was to maintain peace by developing a clear presence on campus. From morning until the end of every day, YM participants, community members, and student volunteers were present on campus to work as members of the "East Oakland Peace Delegation." They asked students and staff to sign a petition to demonstrate their commitment to peace. Besides the petition drive and the Peace Delegation, YM sponsored various events on campus during lunch.

YM then contacted particular students and groups whom they recognized as potential instigators of violence and attempted to recruit these students into their Weeks of Unity petition drive. Some of them did collect signatures. As the EHS site coordinator stated, "all we are doing is trying to promote unity." As they walked around and talked to people, gangs, and cliques, they gained the trust of the students. Working with them was an influential retired gang member from

Oakland who helped them gain respect. The site coordinator stated that “by the middle of the first week, people started respecting us.” YM participants and staff also helped students with scheduling and other issues. They served as mediators between the administration and the student body. For the first time in approximately four years, EHS experienced almost no racial conflict or violence at the beginning of the school year.

The Impact of YM’s Efforts at EHS

An analysis of comments by EHS students, teachers, administrators, and YM staff shows that YM organizing efforts brought about qualitative differences in the attitudes and behaviors of the EHS community, culminating in the development of social capital. When the coordinator was asked about YM’s relationship with other groups on campus, she responded that:

One of the more active groups on campus that has student leadership in it is YACIN (Youth Against Community INjustice), which has come from Ms. Thomson’s work. She has been a strong ally of our work. Our partnership has fostered the development of both. All the people involved in YM and YACIN are the leaders of EHS. They are also involved in student government, Asian Student Union, BSU, and debate club. There is a relationship, especially through Weeks of Unity. It sparked student activism on campus. [Like] the petitions we were gathering during Weeks of Unity, other students started doing petitions for other issues: dress code, Mumia. It created space for politicization.

According to the coordinator, a number of changes relevant to social capital have occurred through YM’s work. Other student groups have developed relationships; YM student members’ participation in other associations and their partnership with YACIN created a broader base for collaboration among students; and students have become less apathetic. When students see other students working together, it empowers them to do the same. Mark had similar comments concerning the impact of YM on other students:

One Land One People impressed kids. They saw students had a voice. When you can’t see it, smell it, then you aren’t gonna wanna do it. But when you see others stepping up to the plate, it makes you feel the same way. Other kids think, why don’t we do something like that? ...On Unity Week, there was a group of kids dancing in the back, and a kid threw a bottle. And the (other) students told him he had to go somewhere else with that. He walked away. Because YM explains if fights happen we won’t be able to do things.... People are taking more responsibility and for the consequences to their actions. Why let somebody ruin your fun?

His perceptions are similar to those of the coordinator in that YM has helped to open a space for greater student participation in school. Students are being shown by example that they are not powerless. During Unity Week, students and community members wore “Unity” armbands. Adults and students were present to promote unity, and this empowered students to create their own norms of behavior, such as sending a disruptive kid away. Jilma, a 12th grader, commented on YM’s efforts at EHS:

Teresa [the coordinator], what I liked about her, when the fight happened, she called me at home. She called me to be there at 7:30 the next day. In the morning we were separated.... They took us to the cafeteria, the Polynesians, and the Mexicans to the music room.... They really had the respect going during the mediation. We had respect for each other after. She called me and said, would you like to meet with us? ...

First two weeks of Unity Week, everybody wore the armbands. Last day, the Polynesian students danced. Other Polynesians came from other schools. Mexicans were there, too, being supportive. Reality is one thing, but there is a change....

YM got to the root of the problem, which never would have happened without them, and the problem would have still been there....

Relationship between YM and Polynesians? We learn from them and they learn from us. When they speak, we listen; when we voice, they listen. It’s like a student-teacher type of relationship.

Jilma described the work of the coordinator as particularly effective in developing collaboration and trust. YM’s strategies of putting people on equal terms created the space for trust or respect to develop between different groups. If the administration had been handling the problem, the lines of communication would have been top-down. As Jilma states, YM got to the root of the problem, which a hierarchical structure inhibits. Additionally, the give and take between YM and the Polynesians had developed to the extent that they learned from one another. In other words, their relationship was an exchange between equals—a clear sign of trust.

Asked about the impact YM has had on the school, Mrs. Moore, a social studies teacher, stated:

Fights have been absolutely cut by 80 percent. I know percentages are weird. I see cultures working together inside and outside the classroom. Student council, the planning committee for the 12th grade class. Prior years it wasn’t as diverse. Also, when the kids did the new mural on one of the portables. In the past, it could be all Black. It helped me to help my students understand the importance of appreciating your own culture as you appreciate others’ It made a difference in my approach to teaching my students about the importance of appreciating other cultures. It had

an impact on other teachers also. It made me think that we are all in this together. A house divided against itself cannot stand. It takes all cultures working together to make EHS what we want it to be.

This interview occurred on October 19, 1999, one month after the Weeks of Unity. That explains her strong claim about the decrease in violence. Others interviewed right after Unity Weeks expressed similar sentiments. The school was still experiencing the impact of this effort when, by November, conflict between Latino and black students resumed. Nevertheless, Mrs. Moore mentions other aspects of YM's work that were more consistent. Her claims about greater diversity in student government suggest that a more representative group of students was participating in school affairs. Moreover, she implies that due to the work of YM, in her view a member of EHS, community had expanded. Both assertions indicate a rupture, although a small one, in the hierarchical structure that permeates EHS.

The principal, Mr. Brinkley, made the following observations concerning YM's endeavors:

Concerning nonviolence and safety issues, so far they have done a pretty good job.... To the population that it reaches, I think it is very effective, in collaboration with other student groups, such as violence prevention council, and also in the community, which is where it starts. Do more outreach to the community....

I think if properly utilized it could be more effective. We need coordination between YM and the administration. That the major population is African American is not very well represented in the organization here at EHS. We need to expand our horizons of all ethnic groups. There's not enough African American representation in YM, especially here on campus. If you have incidents between two groups, you need representation of African Americans. They see the same thing too [referring to Latino claims of lack of representation]....

YM student component has done a fantastic job. Organizing peace effort, especially when school first opened up [the Weeks of Unity].

Mr. Brinkley acknowledges the YM's impact on the school has decreased violence, which he attributes to the relationships YM established with other student groups. He emphasizes the need for more outreach to the community and more coordination between YM and the administration. Furthermore, the development of these relationships requires a certain amount of trust, because the administration would be considering the perspectives of other groups when developing school policy. Additionally, involvement of members of the EHS community in the politics of the school would be expanded, lessening the hierarchical structure of the school. Nevertheless, it is important to note Mr. Brinkley's doubts and apprehension

concerning the lack of proportionate African American representation in YM at EHS. Race is an important factor in school politics, and deserves consideration.

Conclusion

Youth Movement's efforts offer a model of how counselors can work creatively to better use the resources within the communities to build social capital and bring about change. Through YM's work, transformations relevant to the development of social capital have occurred. YM facilitated the establishment of relationships between student groups. Similarly, YM student members' participation in other associations increased student collaboration, and these efforts provided other students with positive models of empowerment. Another key aspect of social capital is the development of trust. YM's strategy of putting people on equal terms created the space for trust or respect to develop between the different racial groups of students on campus. Additionally, when social capital is lacking, institutions often must rely more on hierarchical structures of power. YM's creation of greater student participation and collaboration helped to expand the definition of who was to be considered a member of the school community, indicating a rupture of the strict lines of power that had characterized EHS.

Too often, mental health providers focus on symptoms or manifest problems (e.g., drug use, arrest, psychiatric crisis, etc.), whereas the underlying individual, collective, and social antecedents to the crisis remain camouflaged and are left unattended. The role of the counselor (YM facilitator in this case) should not be relegated to the limited resources and tired strategies that maintain the status quo. Instead, counselors should work collaboratively to empower communities, raise critical consciousness, and promote individual and systemic accountability (Almeida, Dolan-Del Vecchio, and Parker, 2008; Brown et al., 2010).

We encourage counselors to revisit within a broader framework how they assess the mental health needs of individuals and communities, particularly those who are historically marginalized and disenfranchised or considered to be underachieving, impoverished, and unhealthy:

Psychology treatment approaches that focus primarily on the individual may be found wanting. Psychology as a profession may find that the development of safer neighborhoods, neighbor responsibility, and community communication and organization may have greater impact on one's psychological health (Stevenson, 1998: 56).

Expanding the foci of assessment and the scope of intervention allows for greater opportunities to create sustainable outcomes. For example, a typical response to violence in a school situation is to negotiate a resolution between the two offending parties — e.g., through peer mediation or conflict resolution. A more effective model of intervention may be to move beyond the interpersonal conflict among youth and

to interrogate the root of the problem within the historical, economic, social, and political context in which young people are embedded. This may include providing leadership training and opportunities for students to work collaboratively toward school improvement. In relation to responding to crises, counselors can establish mentoring opportunities that expand beyond the therapeutic context, for example by creating opportunities for youth to build their own norms of behavior and trust. Finally, we suggest that counselors should assume a leadership role in coordinating with key stakeholders in the community to base their interventions on a more accurate needs assessment:

Healthy neighborhoods are those in which supervision, caring, and one's creative self-expression are inseparable and in which the most meaningful consequence for youth emotional struggles is to give back and help build the communities where they live (Stevenson, 1998: 57).

To create healthy communities, we are encouraged to work creatively, using a social capital framework to build upon the resilience that exists in communities.

NOTES

1. To maintain anonymity, all names of individuals, schools, programs, and communities are fictitious.

2. This article is based on two years of research conducted by Professor Ethan Johnson while a graduate student researcher and evaluator of the YM program. Previously, he had taught Spanish for Spanish speakers at the school for three years.

3. These were city parks that offered after-school recreation programs.

4. Gangs do provide valuable resources to their members and the community through bonding social capital. They should not be viewed only negatively because they can be places of empowerment, as we demonstrate later.

5. Being a YM member, Mark has given much thought to the conditions of the school and how to change them; thus, he is particularly articulate in his critique.

6. The coordinators' role was complex: they assisted the group in planning and implementing school change efforts; they provided ethnic studies education, violence prevention training, and academic oversight; and they were generally advocates for the students in various capacities. The coordinator was associated with a community-based organization that ideally had a track record of experience with youth in the school community, such as the Xicana Moratorium Coalition. Assisting the coordinator was a "partner," the director of the community-based organization. This person functioned as a resource based on experience and political connections throughout the community.

7. Over the summer of 1999, YM students participated in leadership training and led an eighth-grade mentorship program, in which they involved incoming ninth graders in the painting of the Unity Mural located in EHS's main hallway.

8. YM also worked at three other schools in the Bay Area and their student participants gave presentations on their work at this event.

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