

## Youth Civic Engagement: Promise and Peril

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### **Introduction**

Recent interest in youth civic engagement (YCE) parallels the growing attention being paid to social capital (Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). Like social capital, YCE poses promises as well as perils. In a nutshell, the promise of YCE lies in enhanced wellness for participating youth, for their interpersonal connections, and for the community at large. The perils lie in accentuating the virtues of participation at the expense of changing structural inequalities and power differentials that ultimately undermine the goods associated with democratic participation (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2004). These threats may prove unfounded if YCE addresses inequality, injustice, and power differentials. But if YCE is primarily about supporting the structures that uphold the status quo, we should proceed with caution. For participation can easily create an impression of progress, when in fact such engagement may only reinforce models of charity as opposed to models of justice. Such is the case with many social capital efforts that have proliferated in response to Putnam's calls to revive community (Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). In a thinly veiled cautionary note, Muntaner, Lynch, and Davey Smith (2003) have characterized the flock around social capital as "Communitarians of the world unite! Ignoring the class, gender, and race structure" (p. 292).

But our condemning judgment may be premature. After all, it can be argued that before youth can engage in any kind of social justice, they have to learn how to participate at all. Young people may first need to experience what it feels like to move beyond the negative role of clients or adults-in-waiting into the empowering roles of participants and valued community members

(Ungar & Hum, 2004). Furthermore, it can be argued that what we are witnessing today is the first developmental phase of a long process designed to engage youth in civic action. Once youth master the skills of participation, they will be able to move beyond the reinforcement of unjust social structures -- perhaps. In the second part of this chapter we examine the half full of the YCE cup. In the third part we turn our attention to the half empty. For us, the fullness of the cup depends on the ability of the YCE movement to address injustice and power inequalities every step of the way. Although engagement is a part of wellness and justice, they are not isomorphic. History is replete with cases of engagement that support discrimination and exclusion of the "other."

But before we render a judgment on the promise and perils of civic engagement, we have to offer criteria for what might constitute a positive or negative outcome. Our criteria are based on the achievement of two desirable outcomes: wellness and resilience.

### **Wellness and Resilience**

Wellness is a positive state of affairs, brought about by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of personal, relational, and collective needs. Wellness emerges from the synergistic interaction of needs at three levels (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2004; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Prilleltensky, Nelson, & Peirson, 2001a, 2001b). At the personal level, individuals have to meet needs for a sense of control, hope, optimism, physical and psychological growth, stimulation, health, meaning and spirituality. At the second level, healthy relations need to satisfy requirements for mutual respect, appreciation for diversity, caring and compassion. At the third level, communities have to promote a fair and equitable distribution of power and resources, democratic means to make decisions, adequate access to health services, decent housing and employment, a clean environment, accessible transportation, and food security (Nelson &

Prilleltensky, 2004; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Though not an exhaustive list, these needs represent some of the basic requirements of wellness. Maximal wellness may be said to occur when both individuals and their communities as a whole benefit from the satisfaction of needs at all levels. For example, as a private citizen, the resident of a community derives tangible benefits from access to universal health care, high quality schools, and safe communities. Communities, as collective entities, benefit from institutions that promote participation, employment, and health and from individuals who support these health-enhancing entities (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2004; Putnam, 2000)

But how do we meet these needs? The fulfillment of needs depends on values, resources, programs, and policies. Values are primordial because they determine priorities for the generation and distribution of resources, programs, and policies. Parallel to the three levels of wellness, values may be organized along a continuum that ranges from the personal to the collective (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). At one end, people require freedom and self-determination to exercise control over their lives. In the middle of the range, people require respect, participation, and a sense of community. This is reflected in the values of solidarity and fraternity. At the collective end, communities have to promote justice, fairness and equality.

Values must achieve equilibrium. Too much emphasis on self-determination diminishes fraternity and solidarity, whereas too much emphasis on the collective thwarts individual uniqueness. People who live under communist regimes often report pressure to conform, typically at the expense of personal liberty. A delicate balance is required among values for personal, relational, and collective wellness.

Resources, which translate into programs and policies such as day care, health care, unemployment insurance and public education, are often determined by the values of the

dominant class. When self-determination is heralded as the ultimate value, and individualism reigns, policies emphasize the need for people to solve their own problems, in large disregard for the social conditions that lead to the problems in the first place. In contrast, when the collective is privileged over all other values, personal sacrifice is bound to ensue (Prilleltensky, 1997, 2001)

Unlike wellness, which is a satisfactory state of affairs, resilience is associated with the ability to cope under adverse circumstances. This is the case when needs at one or more levels of wellness are inadequately met. In such situations, the individual, family, or community are called to cope under less than ideal circumstances. As we note below, various coping and compensating mechanisms have been shown to support processes and outcomes of resilience. Resilience is not a personality characteristic, nor is it a static or permanent state of affairs; rather, it is a dynamic process, associated with -- but not identical to -- personality features. Furthermore, as this volume makes abundantly clear, it is a quality found at all levels of analysis, from the personal to the relational to the collective.

Resilience and wellness are theoretically linked, but distinct. Under conditions of adversity, resilience must precede the promotion of wellness. Under optimal circumstances, health and wellness are more readily achieved. But wellness, as much as resilience, relies on values, resources, programs and policies that are influenced by power dynamics. Those in power usually impose their values and will onto the people, determining priorities that suit their particular interests (Prilleltensky, in press). Values do not exist in a political vacuum, nor do organizations that support children and youth.

Cowen (1991; 1994; 1996) a leading theorist of wellness, defined the construct as:

The positive end of a hypothetical adjustment continuum – an ideal we should strive continually to approach. ... Key pathways to wellness, for all of us, start with the crucial needs to form wholesome attachments and acquire age-appropriate competencies in early childhood. Those steps, vital in their own right, also lay down a base for the good, or not so good, outcomes that follow. Other cornerstones of a wellness approach include engineering settings and environments that facilitate adaptation, fostering autonomy, support and empowerment, and promoting skills needed to cope effectively with stress. (1996, p. 246)

While Cowen asserts that health and wellness derive from multiple sources, internal and external to the child, including opportunities for empowerment, his definition is psycho-centric in its focus on the individual and family. A broader view of health has been proposed in the Canadian federal government report *Mental Health for Canadians: Striking a Balance* (Epp, 1988). According to the Epp report, health not only involves individual well-being, but equality and social justice as well. We concur with Wiley and Rappaport (2000) who argued that neither wellness nor resilience can be explained in the absence of a power analysis.

So far we have established criteria for what constitutes wellness and resilience. In addition, we have argued that neither concept can be fully grasped without accounting for power differentials. This brief discussion enables us to assess the actual and potential outcomes of YCE in light of wellness and resilience and in light of power dynamics.

### **Benefits**

#### **Benefits of youth civic engagement for personal wellness**

One of the important developmental and protective factors to consider in YCE is *self-efficacy*: the perception that one can achieve desired goals through one's action (Bandura,

1989). To foster development, youth need opportunities to be efficacious and to make a difference. They have a need for “mattering” (Eccles et al., 2002). Opportunities to do things that make a real difference build self-efficacy.

Like Cowen (1996), we believe that wellness and self-efficacy hinge upon experiences and feelings that promote *competence* and *skills*. Children and youth can develop mastery and sense of control in family, school, and community settings. As they mature into youth and young adulthood, they may also expand their competencies through participation in social and civic affairs (Pancer & Pratt, 1999). It is important to young people’s definition of self as resilient to not only experience opportunities that enhance their personal skills and competencies, but also their political competence (Ungar, 2004). Competencies and self-efficacy develop through participation in different settings, especially when children and youth have a voice and can influence those settings. As personal and political competence increases, so does their sense of control over the settings in which they find themselves. While many settings provide children and youth with opportunities for participation, opportunities that develop political competence, power, and self-determination are limited.

Community participation and prosocial activities appear to offer young people valuable opportunities to work on important developmental tasks. Researchers have documented how opportunities for meaningful involvement contribute to the *development of protective factors* (Benson, 1997; Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002; Lerner, 2004; Lerner & Benson, 2003; Scales & Leffert, 1999). With sufficient opportunities for involvement in meaningful activities, and adequate supports, young people may *overcome negative experiences and even thrive*. Michael Ungar (2004), in his research with high-risk teens, found that “experiences that enhance capacities, promote self-determination, increase participation; and

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distribute power and justice” (p. 285) have the potential to promote wellness enhancing alternate discourses.

Ongoing exposure to positive experiences, settings, and people, enhances the *acquisition of assets*. Adolescents who spend time in communities that offer rich developmental opportunities experience *less risk* and show evidence of higher rates of *positive development* in a variety of domains, including school achievement, employment, family life, relationships, and life satisfaction in general (Eccles, & Gootman, 2002; Lerner, 2004).

As young people enter adolescence, they have a need to have some *control* over events and a say in decisions that affect their lives. Evidence suggests that a strong *sense of self, confidence in ability to cope with challenges, and experiences of task completion* are protective factors (Rutter, 1987). Mastery over a difficult situation reinforces efforts to take action, which, in turn, precipitates positive chain reactions, including *social acceptance*. Acceptance, in turn, leads to new opportunities and *expanded roles* within the community (Bandura, 1989; Rutter, 1987; Wyman et al., 2000).

Evans (2004) witnessed such positive chain reaction as it was unfolding. After a group of young people learned how much interest some check-cashing outlets in their neighborhood were charging their customers, they were eager to spread the information. They felt *empowered* and energized by the information they gained. When they shared the information with others, they were treated as experts, which in turn contributed to their self-efficacy. After the first presentation, they were asked to present to other groups, businesses, and organizations. A group participant described the experience as follows:

At first I got up there and was thinking that they weren't going to be interested, we're a bunch of kids that don't really know what adults have to go through. People were really

listening and saying yeah, that's true. They were really listening to us and saying like "Wow that's wild 313% [interest]. I can't believe that these youth really know stuff like that; they know more than I know." They were really asking us questions. Man that's really touching people. (Evans, 2004, submitted for publication)

These young people have been rewarded for their work. They have been invited to share their knowledge across their community, to lead a class at their school on the subject, and to present their material to a national youth organization in the nation's capital. Opportunities like this, that stretch and challenge youth with demanding tasks, have been shown to *protect against current and future adversity* (see Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Prilleltensky et al., 2001a; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1995).

In addition to skills, control, and self-efficacy, *voice and decision-making power* are also correlated with positive developmental outcomes. Voice and choice define our sense of agency and contribute to positive psychosocial development. Simply put, young people feel important and part of something bigger than themselves – part of a community.

Young people speak of embracing opportunities to contribute in a variety of settings. These opportunities, it seems, appear to be reinforcing. The more youth experience opportunities to have a voice, the more they find their voice and want to contribute. They also begin to see how much value their voice can have for their community (Catalano et al., 2002). This is how a young person describes how it feels to be included in organizational decisions:

"It makes you feel like a person, like you are an equal. Teens can have a good idea or an opinion and it is important. Adults need to know. It makes you feel important to know that you can have a say. It's important to have a say so cause we are the one's who will be in charge soon." (Evans, 2004, submitted for publication).

Power and control are determinants of voice and choice. Sometimes this is accomplished through collaborative means, and sometimes it is achieved through conflict. But in either case, they support voice and choice (Prilleltensky et al., 2001a, 2001b).

*Intellectual, social, and cognitive skills* are also correlated with resilience (Garmezy, 1985; Masten et al., 1990; Werner, 1995). Handling complex interpersonal and social situations requires multifaceted thinking. Developing these capacities is a gradual and ongoing process that requires extensive experience and exposure to community conflict (Clark, 1988; A. E. Keating, 1990). Unfortunately, we often expect young people to develop these competencies without providing in vivo opportunities in a supportive climate. Studies support the notion that opportunities for participation and problem-solving promote *responsibility* and lead to positive developmental outcomes for young people (Catalano et al., 2002; Rutter, 1987). Experiences of this sort foster empowerment, perceptions of control and self-efficacy (Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Prilleltensky et al., 2001a; Rutter, 1987).

Empowering opportunities often grow from voluntary structured activities and service to others. Studies indicate that participation in well-designed activities during non-school time is associated with development of *positive identity, increased initiative, and positive relationships* with diverse peers and adults, *better school achievement, reduced rates of dropping out of school, reduced delinquency, and more positive outcomes in adulthood* (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Youniss & Yates, 1997; Youniss, Yates, & Su, 1997). Werner and Smith (1992) found that those in their study who were the most resilient as adults tended to have taken on various kinds of helping responsibilities as adolescents, whether paid work or caring for ailing family members.

Community service, volunteering, and service learning have been associated directly or indirectly with a wide range of positive developmental outcomes (see Scales & Leffert, 1999 for a thorough review of this literature ). The learning benefits and potential positive outcomes are magnified when the activities take place in quality settings and when an intentional reflective component is built into the structure of the experience (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that young people can benefit by looking more critically at the broader society and at the barriers facing their families and communities (Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth, & Laco, 2003). Youth organizing and civic activism offer new ways of working with young people. Young people benefit by learning how to participate in a group action process, build consensus, and set aside personal interests in order to consider those of the collective (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003). With this approach, youth are assets and agents capable of transforming their toxic environments, not simply individuals who need to develop resiliency and resistance to them (Ginwright & James, 2002).

#### **Benefits of youth civic engagement for collective wellness**

Adolescents are potential agents of change in their own lives and in the community. Through meaningful civic and political involvement young people can develop the skills and capacities that foster resilience and help *transform communities* at the same time. Youth can play important roles in *educating, organizing, and taking action on issues of social justice* . Families, schools, neighborhoods, community- and faith-based organizations can facilitate youth and community development by creating opportunities for teenagers to play meaningful roles, influence decisions, help others, and partner with adults in *addressing the root causes of suffering in their communities* (Lerner, 2004).

John (2003) describes the role of youth in establishing the Devon Youth Council in England. Among other things, the council was charged with *promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. This was a very successful initiative that led to the *establishment of similar councils* throughout England and other countries. Similarly, John (2003) reports on the remarkable work of the Children's Parliament in rural Rajasthan, India. With help from a social work institute, the parliament was set up to *influence government policies affecting children*, from literacy to the hiring and firing of teachers to access to potable water. The many contributions reported by John make it abundantly clear that children can readily surpass our current expectations of them. Another notable contribution of a youth movement is the work of Free the Children. Started by Craig Kielburger, a Canadian teen in the early nineties, Free the Children seeks to *liberate young laborers from bondage* in India. Since its inception, however, its mandate has grown to include the *construction of schools in developing nations* and other *humanitarian projects*. Completely run by young people, this organization is another exemplar of what youth can accomplish and contribute to the community at large ([www.freethechildren.org](http://www.freethechildren.org)).

In a recent study of marginalized youth engaged in civic activism in the U.S., Lewis-Charp and colleagues (2003) witnessed the impacts youth organizing groups can have on the community. Youth organizing groups helped to close down a cement plant in their community, created a recreational skate park for teens, and initiated the creation of a sexual discrimination policy for their school district. One of these groups was also able to secure funds for a cleanup of the Bronx river and for the development of the Bronx greenway. Young people, if given the opportunity and support, can help change communities.

As demonstrated in the examples above, youth can play meaningful leadership roles in families, schools, organizations, neighborhoods, and communities. If given active roles on

committees, governing boards, and other decision-making bodies, young people can learn how to work effectively, take responsibility for important decisions, and find their voice and power. Through participation in social and civic affairs, young people have an opportunity to develop and expand their competencies (Pancer & Pratt, 1999). Youth who are involved in these institutions are not only *less likely to violate social norms* but also more likely to *reinforce community norms* by their participation (Youniss et al., 1997).

## **Challenges**

### **Challenges to meaningful participation**

A major barrier to the healthy development of young people is the absence of opportunities to participate meaningfully in the contexts that affect their lives. This is especially the case for disadvantaged and marginalized youth: those who have most to gain from participation. Just as young people are becoming ready and able to contribute to community, they are being denied the opportunities and supports they need for full participation (Ginwright & James, 2002).

Well-meaning attempts often relegate youth to token participants, with no power and no preparation. We know of a school board charter that was recently changed to create two positions for high school students on the board. These positions, however, did not come with voting privileges. Students can have a say, but have no power to influence decisions.

Other organizations are also creating slots on governing for young people, but often neglect to prepare them to serve effectively in these roles. The culture of these bodies and the structure of the meetings remain largely adult-centered. In addition, they are held at locations and times inconvenient for youth. Furthermore, the content and format of meetings is not adjusted to meet the needs of youth participants.

Organizations that want increased youth participation in decision-making must be willing to alter their processes so that youth can play an authentic role (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003). If our aim is to promote youth engagement in civic matters, for their personal development and for community well-being, we must do more to better facilitate their full participation.

### **Challenges to type of engagement**

Many risks are faced by youth who join fanatical groups that meet their needs for belonging while indoctrinating them in hatred. History is replete with examples of young people joining fascist groups or religious extremists bent on ethnic cleansing or final solutions. The bonding created by such organizations decimates any shred of possible bridging across ethnic, religious, or sexually diverse groups.

We do not wish to romanticize involvement in civic engagement. Like other associations, they may establish negative dynamics that can potentially damage self-esteem and exclude people from full participation. Joining a civic association is only the first step. What happens there once a young person has joined depends on many factors, including leadership, sense of community, and social support.

In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam (2000) described the perils of bonding at the expense of bridging. While sense of cohesion is a desirable quality in communities, it often breeds exclusion. When exclusion is combined with intolerance, dangerous outcomes are possible, as in discrimination, oppression, exploitation and extermination. These are not exaggerated claims. The many ethnic wars that took place in last century and continue today prove that this is no idle threat. The ultimate question is engagement for what? In the absence of freedom, respect for diversity, equality and justice, the bonding generated by civic associations may lead to dogmatism, racism, sexism and xenophobia.

## **Challenges to idealism of YCE**

As noted in the introduction to our chapter, the promise of YCE is threatened by the peril of idealism. Unless the engagement we promote for youth includes a critical analysis of the power dynamics that exclude them from full participation, the peril may outweigh the promise. We should remember that many of the injustices perpetrated against the poor and the marginalized are carried out by the very institutions we want youth to join: schools, local government, social services. How can we ensure that the type of engagement we foster in youth is different from mere reinforcement of the status quo? These doubts, similar to the ones leveled by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2004) concerning social capital should cause us to pause. Unless it is accompanied by social change, YCE, as much as social capital, can limit its contribution to the promotion of person-centered capacities that are ultimately undermined by the presence of overwhelming environmental and social odds against youth.

In their extensive review of programs for positive youth development, Catalano et al (2002) recognize an extensive list of positive personal, relational, and collective outcomes. However, there is no mention of injustice, inequality, or power differentials. Most of the outcomes may be safely designated “apolitical.” Out of twenty five evaluated programs with strong research designs,

nineteen effective programs showed positive changes in youth behavior, including significant improvements in interpersonal skills, quality of peer and adult relationships, self-control, problem solving, cognitive competencies, self-efficacy, commitment to schooling, and academic achievement. Twenty-four effective programs showed significant improvements in problem behaviors, including drug and alcohol use, school

misbehavior, aggressive behavior, violence, truancy, high risk sexual behavior, and smoking. (Catalano et al., 2002, NP)

As may be seen, most of the positive outcomes reported deal with personal and interpersonal skills, none of which call for critical thinking or sociopolitical development. This is not surprising, given that by definition positive youth development programs were characterized by the following features:

1. Promotes bonding
2. Fosters resilience
3. Promotes social competence
4. Promotes emotional competence
5. Promotes cognitive competence
6. Promotes behavioral competence
7. Promotes moral competence
8. Fosters self-determination
9. Fosters spirituality
10. Fosters self-efficacy
11. Fosters clear and positive identity
12. Fosters belief in the future
13. Provides recognition for positive behavior
14. Provides opportunities for prosocial involvement
15. Fosters prosocial norms (Catalano et al., 2002, NP).

While the last two features address social norms, the scope of the programs reviewed by the authors is narrow and apolitical indeed.

### Conclusion

As the literature suggests, there is some evidence that civic activism can be a pathway to well-being and resilience for youth and for communities (Ginwright & James, 2002; John, 2003; Lerner, 2004; Lewis-Charp et al., 2003; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, in press). In addition to the personal skills that accrue through YCE, these opportunities hold the potential to contribute to community well-being in three primary ways: (a) analyzing power in social relationships, (b) promoting social change, and (c) acting collectively (Ginwright & James, 2002). Traditional after-school and youth development organizations and programs can better foster youth and community wellness by shifting their activities toward youth organizing and civic activism. This will not be easy however. There are powerful internal and external barriers for organizations to do this. Many adults lack the critical awareness of how social and political factors influence well-being and regard political activism as not kosher.

How do we enable positive individual and community outcomes and how do we thwart negative ones? How do we prevent cooptation of YCE and how do we merge the lessons of participation with the insights of injustice? Efforts are under way to merge hitherto fragmented roles: the helping role with the change agent role, the ameliorative role with the transformative role, the clinical role with the community builder role, and the caring role with the justice role (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2003; this book). For as long as we envision the contribution of YCE as merely ameliorative, enhancing personal capacities without

linking competencies to social justice, YCE will not fare better than many programs that limit their contributions to person-centered outcomes.

Territorialism, parochialism, and acquired ignorance have prevented the creation of new roles for helpers and youth workers. It is unacceptable to delegate social change to politicians who, in the United States, have been unable to provide universal health care and ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; in Australia and Canada have been unable to improve the quality of life for aboriginal people; and who all over the world ignore the plight of youth and the poor. Adults working with youth, and youth themselves, need to join hands in learning how to address personal, relational, and collective wellness at the same time. Splitting roles into “fixers” and “changers” is inconceivable. Humans and societies require integrative roles for citizens. It is a chimera to believe that once adults and youth “put their house in order” they will be in a position to contribute to the common good. The common good cannot wait. In fact, part of “putting their own house in order” is to enhance the common good. The personal good is inextricably tied to the common good. YCE cannot afford to go the path of “personal skills only.” Personal and relational wellness are essential but insufficient parts of wellness. Without collective wellness, and without YCE actively contributing to it, personal and relational wellness are bound to suffer. Youth workers have a responsibility to merge strategies for personal with collective well-being.

It is interesting to note the stark contrast between multiple personal outcomes and scant community outcomes in youth programs (Catalano et al., 2002; Lerner, 2004). This discrepancy reflects the very strategies and aims of programs. Judging from the available evidence, most youth programs designed to improve positive and civic development concentrate on personal,

cognitive and social skills, to the detriment of political understanding of the conditions that lead to youth exclusion, discrimination, and poverty. Most programs reviewed by Lerner (2004) and Catalano et al (2002) look remarkably didactic, person-centered, and wedded to charity models of well-being. Few are the programs that strive to challenge the status quo (Morsillo & Prilleltensky, in press) and address injustice.

In our programs and in our general interactions with youth, it seems clear that our aim should be to support young people in building capacities and to create opportunities for youth to work alongside adults to address harmful conditions. We foster resilience and promote human and community development by equipping youth with skills and by providing them with opportunities to use them in ways to challenge inequality. This is a dynamic, experiential, and self-reinforcing process. Youth gain skills, a sense of belonging, and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world through social action. Youth are more inclined to act as they develop skills, interpersonal competencies, and socio-political awareness.

But programs are only one way to foster participation and social conscience. We need to look beyond programs and services as we create ways to build capacities and opportunities for healthy development. Developmental theory might suggest that programs and services should be the fall-back position and a sure sign that the natural facilitation of development has broken down (Kegan, 1982). Parents and families surely play a crucial role. However, the community as a whole may be the most important holding environment for thriving (Kegan, 1982; Lerner, 2004; Winnicott, 1965). As a culture, we need to do a better job supporting the developing young person as he or she develops self-sufficiency, competence, identity, and political agency. Adults

in all corners of the community can look for ways to give young people the opportunity to have a voice in public contexts and in the decisions that affect their lives.

We agree with John McKnight (1995) who suggests a community vision where the marginalized are not treated as clients, but instead are “incorporated into community to experience a network of relationships, work, recreation, friendship, support, and the political power of being a citizen” (p. 169). The aim is to create communities where resources facilitate personal power and control as well as collective well-being. It is incumbent on us to join with youth to create more supportive structures and to confront injustice and oppression.

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