Child and Youth Development Through Community Participation

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Spring, 1996

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT

Very instructive for this Initiative was the review of the psychological literature on children's developing capacities to participate, and on the benefits of participation. This work establishes that providing opportunities for young people to engage in action research and other forms of exploration and of self-expression, has positive effects for them and their communities. Benefits include the development of their self-concept and identity, their autonomy, social competence and social responsibility, community identity and development, and political self-determination.

This review foregrounded the following considerations of particular importance in planning community projects of the kind proposed for this Initiative:

• Children need opportunities to engage with peers and adults who are models of the competence and social efficacy that children seek. However, they will only feel empowered if their actions make a difference;

• If organizations are going to attract young people to serve their communities, they need to allow "youth culture" to flourish and to allow for the diversity of children in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, physical and mental ability and sexual orientation. Only in this way will the organization support personal and social identity;

• Adults in young people's organizations need to provide a trustworthy base, maintain a sense of purpose, and understand the issues and needs of children as the children define them;

• When children or youth critically evaluate their own living conditions and identify the underlying causes of problems, they become more able to rise above the constraints imposed by their environment, be it ghettoized and spatially isolated housing or a broken home;

• Neither teaching nor modeling alone promotes democratic participation, which must be learned through practice.

FINDINGS

1. The Changing Ecology of Children and Youth and the Need for Community-Based Programs

While there is an enormous research literature on children's development, particularly children's thinking, there has been remarkably little research on their everyday lives. We know much more about the way children and teenagers behave in schools and in strange experimental settings than about their lives out of school in their own neighborhoods. Yet by the time they finish high school, children have spent only 11,000 hours in the classroom and approximately 65,000 hours outside (Medrich et al. 1983). During that time they will watch about 15,000 hours of television, something research does know quite a bit about, but this still leaves 50,000 hours about which we know very little beyond the fact that there have been dramatic changes in the past two decades in children's relationships to their communities. They are less free to choose where they want to go and when, with the result that their opportunities to contact their peers in unprogrammed activities outside of school time are severely limited (Medrich et al, 1983; Hart, 1986; Children's Environments, 1992; Gaster, 1992; Bryant, 1985).

Much more attention has been given to the seductive power and negative influences of television than to the dangers and environmental deterioration which keep children and teenagers indoors probably because the data is more readily available. But Medrich et al found in their study in Oakland California that whether or not a mother was employed did not make it more likely that the children would be a heavy television viewer unless she was also worried about her child's safety. Thus the growth of crime, together with growing attendant fear of it, is a significant determent of free time activity. These fears are not all unrealistic; during the 1980's there was an 11% increase in the violent deaths of teenagers and a 10% increase in juvenile incarceration (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1992). There have also been great changes in the structure of families in the USA for the 20-year period beginning in 1971, there was a 276% increase in the number of very low income working mothers (Dugger, 1992). The combined effect of such variables such as these combined, the increase in single parent families, the increase of two-parent working families, a 40% reduction in federal aid to cities and a wholesale retreat from public support for play, recreation and youth services (Rubin, 1981) has been the entrapment of children and youth indoors, alienated from their communities and separated from their peers.

A few studies show how these disturbing statistics translate into difficulties for individual children and youth (Kotlowitz, 1991; Hamburg, 1992; Kornblum, and Williams, 1993). Some quantitative data is also available. A 1988 longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of about 25,000 eighth

grade children found that approximately 27% of them spent an average of two or more hours home alone after school (US Department of Education, 1990). Researchers have also found that children of lower socioeconomic families were more likely to be home alone for·upwards of three hours (Benson, 1993; US Department of Education, 1990). The loss of a safe outdoor environment for children and adolescents has precipitated a breakdown of the "naturally occurring social networks" that once supported them in many ways (Bernard, 1991). This means fewer opportunities for the young to engage in spontaneous activities with one another, fewer opportunities for informal contacts with responsible adults in the community, fewer opportunities to observe responsible community action, and a reduction in the amount of time spent with other people in community public spaces in general. Furthermore, when children are isolated from the surrounding community, the pressures on parents increase even further, and the incidence of child abuse and neglect increases as well (Garbarino and Giulliam 1980; Polanski at al, 1981).

Given these striking changes in the kinds of contacts children and youth have with their communities and the resultant reduced opportunities they have to direct their own lives outside of home and school, it is not suprising that other research is beginning to find that youth are attracted to, and more likely to maintain, their participation in programs which offer them the chance not only to engage in activity and social interconnection, but also to lead such activities themselves (Villarruel and Lerner, 1994; Heath and McLaughlin, 1993; Steele, Miller and Rai, 1993). However, young adolescents have revealed in research that they generally do not want to be left alone or left to their own devices. They want more regular contact with adults who care about and respect them, greater access to constructive alternatives to loneliness, protection from the hazards of drugs and violence and activities that allows them to contribute to their communities (Benson, 1993; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Lou Harris, 1993). In an ethnographic study of a wide range of community based programs for inner city youth over a five year period, Heath and colleagues found that inner city at-risk adolescents prefer organizations that have a high degrees of activity, a wide range of choices, and include youth-driven activities (Heath, 1994). The youngsters who have remained in programs explained that the experiences produced an increase in self control and self respect and greater expectations for their own futures. Socially they found opportunities to find friends and to link up with caring adults as role models.

With an increased number of families in poverty and the kind of deterioration in community and hence social networks described above, there is a particular need for child and youth organizations to serve as a bridge to a larger community of social support for troubled children form highly stressed families. When a family is having great difficulties, group membership and contact with alternative social supports can greatly decrease the likelihood that a child will subsequently exhibit poor social adjustment (Bryant, 1985). Lerner and Smith (1982) found that 80% of "resilient" youths who grew up in chronic poverty felt that support and counseling from friends and "parent" figures in their community had been valuable in helping them cope with crises. They also found that informal sources of community support were more numerous and available

in these resilient "youths" communities than they were in the communities of youths, who had serious coping problems.

2. Identity Formation

A major project of childhood and adolescence is the construction of a sense of identity. This construction of identity, also referred to as self-concept, organizes a child's social and psychological energies, including the child's participation in groups. Understanding how children form a sense of identity is fundamental to understanding how they relate to others and why participation in projects with other children is important to their development. It is also useful as a guide to the facilitators of programs of children's participation.

The developmental trends in identity formation in childhood and youth and how these vary

Many theorists and researchers who focus on identity development characterize it as a social process, although they differ in their descriptions of how society plays a role. In the review that follows, we will discuss explanations from the perspectives of the psychodynamic tradition, the social psychology tradition, narrative psychology, and feminist psychology. The insights from these diverse perspectives are, in our view, complementary in that these perspectives all emphasize relationships between society and self at the same time, offering insights from different viewpoints on this interaction. The psychodynamic perspective focuses on the nature of needs and changes in affective life, in particular the crises that children and adolescents experience as they work toward integrating their feelings and beliefs with those of the people around them. The social-psychological perspective offers insights into how children and adolescents analyze themselves and their roles, which is helpful in understanding their conscious reflections, while the psychodynamic aids our understanding of subconscious processes. To these insights, narrative psychology adds the observation that social and cultural factors, in particular the nature and use of private and public discourse, plays a major role in constituting identity. Then finally, feminist psychology extends this emphasis on social and cultural influences by focusing on issues of power and political dynamics that play a role in identity as well as community.

Across these various theories, however, are some general points as well as singular observations. All of them define identity as social rather than something uniquely within individuals, and all emphasize the role of language and thought in identity. In addition, all of these theories offer some common observations about children's orientations to the world at different phases in their development, and their common observations about two of these phases are particularly relevant to the formation of children's participation in their communities. Children from roughly 8 through 11 years are characterized as enthusiastic, outward-looking, and industrious as they begin to forge what

seem like independent identities. In contrast, adolescents, from roughly 12 years old on, are characterized as more inward-looking, philosophical, and mercurial as they test the identity constructions they have made for themselves. Although broadly characterized, these qualities of children and adolescents suggest the need for somewhat different kinds of participation, and of course, the social, economic, and cultural differences that determine just how and where these qualities come in to play must be considered as well.

Developmental crises: A psychodynamic perspective

Psychologist Erik Erikson is a major theorist of identity formation. In 1950 he proposed that psychosocial crises propel identity development, saying "Each stage becomes a crisis because incipient growth and awareness in a significant part function together with a shift in instinctual energy that causes specific vulnerability in that part" (p. 56). These crises occur in several of the important formative stages that shape the individual's relationship to others. Infants, for example, struggle with trust and mistrust, and develop their orientation to others based on their early experiences of being able to trust or having to mistrust. Young children face a crisis over autonomy versus shame and doubt, and later over initiative versus guilt. School-aged children, who are especially interesting as potential participants in community organizations, are propelled by a strong sense of industry which can be nevertheless frustrated by feelings of inferiority when their efforts are foiled or when they do not receive the appropriate feedback for their efforts. then, in adolescence, the child faces further struggle. According to Erikson, adolescence is a particularly crucial time in identity formation because a still somewhat fragile sense of identity can be threatened by what he calls identity diffusion. But all of these tensions provide the challenges and potentials for each stage of development. As children mature, they develop a sense of identity through their problematic experiences and resolution of these crises.

Erikson characterizes the stages of childhood, by the following self definitions, which represent the child's implicit orientation to the world. When very young, children tend to define themselves in somewhat passive terms, capsulated by the phrase "I am what I am given" (Erikson). Then firm grounding in trusting relationships allows children to progress to a more authoritative stance captured by the phrase "I am what I will". Then after this identity comes increasingly under conscious control, children expand to a sense of "I am what I can imagine I will be", that eventually culminates in the central orientation of the school-age year: "I am what I can learn". This heightened sense of industry during middle and late childhood is in some ways a practicing for parenthood by children in the latency stage (the time when psychosocial drives are dormant but laying the foundation for "the storm of puberty" [Erikson, 1950]). However this heightened sense of industry also involves doing things beside and with others. Children's awareness of division of labor and potential to share opportunity develop at this time, and children need authentic recognition that their ways of mastering experience and self-image are reasonably consistent with how others view them.

After childhood, as they undergo major physiological changes, adolescents want to consolidate their social roles. While adolescents may appear to experiment with myriad identities, this is actually a purposeful constructive time. According to Erikson (1950, p. 74), "The sense of ego identity, then, is the accrued confidence that one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity (one's ego in the psychological sense) is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning in others' eyes." As adolescents come to feel a central self, they test this self in various contexts, and versions, simultaneously seeking confirmation that others see them in a way that is true. This Eriksonian characterization offers a helpful explanation for adolescents' sometimes extreme adherence to symbols in dress, behavior, or language. Such clear emblems of identity allow them to exhibit the emerging sense of self and solicit feedback from others in their environment.

"I am this, but I'm also that": A social-psychological perspective

Research in social psychology indicates that children's and adolescents' self-concepts tend to be multifaceted (Harter, 1988; Wigfield & Karpathina, 1991; Strein, 1993). Children's descriptions of themselves and their self concerns focus on an array of internal and external factors. According to the social psychology approach, children gradually acquire the penchant to describe themselves and have characteristic preferences. Changes in self-concept are based on underlying cognitive structures which enable children to represent different notions of self (Harter, 1988). In studies of self concept, the focus is on an understanding of self culled through various research methods that emphasize cognition and language, in contrast to descriptions based in psychoanalytic theory, which focus on psychosocial drives as postulated in theory and reified through theorists' success with therapies intended to address the hypothesized conflicts, traumas, etc. Building on Piaget's developmental principles and explanations, Harter (1988), for example, explained that preschoolers tend to describe themselves by making reference to discrete modes of behavior instead of higher order concepts of selfhood because basic cognitive abilities predate the understanding of basic logical relations.

When understanding of logical relations does begin to develop, during middle childhood, children describe themselves with reference to evaluations and categories which require a kind of logic that allows for analysis, some hypothesis testing ("Is this me?"), and an emerging ability to assume and coordinate more than one perspective – theirs and someone else's. This research on the development of self-concept within the social psychology tradition, engages children in characterizing themselves in terms of a wide range of descriptors that have been theoretically chosen by the experimenters. As children mature, the trait labels they ascribe to themselves become increasingly interpersonal and they often identify themselves as "friends," or "trustworthy". Furthermore, children from ages 8 through 11 tend to organize their self-attributes within domains like school, sports, neighborhood, etc. Children in this age group also demonstrate interest in and awareness that others are critically evaluating them, and their own self-evaluations come to match those of

others increasingly during these years. Finally, as they approach adolescence, children's self-descriptions show increasing continuity and stability.

In adolescence, self-descriptions tend to focus on psychological and interior representations of feelings, thoughts, and personality, a distant change from the childhood focus on traits that represent behaviors (Harter, 1988). Also, while children describe traits like popularity, smartness, athletic ability, and physical attractiveness, adolescents draw abstract generalizations about psychological constructs, like truthfulness. In addition, adolescents develop a more formal theory of the self which cuts across different domains. While there is consistency in this integrative domain, adolescents' descriptions nonetheless reveal conflict and confusion. They are unsure about exactly who they are and intensely pursue an integrated description. Adolescents self-evaluations can be quite accurate but they also vacillate from positive to negative self-evaluations. In their intense self-focus and vacillation of self-representations, adolescents require contexts which allow metaphysical identification, occasions for mirroring, and perhaps most importantly flexibility in aspects that involve identification.

Although the social-psychological tradition has offered some stable accounts of children's self-descriptions that are consistent with cognitive-developmental progressions, this approach does not engage children in extended discourse which would reveal more diversity. For this we must turn to other methods that leave more room for diverse characterizations of identity and self, given in extended language like narratives, to merely the language which the process of labeling constitutes.

"I am the stories about me": Narrative psychology perspective

Recent theory in narrative psychology argues that the self is formed through the process of narrating one's life. Consequently, the cultural beliefs, practices, and discourse patterns which influence narrative are taken to be major factors in identity formation. This "identity through discourse" view (Harre & Gillet, 1994; Fivush, 1994; Gilbert, 1993) differs dramatically from the cognitive-developmental view that children's awareness of self builds on underlying cognitive structures and their sense of identity evolves with the development of the cognitive structures.

According to much of narrative psychology, identity is said to be constructed through the stories told by and about children (Polkinghorne, 1991). Research has supported the theory, indicating that the roles, characteristics, and actions of children resemble those in the stories mothers tell about them, which differ in nature across socioeconomic groups (Miller, 1994). The nature of story-telling and other forms of discourse also has an impact on how a child perceives and organizes experience. For example, girls cast themselves in social situations much like the girls in the oral and written stories in their worlds (Fivush, 1994; Gilbert, 1993). Similarly, children whose mothers characterize people and events the children encounter in narrative form tend to organize their experiences in narrative form – a form especially helpful to autobiographical memory, while

children whose mothers focus on taxonomies tend to organize the world in terms of categories (Bruner, 1991; Nelson, 1993). In identity formation, both the narrative and paradigmatic approaches to making sense of experience come in to play, but these may support identity formation differentially across phases of development. Young children, for example, may be best served through narrative which provides a culturally-appropriate event-based framework for past and ongoing experience, and narrative structure thus may be especially helpful for the development of self-concept in early childhood. But paradigmatic approach may be equally helpful later on when children are better able to analyze the world into categories, or culturally-appropriate domains and materials. In later childhood, children use their own narrative to make sense of the people, events, and concepts in their environment (Daiute, 1995). They create an ongoing underlying "story of how things are" to interpret school, community, and themselves (Daiute, 1995). Thus, children's participation is embedded in the context of this dynamic narrative.

Identity and political struggle: Feminist psychology perspective

Feminist psychological theories are varied, but share an emphasis on the role of political power and hegemony in the formation of self-concept (Alcoff & Potter, 1993). A basic theme of feminist psychology is that power relations underlie all mental life and behavior. Being socialized to play the role of "other" by society, parents, teachers, and even peers (Fivush, 1994; Rogers, 1994) is a foundation of both women and girls' identity, and this disempowers them, especially when they do not recognize the power imbalances or make explicit efforts to struggle against these imbalances. Moreover, simply being a member of the group that does not have power means having less access to resources and other material means that can support communication and community-building as well as the identity development that results from them.

Another aspect of power relations, however, impacts identity development just as severely. The feminist critique posits that "ideal" identity has been defined in terms of the white male, due to the fact that much research on morality and identity was conducted for many years with white male subjects, and they have thus become the standard. But more importantly, feminist theory has also shown where such assumptions are greatly flawed though research interviews with women that reveal different foundations, processes, and outcomes for characterizing and developing an identity. For example, women tend to focus on contextual factors and relationships and explain their experiences when they describe themselves while men tend to appeal to abstract universal standards (Gilligan, 1977).

Admittedly, feminist psychology has not explicitly confronted issues of development, but children and adolescents, like women, are also groups who do not have power, and as such some of the ideas of feminist psychology apply to explain their development. Disempowerment affects children and adolescents in terms of the resources, possibilities, and struggles they have to work with in constructing their identities no less than it does women. As advocates for children, we also would point out that another problem interest in the universal

"ideal" identity mold is that it assumes an adult, with extensive life experience and cognitive testing.

Cultural variations in the development of identity

Cross-cultural research indicates that identity and self-concept are influenced in specific ways by the beliefs and practices of specific cultural and social groups (Markus & Kitayama, 1989). While many current theorists emphasize that identity evolves in a social context, the nature of the sociocultural influence varies. For example, children in Asian cultures tend to describe themselves in collective terms, while children in North America tend to qualify their self-descriptions less in regard to a surrounding context (Markus & Kitayama, 1989). Some have argued, moreover, that personal identity and self-concept may be uniquely Western concepts, while a broader sense of societal anchoring dominates individuals' orientations in other cultures.

However, differences also occur within the USA related to variations in both oral and written discourse, values, economic situations, and schooling. Research in narrative psychology, for example, has illustrated how U.S. children from Latino backgrounds tend to frame important events in their lives in terms of a network of family participants, relationships, and roles (McCabe, 1995), which is consistent with descriptions of how Latino children organize their experiences in school (Moll & Greenberg, 1991). In contrast, European-American children in the U.S. tend to organize their life narratives in terms of succession of events, with their own emotional marking in the qualification of these events (McCabe & Peterson, 1991).

The importance of group membership in the formation of children's identity

In late childhood and adolescence, group membership is crucial for different reasons. Children ages 8 through 12 develop their sense of competence, independence, and self-worth in a context of social interchange which provides the opportunities for mirroring that these children require to test their self-concepts. Adolescents engaged in the consolidation and differentiation of their ego identities seek group membership which allows for symbolic work with the possible identities they are constructing, as well as social interchange that meets basic affective interpersonal needs. Thus, for adolescents, groups serve, in part, as a stage for the identities they are creating, while for younger children groups serve more as work places in which they demonstrate competence and the first flourishes of independence.

Who is in a child's group of friends also matters. Young children do not, for example, tend to differentiate their playmates by gender, ethnicity, or even disability, as long as the characteristic does not dramatically limit play. During middle and late childhood, however, friendships tend to be gender-segregated, and other factors like ethnicity and social class appear. In adolescence, identity affiliations which help to define social and personal roles become important

factors as teens begin to identify a "true self". Adolescents need flexibility in their group membership although at any given time, they may appear to be bonded for life.

A role for children's organizations in identity formation and self-efficacy

Organizations can provide contexts that allow for the needs, challenges, and potentials of children in various phases of development. But these structures must allow flexibility for children and adolescents to explore and develop their identities and actions in the world in ways consistent with their own cultures.

The structure of environments in which children live plays an important role in the development of their sense of competence. Environments like school that emphasize self-restraint and a strict sense of duty in doing what one is told – if carried to the extreme – make children dependent and overly restrained, which spoils the child's desire to learn and work (Erikson, 1980, p. 88). At the other extreme, relying entirely on free play to learn what one must do can lead children to a feeling of confusion since one cannot learn what one must do only by doing what one likes. Children need to be led toward activity that shows them then can accomplish pragmatic and realistic tasks which remain satisfying to them because such accomplishment makes them aware of previously unexplored potentials in themselves. Thus, environments that steer the middle course between free play and directed activity serve children best in resolving the crisis of industry versus inferiority – developing a sense of competence that is a milestone of healthy personality development during the school-age years.

Thus, an organization for children from ages 8 - 10 should provide the impetus and resources for manageable and intellectually challenging projects, like doing community surveys around a topic that is of issue. Children in this age group have enormous energy and enthusiasm for turning outward to the world as a way of feeling their identity and gradually using the world as an alter-ego or mirror. But the organization would also needs to provide support if these children are to carry out their sometimes overly ambitious ideas. In consideration of the industry/inferiority crisis of childhood, an organization cannot simply play a role in engaging children in meaningful, concrete projects it must also make it a priority to ensure, as much as possible, against failure in these projects by supporting children's grand schemes with structure and practical resources. Alternately the organization must help the children learn to deal with failure of their projects when this becomes necessary to provide such support the organization could rely in part on older children as well as on adults.

Since early adolescents focus more internally, their projects would need to allow for and ideally build upon their need to do extensive comparison and contrast of self/other in emotionally intense contexts. Thus, participation in artistic and dramatic humanitarian projects may be most attractive to adolescents. Of course in this case, as with support for younger children, the organization

must provide the psychological and social space to allow developmental contexts to play themselves out in safe ways.

A role for children's organizations in the formation of children's identity with their community

Children's organizations can create contexts in which children become as much integral members of the community as they are members of family and peer cultures. Organizations for children ages 8 through 12 can provide community contexts and purposes that allow children's sense of industry to flourish. The projects must be viewed as authentic and manageable by children so that the competing tension at this age – the tendency to feel inferior if their efforts are thwarted – does not overwhelm and paralyze their sense of industry. In addition, although children need to be given responsibilities at this age and the freedom to work independently, they also need supervision so that they can avoid unnecessary failure. But if both authentic projects and adequate supervision are provided children at this age can become part of a community where their industry is valued and where they can engage in meaningful tasks with peers and adults who are subtle models of the competence and social efficacy that children seek. They can also become part of a community as they rise to challenges wherein they learn of the significance of their action and their actions impact upon others. Then, as they learn about the needs of others, they can apply themselves to helping others as well as helping themselves.

How and why children establish child and youth cultures

In multicultural education, there is a focus on the various ethnic cultures which provide the basic foundation for children's values, activities, language, and self-concept. Yet, as children mature, they become part of an increasing number of other cultures, including the culture of school, interest groups (like sports), organizations, and peer groups (Daiute, 1993). One pervasive culture that children construct as well as join is youth culture. Youth culture tends to cut across ethnic boundaries; it is often shared via media, fashion, music, or performance. however, while youth may use the material of commercialism, there is evidence that they reconstruct it in their own terms, beginning a cycle of mutual influence between their own youth culture and the popular culture designed to attract them. Thus, the spontaneous and essential elements of youth culture are defined by the needs and sense-making strategies of the young themselves. This culture is, moreover, ever-changing and tends to be formed in resistance to mainstream culture, in particular that associated with adults (Fiske, 1991; Willis, 1990).

Both children and adolescents participate in popular culture as a means of social action and identity development and social action. They use popular cultural forms of music, fashion, cultural media as arenas of social action to form and reproduce collective and individual identities. This participation involves symbolic creativity that has to be engaged in daily and is essential "to the production and reproduction of human existence" (Willis, 1990, p.7).

Through symbolic activities of fashion, music, performance, and friendship rituals young people learn to understand themselves and what their possibilities are for the rest of their lives (Willis, 1990, p.7). Thus, the construction of youth culture symbols, rituals, and meanings is referred to as "necessary symbolic work" – mental, emotional, social, and physical activity that is like clay for identity formation.

Researchers have identified several elements of necessary symbolic work, and these include language, physical activity, drama and a wide range of communications. Youth discourse enables group formation and solidarity with identity elements conveyed in its content and form. Performances like drama, dancing, story-telling, and humor are symbolic forms of communication that can serve for role-playing and interplay are important in establishing society/self connections. These symbolic creations are not mere forms, but are instead infused with personal and shared meanings which function as foils for identity. As youth use a set of these symbolic forms consistently, they also begin to constitute cultural practice since symbol formation is an aspect of culture binding. In fact, youth's symbolic creativity in resistance conforms to many of the basic aspects of a culture, including rituals, goals, and moral rules (Fine & Mechling, 1993). However, because this is also important identity work, the content of these youth cultures tends to be created by youth anew, based on the available raw materials, issues, needs, and developmental emphases. Since this identity work is authentic and effortful youth need freedom to create symbolic forms and meanings and to contrast these emerging forms to the existing forms – those of established culture, adult culture, mainstream culture, for youth symbols are typically in resistance to established symbols.

How youth organizations can provide contexts for creative symbolic work

Because symbols function as the observable glue of youth cultures and these include aspects of language, dress, music, rituals and activities, an important function for youth organizations is to provide a context in which youth can establish a culture in ways that positively impact personal and social identity (Daiute, 1993; Heath & McLaughlin, 1993). Thus, youth organizations need to allow the formation of certain aspects of youth culture, which means they must be flexible enough to allow members to form symbols and rituals, and to infuse existing rituals with new meanings. While the adults should manage youth organizations increasingly from the sidelines as children mature, they should nevertheless need to provide certain types of support for positive youth culture. They need both to ensure that members are seen as important and resourceful in complex and diverse ways and more importantly, to provide some stability, mirroring, and facilitating for productions. However, as in any culture, economic, social, and political stresses will undermine the positive development of youth culture. Moreover, while economic resources shared equitably are always helpful, such resources are not typically available. As a result, adults need to provide a basic structure and resources.

Organizations that have captured and maintained young people's interest have several important features (McLaughlin, p.59). The adult sponsors of these organizations make it clear that the young people are valuable to themselves and to society. Through various means, it is also made clear that the youth are a resource to be developed. At the same time though, youth organizations need to allow for complexity – in particular for young people's participation in multiple cultures, and multiple identities, defined in their own ways. In successful organizations, youth benefit from having the opportunity to play a range of roles and to be experts in these roles as well as apprentices.

Finally, adults in the organizations cannot over-determine the culture of the organization. Instead, they need to provide a trustworthy base, to maintain a sense of purpose, and to understand the issues, purposes, and needs of youth as they define these things themselves. Adults can honestly convey their values and compare and contrast their values with those of the youth, but this should not take on the form of an evaluation, that can diminish the sense of responsibility and identity work in the young people. Thus, supporting youth organizations is a difficult job indeed. Structure and support are crucial, as are positive role-modeling, but if these organizations are going to attract and serve young people in a way that encourages them to participate in and serve their communities, adults need to allow the organization culture to be deeply informed by youth.

3. The Development of Children's Understanding of the Social World

Although different psychological literatures have arisen to focus on the development of interpersonal relations, social cognition, and personal identity, they should be understood as different aspects of the same activity. Understanding of the social world and understanding of oneself are constructed in a reciprocal manner, influencing each other and, at times, constraining each other. One's identity enters into how one interacts with others, and, conversely, interactions in the social world contribute to an evolving sense of self (cf. Cooley, 1902, Mead, 1934). It should be noted that although lapses into conventional English usage may obscure the point, an understanding of the social world and "identity", should be thought of in terms of processes (adaptation and meaning-making) rather than as fixed entities (e.g., Holoquist, 1990, Wertsch, 1991).

The traditional literature on the development of social cognition has focused on cognitive capacities of the child. This literature, strongly influenced by Piaget, gives primacy to the contribution of a child's ongoing interaction with the physical world in their cognitive development. More recently there has been an emphasis on the primacy of social relations in the construction of thought (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978, Doise & Mugny, 1984). Both domains of theory have relevance to this review.

A general picture of developmental differences that has been found and widely studied is in the way persons (self and others) are described (Livesly & Bromley, 1973; Peevers & Secord, 1973; Scarlett, Press, & Crockett, 1971; Selman, 1980). Physical characteristics predominate in the person descriptions of young children. From 7 or 8 years of age on, children's descriptions increasingly emphasize behavioral description of persons and, with the onset of early adolescence, psychological characteristics of persons gain increasing prominence in both descriptions of oneself and others.

Another aspect of social cognition which has been widely studied developmentally is the ability to think about the thoughts and feelings of others, and of self in relation to others (Feffer & Gourevitch, 1960; Flavell, Botkin, & Fry, 1968; Guardo & Bohan, 1971; Broughton, 1978; Chandler, 1977; Selman, 1980). This research on perspective-taking indicates that with development children become increasingly facile with decentrations, enabling them to better understand the others' point of view. Although under the right conditions even preschool children can recognize that others can have a point of view that differs from their own, they do not consistently act in a way that reflects this understanding until about 7 or 8 years of age. Throughout pre-adolescence there is a gradually increasing capacity to coordinate one's own perspective with that of another person in a way that allows for anticipation of what the other might think, do, or feel; they come to be able to *sequentially* take another's perspective, and recognize intent. Not until about 10 years of age, or older, is there a recognition of the psychological relationship between self and other; there is no *mutual* perspective taking.

By adolescence, the individual is not only aware of the other person's thought, but also grows to be acutely aware that other people might be thinking of them. Such reflective capacities allow for strategic planning of interactions with others; anticipation of the others' moves in a chess game is an apt metaphor. These capacities also lead to the heightened sense of self-consciousness characteristic of early and middle adolescence. Several authors have noted the isolation and profound sense of relativity characterizing early adolescence (Chandler, 1977, Elkind, 1967, Selman, 1980), and this could be a factor in adolescent participation in groups. A useful way to understand how this scheme might inform work with children is to look at how "levels" of perspective-taking, conceptions of friendships peer relationships and leadership might be related (Figure 1).

At each age, socio-cognitive capabilities such as self-awareness and the ability to understand others have direct implications for how a child is likely to interact with peers, and in groups which might include both peers and non-peers. Rather than considering this in terms of a deficit model, outlining what younger children cannot do, it is more fruitful to think in terms of what children can do. For instance, even preschool children can enjoy participating on projects alongside others and can be counted on to express their own preferences. Although a statesperson-like stance is not to be expected until early adolescence or later, children at each age are capable of making contributions to group activity. Consequently, the developmental limitations of children should

not be stressed in the way they too often are, and in this regard it is worthwhile keeping in mind how rare it is to see adults functioning consistently in a selfless way that puts the good of the community ahead of their own interests. Thus, Figure 1 might be used as a tool in designing organizational structures for activities which enable the optimal involvement of children at different ages, remembering of course that participants will not always function in these optimal ways, and that organizational structures cannot rigidly determine participant's functioning.

Figure 1 Selman table (horizontal insert)

4. Peer Relationships and Friendship Formation

Based largely on research with American children (e.g. Sherif and Sherif, 1953), peer groups have been characterized as those in which members share interests socially at regular intervals, hold their common values above those of society at large, and feel a mutual a sense of belonging. In addition, a peer group utilizes leader and follower positions, friendship patterns, and divisions of labor to regulate the members attitudes toward each other (Hartup 1983, p. 144). As detailed in Part One, there are good reasons to believe that opportunities for children to spend time with their peers freely in unprogrammed activities are decreasing due to parental restrictions. Nevertheless, it has been recently estimated that during the elementary school years, children spend over 40 percent of their waking hours in the company of peers and during the teenage years they spend an average of 22 hours a week with their peers beyond the hours they are together in school (Cole and Cole, 1993, p. 516 and p. 583-584). As a result, in designing programs for children it is important for us to know how they come together in groups, what patterns of association develop, how friendships are formed and what factors influence this.

Children's peer groups are organized along multidimensional structures which converge with age (LaFreniere and Charlesworth, 1983; Strayer & Trudel, 1984). Researchers have identified a number of "roles" that children may occupy in their peer group, categorizing them as popular, sociable, withdrawn, isolated, neglected, unpopular, rejected, aggressive, controversial, and average (Rubin and Coplan, 1992, p. 541). These categories may be divided more generally into peers who are accepted and those who are rejected, and they represent a significant organizational future of peer groups. But observational studies have identified dominance relations as an equally important organizational feature that characterized peer groups from as early as preschool through middle childhood and adolescence (Abramovitch, 1976; Strayer & Strayer, 1976; Vaughn & Waters, 1981; Strayer, 1989; Savin-Williams, 1976; Weisfeld, Omark, & Cronin, 1980). Such dominance is more apparent among boys (Savin-Williams, 1979) and during adolescence, group structures are in general less influenced by physical strengths and displays of it by members than by characteristics that support the group's present normative activities (Savin-Williams, 1980). Moreover,

Figure 1: Developmental Levels of Perspective-taking and How They are Reflected in Social Relationships (after Selman, 1981)

Developmental Level in Coordination of Perspectives	Close Friendships	Peer Group	Leadership
Level 0 (approximately ages 3 to 7) Egocentric or undifferentiated perspective. Other's perspective not differentiated from one's own perspective.	Stage 0 Momentary physical interaction.	Emphasis on physical connections and overt action (e.g. "a big team", "play games")	Recognition of a leader's physical actions (e.g. "tells what to do") but not the rationale.
Level 1 (approximately ages 4 to 9) Subjective or differentiated perspectives. Recognition of differences in perspective.	Stage 1 One-way assistance, e.g. someone who plays your favorite games with you.	A series of unilateral relations. Group activities thought of in terms of outcomes that benefit self or please others. Reciprocity based on physical acts only.	Obedience to authority "until reaching a critical level of hurt feelings results in the leader's dismissal".
Level 2 (approximately ages 6 to 12) Self-reflective or reciprocal perspective. Awareness of how others might view one's thoughts and feelings.	Stage 2 Fair-weather cooperation. Cooperation around incidents or issues. Relationships tend to break up over agruments.	Bilateral (reciprocal) partnerships. Interlocking dyads. Reciprocal feelings of affection "extend a chain from one dyad to another".	Thoughts and actions tied to specific pragmatic effects are the basis of interdependence.
Level 3 (approximately ages 9 to 15) Third-person or mutual perspective. Ability to understand a neutral perspective.	Stage 3 Intimate and mutual sharing. A system, not isolated. Possessiveness and jealousy often characterize this stage.	Concept of the group distinct from particular relationships. Cohesive because of common interests and beliefs. Expectation of unanimity suppresses differences of opinion.	Unanimity and team spirit are valued. Leadership is thought of in terms of personality differences. Obligation based on shared beliefs.
Level 4 (approximately 12 - adulthood) Societal or in-depth perspective. Ability to take the perspective of what is good for society; a legal or moral perspective.	Stage 4 Autonomous, interdependent, i.e. relational systems which are flexible and change.	Interdependence of group process and individual differences are recognized. A pluralistic community united behind common goals but recognizing diversity.	An abstract concept of the leader's role.

because groups differ in their normative orientations, social power within the group is distributed differently in different social situations (Hartup, 1983).

Friendship formation among preschoolers has been found to grow out of a mutual attraction through which partners reciprocate and complement each other's behaviors, leading to a "climate of agreement' (Howes, 1987). Youniss and his colleagues found that 6- and 7-year-olds describe friends as children with whom they share activities and things (Youniss, 1980). By the time they are 9 or 10 years of age, children say that friends are people whom they know well and share interests or similar abilities with or who have compatible personalities. While participation in common activities remains an important basis for friendship formation in adolescence, other factors come into play at this time as well. Friendship becomes a much more reasoned relationship with a great deal of shared values as well as similar interests, behaviors, and attitudes towards school, academic performance, dating, drug use, drinking and delinquency (McCord, 1990).

Peer relationships and friendship formation across cultural and racial lines

It has been found from the observation of mixed-race situations that the contacts between children of the same race are generally more frequent than cross-race contacts from the preschool years through early adolescence (McCandless & Hoyt, 1961). Adolescents have more opportunities than younger children to meet peers from other social and ethnic backgrounds because of their greater freedom to explore new and different environments, and because they attend gradually larger schools with a larger "pool" of possible friends (Cole and Cole, 1993). Nevertheless, Epstein (1989) observed an increased racial similarity between adolescents and their friends as compared to elementary school children.

Gender differences in friendship formation and patterns of sex-segregation in friendship

Gender-grouping has been found to take precedence over race-grouping in children's associative contacts (Asher, Singleton, & Taylor, 1982). Friendships become increasingly sex-segregated as boys and girls move from middle childhood to preadolescence. When asked to choose a best friend, roughly 68% of 6-year-olds chose a child of the same sex while almost 90% of 12-year-olds chose a child of the same sex (Daniels-Beirness, 1989).

Distinct patterns of gender association have been observed in middle school (9 to 12 years). Girls generally have fewer friends and make friends less rapidly than boys (Eder and Hallinan, 1978). It seems that they are more sensitive to the boundaries between friendship and acquaintances, and are more likely to discourage interactions with those who are not close friends (Cole and Cole, 1993). However, girls' friendships are often more intimate than boys': the sharing of feelings, exchanges of compliments, and discussions of likes

dislikes and embarrassments is often more complete (Waldrop and Halverson (1975).

In contrast, during the middle school years (9 to 12 years) boys usually spend time in larger groups and have more friends of different ages. Studies have consistently found that, on playgrounds, girls usually form groups of two or three, while boys gather in 'swarms' (Daniels-Beirness, 1989). Boys commonly prefer more active play and competitive games. They also prefer to spend more time away from direct adult supervision . Furthermore, Cole and Cole (1993) conclude that boys' socialization seems to be marked by competitiveness within activity as well as conformity as well as conformity to the "rules" of such activity, while girls' socialization is marked by cooperation and with sensitivity to each other and any rules are only implicit.

From the emphasis in middle childhood on developing mutual intimacy and support through friendship which Selman calls Stage 3, children develop to the stage 4 of adolescence with a greater understanding that friends need to establish relationships with other people (see Figure 1,; Selman, 1980). Nevertheless, between the ages of fourteen and sixteen girl's friendships are likely to be closer than boys (Douvan and Adelson, 1966). This is related to the conclusion of Buhrmester and Furman (1987) that boys bond in friendships wherein sensitivity to each other and recognition of worth are expressed by actions rather than by verbal communication that discloses what they think and feel (p. 111-112). Douvan and Adelson suggest that this may be a result of boys' greater concern with their resistance to authority and their need to assert their independence from the control of adults by forming an alliance with a group of friends. But the 14-to-16-year-old boys studied by Douvan and Adelson (1966) were still similar to the 11-to- 13-year-old girls in their desire for friendship that is amiable and cooperative and where friends can control their impulses and share common interests with them. Like girls of the same age they rely upon their friends to be supportive in difficult times though the kinds of difficulties during which they need support for differed: for girls, it was their relations with boys, while for boys it was their conflicts with authority.

It is also widely accepted that girls are more possessive in their friendships but possessiveness tends to typify their friendships during the middle phase of adolescence. After that, during the late teen years, girls become less obsessive and jealous (Cole and Cole, 1993, p. 586) principally because, during the same years, girls begin to lost their nightmarish fears of abandonment and betrayal (Douvan and Adelson, 1966, p. 192). But and additional result is that in the later teenage years, girls also become less threatened by and more tolerant of friends who differ from them.

The contextual factors that influence friendship formation

In considering the place of children's organizations in children's social lives it is useful to consider how children come to form the friendships they have. Epstein (1989) argues that opportunities for contacts which signal friendship

formation, including eye contact, touch, expressive gestures and communication in words, are determined by children's proximity to each other (Epstein, 1989, p. 159). He identifies three settings in which children may find themselves in the proximity of other children–home, community, and school. These settings have different organizations of space and activities which influence how, and with whom, children interact. In addition, what constitutes sufficiently "close proximity" to establish friendships changes with age, progressing from a child's own backyard, to block and neighborhood, to other neighborhoods or larger communities. Similarly, in school there is an expanding range of opportunities for friendship formation from one's own classroom to other classrooms, the library, cafeteria, playground. Epstein found clear trends of expanding boundaries of selection from grades six through twelve (Epstein, 1989).

Central to an analysis of proximity in relation to the development of children's patterns of friendship is the extent to which they make contact through *"naturally occurring proximities"* with siblings, relatives, and neighbors, *"accidental proximities"* created by chance meetings with other children, and *"planned proximities"* arranged by parents (Epstein, 1989, p. 160). In the past, research has shown neighborhoods to be an important factor in the establishment of friendships at school. Several studies (e.g., Seagoe, 1933; Furfey, 1929; Fine), covering an age range from 8 to 13 years, found that, on the average, friends in school lived closer to each other than did other students and classmates. Other data suggests that high school friends who live near each other are longer term friends with more frequent interactions and closer friendships (Coates, 1985). It would be valuable to know how these kinds of patterns are changing at this time. We hypothesize that with the decreasing ranges of children's free movement in their neighborhoods, described in the first section of this paper, more children in the USA are forming friendships through planned proximities.

It is also important to remember that the spatial proximity and characteristics of the physical design of residential areas or schools that can strongly influence contact and friendship formation between children, are not god-given. They are socially constructed; a reflection of ideology, with conscious or unconscious goals of attempting to socialize children in certain ways. Thus, the design of residential areas and the density of children per housing unit can positively affect opportunities for children to meet other children (e.g., Whiting, 1986; Kon, 1981; Van Vleit, 1981). But while housing can facilitate the building of community, it can also lead to ghettoization, which is all too common in public housing projects. Housing projects built at high densities on the end of cul-de-sacs, or even peninsulas, have often been created to isolate certain classes or ethnic categories of children. Large schools, built like prisons with blank schoolyards for lining up but no spaces for group play and high fences to provide a barrier to the community are not expressions of a desire to foster more participatory activity and cooperations between children and adults. Children's organizations can play an important role in countering such social and cultural segregation.

Fortunately the physical environment can only influence, not determine, how children associate. Knowing the ideologies which produced the spatial arrangements we live with is important in helping to articulate one's own ideology and programs which can counteract that which we have inherited. For example, we can equip poorly designed schools with furnishings, equipment and supplies which afford opportunities for sharing and cooperation, and we can modify school asphalt to enable small groups of children to engage in a great variety of different activities (Moore, 1983). Most of all, we can ask children and youth to join in a critical evaluation of their own living conditions (Iltus and Hart, 1994; Hart, 1993; Hart, in press). Such critical awareness of the physical and material constraints that influence one's lives can be the most powerful means for helping young people rise above these constraints.

But of course proximity alone is not a sufficient factor to explain social contacts. It has been reported, for example, that preschool children in France in close proximity did *not* play together until they first obtained permission from their parents (Pitt, 1968) and the granting of permission was related to the known or assumed socioeconomic status of the nearby child. However, this data is not recent, and societal changes and in France too institutional responses are changing: preschoolers in French "crèches" (day-care settings) for example are now affected by school rules about playing together for much of the day rather than by parental gatekeeping (Stambak & Verba, 1986). Regrettably there is too little research to show how friendship patterns are currently changing in the USA as a result of parental constraints and changes in the roles of families and institutions in the catering of children.

Mixed-age interactions and their benefits

Piaget (1965) distinguished the processes which occur during interactions between child and adult and between peers. Interactions among peers are considered to provide greater developmental opportunities because adult-child interactions are usually characterized by adult instruction of children, a one-way relationship. In contrast, peer relationships allow for a greater degree of bidirectional give-and-take (see the section on social cooperation, p. 31 in the current draft) Children actively construct the parameters of these relationships, rather than primarily acquiring guidance from adults who assume positions of superior power and knowledge. The greater flexibility afforded by peer interaction allows children to test their understandings and adapt them to the requirements of ongoing interaction. Although same-age interactions might provide optimal conditions for such experiences, other benefits may be derived from mixed-age interactions. While too great a difference in ages (e.g., adolescents and preschool children) can yield the same differential of power and knowledge that characterizes adult-child interactions, mixed-age groupings are generally beneficial for all participants. Research on mixed ability groupings and mixed age groupings has found that school work in such groups benefits children of lower ability or younger age by exposing them to more sophisticated approaches to tasks, and has no averse effect on the most sophisticated children in the group, who may even benefit from an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities or even assume an instructional role (but without the power associated with adult instructors).

Given that certain types of interaction might be more characteristic of interactions between younger children (e.g. nurturance) and others among older ones (e.g. dependency), and that some types of behavior (e.g. aggression) occur primarily among peers, distinctive patterns might emerge in the asymmetrical interactions of mixed-age groups (Hartup, 1983). For instance, older children might try out assertive roles, both prosocial and antisocial, while younger children might try to take advantage of a nonthreatening opportunity to seek assistance.

5. Social Cooperation and Democratic Participation

There are two basic stances on how children benefit from group activity, each with a strong and more subtle form. One stance is that the mechanism involves some sort of copying of others. In its best known form, modeling (Bandura (1969), behavior which results in positive outcomes is internalized. The implication is that there is no transformation of the modeled behavior, except what occurs through omissions or misunderstandings. A much more subtle form comes from the Vygotskian tradition and emphasizes the appropriation of social and cultural material as both tools for and the stuff of thought (1978). A good deal of research from this tradition has focused on guided participation, such as the notion of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). Adults or older children interacting with a child can try to structure their interaction in such a way that it encourages the child's functioning at a level beyond their usual spontaneous functioning. In addition to a good deal of research, there are several attempts to refine this notion to more adequately encompass situations which are less explicitly didactic (e.g., Lave's Illegitimate Peripheral Participation). This sort of theory of cognitive development leads us to expect that children's participation will consist largely in their acquisition of new information.

The other basic stance on how children benefit from group activity is a form of conflict theory, often influenced by Piaget's cognitive developmental theory. In this view, differing perspectives, opinions, or ways of doing things are held in juxtaposition to one's own (usually not in a conscious manner). The synthesis of new approaches emerges from such confrontations. It should be noted that here, in contrast to the copy theories, it is assumed that the cognitive product will be a transformation of both the originals. In Piagetian terms, the individual tries to fit new information into his/her existing schemes and, simultaneously, the input requires a modification of those schemes (i.e., assimilation and accommodation). To a substantial extent, the important thing is the experience with a contrast case to oneself; in contrast, the copy and even the appropriation stance values the expertise of the new input. This sort of theory of cognitive development focuses on the role of the child's active engagement in the construction of knowledge. (As with any generalization, there are important exceptions. For example, Valsiner's work, influenced by Vygotsky's theory, emphasize the active child as much as than influenced by Piaget (Valsiner, 1991)

Child-adult interactions

Children 6-8 year old and younger tend to obey adult wishes in interactions, motivated by a desire for material rewards and maintenance of the relationship. Thus, prior to early adolescence, adult-child interactions may be characterized by authority relations and unilateral constraint, and significant transformation of the child-adult relationship does not emerge until early adolescence. At this point perception of adults grows from recognition of authority figures to awareness of adults as individuals; adult deficiencies are now recognized and a greater range of relationships with adults is possible (Youniss, 1980).

The issue of social roles is important in how adults are perceived by children. Social roles are commonly conceived of as fairly static ascriptions of function and power relations (cf. Parsons & Shils, 1951). Indeed, even the constructivist psychologist Hans Furth (1980) defined them as knowledge about the external, rather than personal, world. But social roles may be thought of more broadly in terms of behavioral possibilities sanctioned by society (Sarbin & Allen, 1968, Sarbin, 19**). Although regularities may be found in social action (e.g., Abelson, 1975), social roles and situations are not static. Individuals do not merely appropriate supplied meanings. Although children and early adolescents may attempt to enact conventional formulae for social roles, interaction requires anticipation of the thought and action of others, especially in relation to oneself (Mead, 1934). Furthermore, interacting individuals create conditions for each other's action, constraining certain social performances and enabling others by either explicitly guiding behavior (e.g., Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984, Vygotsky, 1978) or implicitly creating expectations or possibilities for action (Goffman, 1959, 1074, Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) and feeling (Averill, 1979, DeRivera, 1977).

Higgins' (1981) rejoinder to the perspective-taking approaches of the late 1970s was that rather than being a matter of coordinating perspectives at all, children acquire expectations for people in particular roles (e.g., teacher, principal, policeman, hooligan). To update this point, we might say that individuals come to expect particular types of behavior (or a range of behavior) depending on the social location of the other. By "social location" we might mean membership in a group defined by race and/or gender (cf. identity politics), or, preferably, a more tightly defined social position (e.g., middle-class African American single mothers). But in all cases central traits in a person description can bias how subsequent information about a person is assessed (Asch, 1946, Kelley, 1950). Information which does not resemble a prototypic or stereotypic representation of a class of person tends to be discarded.

Theory on the development of social cooperation between children

A number of authors have focused on the developmental importance of the emergence of new abilities which result from interaction with others. Peer relations, because of the equal status among peers, function with the expectation of reciprocity (Piaget, 1965, Youniss, 1980). Compared to adult-

child relations, where power relations take precedence, the greater equality of peer relations offers the opportunity for peers to truly listen to each other and attempt to resolve disagreements to reach a common understanding in adult-child interaction. As a result, advances in person perception occur earlier in peer relations. Moreover, while emphasis has been placed on the importance of disagreements in cognitive growth (Mead, 1934, Piaget, 1971, Damon, 1977, Vygotsky, 1978, Doise & Mugny, 1984),the individual's coordination of his/her actions with those of others also plays a crucial role in the growth of both thought and social action. In Piaget's writings on moral development (1965), he emphasizes the construction of a principled morality which can supersede narrow self-interest, and this morality emerges from peer relations which function with the expectation of reciprocity (Youniss,1980).

Children aged 6-8 tend to act with a strict reciprocity, that is an act is responded to in exactly the same way. Older children gradually attend to psychological factors including the intent and personality of the actor as well as the action itself, so that reciprocity is maintained in more complex ways. By 9 to 11 years of age, reciprocity operates in a broader way, so that cooperation becomes based on expectations of equality between participants. Youniss links this transition to the observation that after about 8 years of age other children begin to be recognized as individuals and in comparative terms such as in relation to differences in possessions, ability in school and popularity. In this way, peers mutually come to recognize each other's deficits as well as strengths, which in turn encourages them to be honest about themselves, and assume that they will be received with understanding and acceptance (Youniss, p. 166). This development continues into adolescence and beyond.

How children's organizations can facilitate social cooperation

It is commonplace for adults working with children to think that the best way to teach students how to do something difficult is to "model" the behavior. But modeling is antithetical to encouraging free and democratic inquiry; by showing the one way or preferred way to do something, students are encouraged to replicate rather than construct their own solutions to tasks (Kritt, 1993). More appropriate methods for promoting democratic participation are based on dialogue of several types. If we assume that children are not naturally democratic (or that it has been drilled out of them in schools), we might consider guided explication of activities as an appropriate method for promoting democratic participation. For example, in an attempt to make assessment a more democratic activity in classrooms, the "Arts Propel" model (Wolfe, 1989; Camp, 1990) for portfolios of student work encourages students to talk about what's important to them, display work of their own choosing, and tell about it – perhaps how they did it or why they did the way they did. Another related approach to democratically developing standards for performance which are meaningful to students is simply talk with them explicitly about what makes something a good piece of work (or, in the present case, how democratic participation can be achieved); if this discussion respects input from everyone in the classroom (and the teacher resists directing it too much), the form of the discussion can parallel the topic discussed, thus supporting it.

The old adage that children learn what they live is most often applied to negative outcomes, such as cross generational recurrence of child abuse. Less attention has been given to prosocial behavior, although there has been some early research on the observational learning (modeling) of prosocial behaviors (e.g., Bryan & Walbeck, 1970). Unfortunately, this work has largely been concerned with replication of behaviors rather than the production of new behaviors, and has focused on children's learning the step-by-step mechanics of a behavioral sequence, as well as the reward contingencies associated with it (Bandura, 1969). Our present concerns call for a more broadly conceived notion of the effects of participation in a democratic group, and we point to the now generally recognized theory that people acquire patterns of action and interaction, not merely discrete behavioral sequences. Furthermore, we should like to acknowledge that people become familiar with how certain modes of action make them feel–it is not just a learning of pragmatic and cognitive procedures, but rather a way of being-in-the -world.

More generally, children and adolescents become more aware of their own and others' perspectives in disputes with peers and attempts to convince others, as well as through differences of opinion which emerge in topical discussions. These reflective abilities can inform future social interactions. Although the guidance of an adult (in a moderator capacity) may be necessary at times, the participants should be encouraged to construct their own democracy as much as possible. Smith, Boulton and Cowie (1993) studied the implementation of a Cooperative Group Work program in classrooms of 8 and 9 year olds and identified key conditions that optimize cooperation within groups. First, there must be recognition that cooperation facilitates learning and the opportunity to explore new ideas, cooperation here meaning that going to the head of the class is not the point, but rather the sharing of ideas for everyone's mutual benefit and increased understanding, in an atmosphere of mutual encouragement and support. Thus, a successful group will consider alternative suggestions from different members when discussing an idea or deciding how to go about tasks, and group members will be respectful of each other's contributions, with the result that they learn to be sensitive to, and appreciative and understanding of, others no less than they acquire knowledge (p. 39). In addition, the successful groups activities will be designed expressly to reflect the values that the group members are interactively learning, specifically, reasonableness, orderliness, respect for others' feelings equality, freedom to take risks and the capacity to listen" (p, 40).

Admittedly, both connectedness and empowerment are vital to individual development as well a to community progress. But, in order to facilitate social cooperation, there is a need to emphasize group connectedness above individual empowerment, at the same time bearing in mind that gender and/or social status may either enhance or impede an individual's ability and willingness to cooperate. Riger cites Gilligan (1982) as maintaining that the balance of separation and individuation versus relatedness and interdependence is determined by gender (p. 285). But Riger also points out that, according to Hare-Mustin and Maracek (1986), social class is actually the determining factor

because autonomy requires the freedom which only status, and its attendant access to resources, allows. Thus, for groups who are not in a privileged position, a focus on **connectedness** may be essential to their survival (Riger, 1993, p288); moreover, it has been observed that the conditions under which some groups exist may, in fact, foster connectedness since such conditions are in direct opposition to those which foster empowerment and autonomy. For example, a community may bond most cohesively during crises or disasters, or simple as a result of either hegemonic oppression or the exigencies of poverty (Panzetta, 1973, cited in Riger, p. 288). Furthermore, in situations where crises and stress are absent, individuals often experience feelings of isolation and find themselves unable to access resources alone (Riger, 1983, p. 288).

Group identity

Dawes, van de Kragt, and Orbell (1990) indicate the establishment of *group identity* as a factor of great importance in the development of social cooperation. They contrast this idea with 4 previous hypotheses of social cooperation which they say "have one characteristic in common; they turn an apparent dilemma into a nondilemma by manipulation (conscious or automatic) of the consequences *accruing to the individual* for cooperation or defection" (p. 99) [emphasis in original]. These four hypotheses are (1) *Leviathan* (Hobbes, 1651/1947), in which " a central state mandates cooperation by punishing defection" (Dawes et al, 1990, p. 98). (2) *Reciprocal altruism* (Axelrod, 1984), a "Tit-for-Tat" strategy in which it is in one's self-interest to cooperate "in hopes of eliciting reciprocity" (Dawes et al, 1990, p. 98). (3)*Mutual coercion mutually agreed upon* (Hardin, 1968), in which "[r]ather than being punished for defection by a (potentially arbitrary) central authority, freely choosing people agree to provide punishments to each other for choosing a dominating defecting choice. While the coercive agent itself may consist of a centralized authority, its existence is maintained through the consent of the governed, rather than their mere acquiescence" (Dawes et al, 1990, p. 98). (4) *Socially instilled conscience* (Campbell, 1975) refers to the power of socialization or "moral teachings" which can instill "such a 'bad' conscience for choosing a dominating strategy which harms collective welfare--or to such heightened self-esteem for eschewing such strategies in favor of cooperation--that the individual is better off cooperating, irrespective of external consequences [i.e., what the individual has to gain from the situation]" (Dawes et al, 1990, p. 98)

Rewards

Another issue is that of rewards. If a competitive structure is set up where individuals are appraised only for their own efforts, this is the kind of work that they will do. On the other hand, if team efforts are appraised (e.g., best garden design), and the effort truly is teamwork in deed as well as rhetoric (often it is not), then cooperative efforts will be promoted. Providing group-oriented reinforcement contingencies (for example, offering a collective reward to a class even if one individual gives a correct answer) is associated with a higher degree

of cooperation than providing individual reinforcement contingencies. (Williamson, Williamson, Watkins, & Hughes, 1992)

The values of rules and rule-making

Mehaffey and Sandberg (1992) focus on two children who are rejected by their peers. They try to integrate them into the larger group through skills training sessions with their peers. Their goal is to mitigate the problems of getting along with the larger group experienced by this pair of children by increasing social cooperation that would allow the pair to reunite with the group (p. 63). She states that "elementary-age students need a clear statement of rules and consequences" and that "these should be reviewed and displayed on a large piece of paper during each session" (p. 63). The rules used in this study were "(1) Only one person speaks at a time (2) All group members will listen to the speaker (3) No physical contact of any kind between children (4) No name calling or put downs" (p. 63). This paper does not discuss the importance of children's participation in the rule-making which is important if one wishes children to develop the practice of democratic self-governance as a long term strategy for cooperation.

Even preschool children as young as three and a half or four can be encouraged to generate rules for behavior in their classrooms (DeVries & Zan, 1993). These rules may include such wise injunctions as, "Do not break the toys. Do not bite. Share things." On pertinent occasions these rules can be discussed by the classroom teacher, or a child may point to a large sheet containing the rules when there is an infraction. The rules are not "cast in stone" and discussions may lead to additions or (conceivably) deletions. The value of such simple exercises in democratic self-governance becomes apparent when such a classroom is contrasted with a typical early childhood or elementary school classroom where all rules are imposed by the teacher and the teacher is the sole arbiter of punishable infractions.

Cultural differences in social cooperation

Cox, Lobel and McLeod (1991) review research on collectivist versus individualist cultures, finding that collectivist cultures stress communal needs, shared goals and cooperation (Triandis, 1989, cited in Cox, Lobel and McLeod, 1991, p. 828). Thus, individual members of a collectivist culture are more inclined than those of an individualist are one to subjugate personal interests to the welfare of the group (Bond & Wang, 1983 cited in Cox, Lobel and McLeod, 1991, p. 828). Unlike white Christian Americans, who remain connected to Anglo-European individualism, Asians, Hispanics and Americans of color with African roots remain connected to the collectivist cultures from which they descend (Cox, Lobel and McLeod, 1991, p. 829). Moreover, recent research has uncovered that among those ethnic groups which are highly visible in industry, the vestiges of collectivist tradition are still observable (Cox, Lobel and McLeod, 1991, p. 829).

Cox et al., (1991) designed an experiment in which all subjects had either been born in the US. or had lived in the US. for an average of 12 years and were thus considered as bicultural. Participants were divided into either Anglo-only groups or ethnically diverse groups that simulated interdependent divisions of an organization. Cox et al. found that groups of non-Anglo participants mixed with Anglos approached tasks more cooperatively than homogeneously Anglo groups, and this cooperation became more marked when the groups were informed that other groups would cooperate with them (p.839). While Anglos were the only group to behave competitively after this cue (p. 840), many Asians, Hispanics, and Blacks behaved in a competitive manner before they were given the cue although less so than Anglos. Cox et al. consider that this may be a result of acculturation and assimilation, and they conclude that minority group participants were more likely to display their subcultural group norm when they expected it to be reciprocated." Also, because cooperation was more evident in the experiment on the group level, Cox et al determined that this might reflect reinforcement of [the cooperative] norm by other members of the group who were also from minority culture backgrounds" (p. 840).

The findings of Cox et al. suggest that, in any organization, prompting may be necessary to encourage the cooperative norm among ethnic minorities, particularly if the organization is largely Anglo. But the organization must also create a climate where expression of diversity is received with approval to prevent minorities from feeling inhibited by the dominant culture (p. 842).

Communication and cooperation

Very young children are constrained in their ability to communicate because of their rudimentary language skills. From 3 to 7 years of age children speak well, but use communication in a different way than older children and adults. Their verbal facility belies their somewhat simplistic use of language, primarily to express their own thoughts, experiences, feelings, and desires. While at first blush this is impressive, they are unable to tailor their messages for an audience due to their inability to take in the perspective of other persons. This limitation precludes such useful communicative tools as diplomacy in phrasing messages to avoid unnecessary confrontation, understanding the other's point of view toward a compromise or negotiation, and full consideration for the feelings of others. Children from 7 or 8 to 12 years of age can do all these things, although these communicative skills further develop during adolescence and through adulthood.

Even young children can, however, be encouraged to work together in settings where a "tradition" of talking about how they and others feel has been established (DeVries & Zan, 1993). Even though a child might want his/her way, such discussion can make the child aware of another child's point of view, even in only that situation and for the time being. Such discussion cannot be expected to facilitate lasting development, but the processes established in the discussion can become an accepted way for dealing with disputes while overcoming communicative and perspective constraints among young children.

Among older children, a milieu of open communication can also create expectations for the type of honest communication conducive to establishing values and working with others.

In an investigation of the weekly meetings of a cooperative workplace Gastil (1993) identified categories of obstacles which impeded the democratic functioning of this group and concluded that *different communication skills and styles* can obstruct the democratic process by creating an inequality of speaking opportunities, with the more skilled perceiving and receiving a larger number of chances to talk. He recommended that procedures such as "round-robins" be used to help more hesitant members speak out and that the least skilled members be encouraged and helped to develop their skills. To this we would add that a wide range of alternative media for communication should be used and that meetings, where verbal exchange is so fundamental, should not be relied upon as the best approach (See Hart, 1995 for alternative methods). Gastil found that, even with adults, fatigue from *excessive meeting length* can make the distribution of speaking opportunities unequal (Gastil, 1993).

6. Political Understanding and Participation

What is the development of children's political understanding?

Kohlberg's (1984) stage developmental theory indicates that before becoming an adult there is usually no recognition of the social structure that "lies behind and legitimates rules and duties." (Emler, N. 1992, p.67). Prior to this "fourth stage of development", authority is interpreted in personal or interpersonal terms i.e. reference to individual interests, personal agreements and commitments, and personal relationships (Emler, Nicholas 1992, p.67). Data collected by Kohlberg and Snarey, (1985) further indicates that the fourth stage of moral reasoning is most common among adults who inhabit industrialized, urbanized societies. Research on insight into organizational roles however contradicts Kohlberg's position and indicates that there is an understanding of formal authority during adolescence (Adelson, 1971 and Furth, 1978).

Before adolescence, children can think that societal decisions emanate from the free will of individuals; they do not recognize the formal impersonal component of role relations. The limitations of authority can however be understood by very young children. A number of studies indicate that young children will believe an authority figure, only to the extent that the person's request is morally justifiable (while no age trend was identified, 6-year olds were the youngest questioned) (Damon, 1977; Turiel, 1983; Tisak, 1986; Piaget, 1932).

Classic cognitive development has focused on individual children constructing their own understanding of the social world. The research has focused on the "what?" rather than the "how of" development. Emler (1992) offers a criticism of this notion of a strictly individual construction by which children acquire

beliefs about formal organization and formal authority "...every child, like every adult, is immersed not just in his or her own experience but also in the accounts, explanations, and interpretations of the social world that circulate in any human community. Thus, children acquire knowledge of the social environment itself and also of these various 'social representations' of the environment." (p. 69-70).

Because schools are a child's first contact with bureaucratic organizations Emler (1992) argues that the way schools are organized has a big impact on children's developing notions of politics have everything to do with the way in which the school organization. He states that by 11 years old children understand that there is a hierarchy and authoritative roles in schools and that the teachers have to answer to a higher authority. Because of their experience with formal education, children have an extensive representation of institutional authority by the time that they finish elementary school. There are of course significant variations in this development according to the influences of class, culture, and type of formal education

Typically, political scientists have perceived parents as the "mediating agency between society and the child-and as powerful sources of primary and enduring influence on the internalization of values and norms (Dawson, 1966; Hyman, 1959; Levin, 1963). Early empirical research in this area found that, in fact, parents and children held similar beliefs on the issues of: foreign affair, civil rights, economics and many other current topics (Sigal, 1970, p. 104). The later studies (Jennings and Niemi, 1968) have shown that except for party identification, other similarity coefficients tended to be low. Hess and Torney (1967) state that parents are influential only in the areas of civil roles and only with younger children, and even this influence decreases over time.

McLeod and Chaffee (1972) and Chaffee, McLeod, and Wackman (1973) focused on the communication aspects of the family culture by creating a scheme that characterizes two dimensions of interpersonal communication within families: The s*ocio-oriented dimension,* a family which encourages the child to value harmony, and the *concept-oriented* , a family which encourages the child to think about political and social issues. A highly *socio-oriented* family feels that children should not show anger in group situations, should not challenge their parents and should not get into trouble. While the *concept-oriented* family feels that family discussions and arguing for your point of view are important. The authors created a typology of four kinds of families: protective (low concept, high socio); consensual (high concept, high socio); laissez-faire (low concept, low socio); and pluralistic (high concept, low socio). This concept explains, among other thing, the variance in the level of political participation in the offspring of these families (Chaffee et al., 1973; Chaffee & Yang, 1990).

Much research in the political socialization has focused on the comparison of children's political party preferences with those of their parents. This is too narrow a view of the meaning of "political". Jankowski (1992) conducted a study on the effects of parenting styles on their children's political affiliations,

specifically in a Chicano community in New Mexico. He argues that Jennings' and Niemi's (1974) report that families have little impact on the development of adolescence political attitudes is misleading because if focuses on parents direct impact. Jankowski found that parents have a significant impact, but not by trying to get children to join a political party or think certain ways about politics. Sixty four percent of the adolescents interviewed said that their parents either encouraged or discouraged certain attitudes or types of involvement.

Variation was found amongst respondents; middle-class Chicano adolescence reported that their parents "generally warned them that certain types of attitudes and behaviors could lead to their being labeled trouble makers, and that this could hurt them in their schools and adversely affect their chances of going on to college" (Jankowski p. 85). Also, some of these respondents stated that they would not support political groups or ideologies that were considered radical because they feared that those in power may use this against their parents. Lower-class Chicano adolescents said that their parents had warned them against becoming involved in radical politics, for fear that they would be hurt physically. Their parents also voiced concern that they might loose their jobs if their bosses knew that family members were involved in radical politics. The middle-class Chicano families thought that their opportunities for advancement and those of their children would be blocked and the lower-class thought that they would be fired. Jankowski discusses the economic, social and political aspects that are behind these types of warnings specific to Chicano's in San Antonio. This social order also influences the curriculum and the teachers who interpret and execute them in schools. It was observed that the teachers who implemented the curriculum varied according to the prevailing political culture.

Chicanos in this study identified three means by which they first learned about politics: observation, listening, and personal action. 42% said that they began to learn about the socioeconomic and political system by observing how people related to them as individuals and as members of a particular ethnic-racial group. Compared to how they treated other Latinos and Anglos. Listening was also important, 47% mentioned that they learned about politics by listening to others and relating it to their experiences. 10% said they learned about politics through their activities. Three types were mentioned: overt political action, i.e., picket lines, boycotts etc. activities with family and friends regarding political work; and individual personal experience, notably, being stopped by the police. Media was found to play less of a direct role in "establishing political attitudes than they do in reinforcing attitudes that already exist (Jankowski, 1992 p. 88).

In summary, adolescents do not learn about politics directly from teachers, parents, peers or the media but rather from the "political environment" with which they interact. An important influence on adolescents political involvement is the degree to which political rules or policies, which they experience personally are considered to be fair, particularly when they have an influence on psychological, social, or economic well-being (Sigel and Hoskin, 1981; Tyler, 1986). Nothing short of creating a regular experience with a social setting that

models an alternative political structure is therefore likely to help adolescents confront the prevailing social order with a more open and enlightened political consciousness. Perhaps this is a role that could be played by a community-based democratic organization for young people.

Patterns of child-rearing ideology and their influences on children's democratic understanding and behavior

It has been demonstrated that differences among child-rearing beliefs of families are related to SES, ethnicity and to being a native or non-native (Ogbu 1981,; Lambert, 1979). Differences were also detected between mothers who label themselves as "experts" in child-rearing versus "just housewives", indicating the importance of education and the quality and quantity of child-rearing advice and information that the parents previously had. But differences in child-rearing beliefs go beyond ethnicity, culture and class. It has been shown that there are big contrasts even among families of similar backgrounds. Laybourn (1986) for example, found that there were great differences of opinion on child-rearing ideas in a working-class community in England.

The most commonly used classification of child-rearing strategy, defines three distinct child-rearing styles; authoritarian, permissive and authoritative (Baumrind, 1971,1975, 1980). "Authoritarian" parents are described as those who value obedience as a virtue and favor punitive and forceful measures. "Permissive" parents are parents who allow their children to regulate their own activities. "Authoritative" parents on the other hand, are those who enforce their own perspectives while recognizing the child's own interests. They encourage verbal give and take and they share the reasoning behind their policies with the child. Of these styles, Baumrind strongly favors the Authoritative style over the others. It is clearly the ideology most relevant to the focus of this paper on children's democratic participation though there appears to be no research on the relationship between child-rearing ideology at home and children's participation in other settings. Also, almost all of the data that has attempted to find a link between family child-rearing ideology and the child's performance in later life is very controversial generally because of ways child development and child performance are evaluated (Ogbu, 1981; Peet & Melson, 1991).

What are the differences in children's learning in democratic vs. hierarchically structured educational settings?

Many would argue that there should be no lace for politics but in fact all schooling is political. Furthermore, education takes place in a variety of settings, school is only one. In Paulo Freire's view education is a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations (Friere, 1985). He seeks to move education from a dominating dehumanizing task to a humanistic and liberating task. Education as a dominating task assumes that consciousness is merely an empty receptacle to be filled. "The educator, as the one who knows, transfers their knowledge to the learner, as the one who does not know" (Friere

1985, pg. 114). Hence, the learner cannot ask questions or offer other views. Education as a humanizing task views consciousness as an intention toward the world. "once we verify our inquisitive nature as researchers and investigators of reflexive (and not merely reflective) consciousness, and once we make that knowledge accessible we automatically ascertain our capacity to recognize or to remake existing knowledge" (Friere, 1985, pg. 114). In humanizing education, the educator invites the learner to discover reality critically. There is no neutral education and no theories of education should become sacred.

There are different definitions of democratic education. Some of them stress individual empowerment. Empowerment here is defined as helping students to "become eager and successful learners, determine their own futures, participate productively in society, and play an active role in making society a better place for all (Ross, Bondy, and Kyle's 1993, p.3). This would seem to place insufficient stress on learning to cooperate and help create democratic communities (e.f. Goodlard, 1984; Seigel and Rockwood, 1993). Freire stresses that it is critical even with very poor children to stress throughout their growing sense of empowerment or "consciensization" as he calls it, that they maintain a concern for others lest the oppressed become the oppressors (Freire, 1985).

There have been many experiments to create democratic learning environments, in which young people are involved in the practice of democracy. It was John Dewey's notion that democracy should be "a way of life" and that an individuals learning should be explicitly connected to experience (Dewey, 1933). It is supported by Grambs and Carr (1979), Benne (1987), Seigel and Rockwood (1993), Tyler (1949), Boyer (1983), Boodlad (1984), Wigginton (1989), Parsons (1991) Hart (1993) and many others. From this perspective individual participation and active engagement are essential to learning. Some assert that students will only feel empowered if their actions make a difference (Seigel and Rockwood, 1993). While this thinking seems to be self-evidently true it has led many people to believe that children's projects should always end with some kind of physical change in order for them to feel effective; this is too narrow a view of "action" (Hart, in press).

How children's participatory programs can utilize democratic education theories and techniques

The content of a theoretical curriculum, dealing with democratic politics and the role of citizens, is not as significant as the "real actions and behaviors that represent day-to-day political reality" (Leppard, L., 1993). The National Issue Forums (NIF) in the Classroom is striving to teach the "practical reality of democratic and participatory action in the class room" (Leppard, L. 1993). NIF believes that making choices is the core of politics and they value working toward "public judgments and identifying common ground for action" (Leppard, L 1993). This type of knowledge is more than just gathering facts. "Rather, knowledge is discovered and created when people work together to understand

the real issues and motivations beneath the surface of facts and events."
(Leppard, L. 1993)

Leppard offers four elements to creating public knowledge, in addition to
collection strategies information. (1)*Knowing connections and the whole.* It is
important to learn how issues are interrelated and connected to broader
systems. *Knowing others in order to know ourselves and where we are.* People
see things differently and it is important to find out what is meant by others
and how they perceive the issues. This type of knowledge comes from
deliberating with others and engaging in a discussion to make sense of an idea.
Knowing consequences. Learning how the choices that one makes affects
might affect the over all project. *Knowing together: mutual comprehension.*
Individually held knowledge is an inadequate basis for making political choices.
Political choices are by definition, choices that we must share. Therefore, we
must also share the knowledge on which we base these choices. Politics
requires that we move from what you or I know to what "we" know.

Each of these elements are best learned in the practice of creating a democratic
learning environment. Democratic education emphasizes "the development of
concepts, strategies, and thinking closely related to student experiences"
(Dittmer et al. p. 40). To accomplish this small group discussion, and
"increasingly more complex opportunities for application of what is learned"
(Paris, Oka & DeBritto, 1983; Paris, Cross & Lipson, 1984; Palinscar & Brown,
1984). Teaching must involve coaching and support from adults. Research has
indicated that children perform better when the teaching strategy is less
structured than previous models (McFaul, 1983; Soar & Soar, 1983).

Some guidelines have been developed for the evaluation of teachers in
democratic process, which would also have relevance for the training of
facilitators of community organizations for children. Some of these indicators
are extracted below from "Constructivist Teaching for Student Empowerment"
(Kyle, Dittmer, Fischetti & Portes, 1992) in order to show the relevance of this
educational literature:

• Providing assistance to students through reciprocal teaching, scaffolding,
peer teaching, modeling, and demonstrating
• Using multiple modes of performance such as videotape, painting, role plays,
simulations, or presentations
• Connecting learning with children's lives
• Encouraging student participation in planning, implementing and assessing
learning
• Encouraging student-generated questions
• Providing audiences beyond the teacher and classroom for student work
• Designing ways for students to understand human commonalities and
differences while honoring diversity
• Encouraging risk-taking, divergent thinking, and tolerance of new ideas
• Creating a classroom community emphasizing cooperation

- Establishing classroom rules which stress student choice, responsibility, roles, and power
- Helping children value the unique individuality of each child in the classroom
- Teaching conflict resolution and communication skills
- Understanding equity; modeling respect and empathy for class members
- Building self-esteem and healthy sense of humor
- Establishing groups-tutoring, sharing, revising, responding, and assessing
- Implementing various aspects of cognitive apprenticeship such as modeling, demonstrations, and peer teaching
- Using simulations and games for understanding and team building

Because democratic schools and institutions seek to teach both the explicit role of political governance and the less explicit conditions on which a democracy depends, it is theorized that these lessons will be used throughout the students life in a democratic society. Some of these conditions are put forth in the book *Democratic Schools* (ed. Apple and Beane, 1995).

1) The open flow of ideas, regardless of their popularity, that enables people to be as fully informed as possible

2) Faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create possibilities for resolving problems.

3) The use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems and policies.

4) Concerns for the welfare of others and "the common good."

5) Concern or the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.

6) Understanding that democracy is not so much an "ideal" to be pursued as an "idealized" set of values that we must live and that must guide our life as a people.

7) The organization of social institutions to promote and extend the democratic way of life.

7. Recognizing Individual Differences and Special Needs

Individual differences in ways of knowing, thinking, and behaving

While it is useful for the designer of children's programs to understand some of the general patterns of children's development it is equally important to be aware of divergence in the ways of thinking and acting of individual children. Furthermore, there are special considerations one must make in order to maximize the participation of children with "disabilities". As most of the research on individual differences has been carried out in school settings, the following sections refers to students, teachers, classrooms, etc. However, the differences reported below need not only apply to educational situations. Some researchers define differences in knowing and thinking in direct relation to learning and teaching activities. For example, Cornett, C. (1983) defines learning styles as "overall patterns that provide direction to learning and teaching" (cited

in Reiff, 1992, p.7). Brown and Hayden (1980) describe learning style as a "set of factors, behaviors, and attitudes that facilitate learning for an individual in a given situation" (cited in Reiff, 1992, p.7). However, others take a more general view of these differences. For example, Goldstein and Blackman (1978) refer to cognitive style as a "hypothetical construct that has been developed to explain the process of mediation between stimuli and responses. The term cognitive style refers to the characteristic ways in which individuals conceptually organize their environment" (p. 2). Thus, it can be stated more generally that different children interpret the "same" situations, activities, tasks, information, etc. in different ways.

In addition, teachers also have different learning (cognitive) styles. Becoming aware of one's learning style (or cognitive style) is an important aspect of preparing to work with children exhibiting diverse cognitive styles. Lack of awareness of one's own cognitive style and of the existence of diverse cognitive styles can lead to a number of problems: (1) intolerance of children's cognitive styles that are different from one's own (2) misunderstanding of children with a different cognitive style (3) preference for students with a similar cognitive style (4) mislabeling of children as "at risk," "attention deficit," or "slow" instead of seeing them in terms of different cognitive styles which may be incongruent with instructional style (Reiff, 1992). This type of environment may lead children to feel inadequate and different in a very negative way. "Teachers can help children become aware of individual learning differences and their own learning styles; then students can appreciate their uniqueness with a positive attitude. They need to feel their styles are accepted rather than feeling weird" (Reiff, 1992, p.5) Some of the areas in which individual differences have been investigated are summarized below.

Brain Dominance

Research on cerebral specialization has suggested that the two hemispheres of the brain process information differently. The right hemisphere functions in a global, holistic, visual-spatial manner while the left hemisphere is characterized by verbal, sequential, and analytical processing. While all individuals use both brain hemispheres, some may be more left or right hemisphere dominant. The important principle here is that both hemispheres are equally important opportunities for both kinds of processing need to be recognized in order to reach optimum potential.

Conceptual Tempo

Reiff (1992) distinguishes between reflective and impulsive learning styles. She offers recommendations for dealing with these two types of learners:

Reflective Learners:
(1) Allow time for thorough examination of material.
(2) Organize proofing of work.
(3) Model risk taking as a teacher to show error is human.
(4) Include cooperative learning to reduce anxiety.

Impulsive Learners:
(1) Structure time into small segments.
(2) Break material into smaller components.
(3) Provide a nondistractable environment.
(4) Provide explicit guidelines and directions.
(5) Have students create a situation from comic strips.
(6) Model thinking modification techniques.
(7) Reward students with concrete tokens for delayed behavior.
(8) Use role play and simulations.
(9) Use bodily kinesthetic activities. (p. 13)

Mindstyles

Gregorc characterizes thought as either abstract or concrete and organization of thought as either sequential or random. Reiff (1992) describes these different learners and offers guidelines for instruction:

Concrete sequential learners. Their thinking is ordered and logical and they enjoy working "hands-on" with materials in quiet settings. Presentations that follow logical order are helpful to these children.

Concrete random learners " are characterized by divergent experimental attitudes or seeing what 'makes things tick.'" Their approach to unstructured problem solving is the use of trial-and-error and risk-taking strategies and for this they need guidance, not domination.

Abstract sequential learners "are characterized by excellent decoding abilities with written, verbal, and imagery symbols." They have strong reading, listening, and visual skills and appreciate sequential ordering in presentations. "They appreciate extensive reading assignments, lectures, and analytical 'thinking sessions.' These students would excel in organizing and analyzing research and debating ideas" (p. 16).

Abstract random learners "are emotional and imaginative" (p.16). These children work well in unstructured, busy environments with freedom from rules and guidelines. They enjoy peer teaching and the use of journals, illustrations, and interpretations.

Psychological Differentiation

According to Banks (1988), "field independent learners prefer to work independently, while field sensitive learners like to work with others to achieve a common goal. Field independent learners tend to be task-oriented and inattentive to their social environment when working" (p. 459) while field dependent learners are more focused on the social environment. Researchers investigating these phenomena have suggested that "African American culture facilitates the development of field dependent cognitive styles" (Hunt, 1993).

According to Reiff (1992), field dependent students "(1) are global, (2) have more difficulty isolating a shape from a surrounding area [i.e., are more sensitive to the context in which a figure is situated], (3) benefit from cooperative learning, (4) need strategies to organize and comprehend material (analogies, outlines, color-cues), (5) need teacher to model how to organize information, (6) have problems with crowded/busy worksheets" (p. 15). Field independent students "(1) are analytical, (2) can isolate a shape from a surrounding area [i.e., focus on figure to the exclusion of background, contextual material], (3) are more internally motivated, (4) have more cognitive flexibility, (5) like internally independent projects" (p. 15).

Modality

Different persons have preferred sensory channels for the transmission, receipt and storage information. The different learning modalities are visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic. While most students may use a mixture of modalities in learning, some students learn predominantly through one (or a subset) of sensory channels (Reiff, 1992). Interaction of different modalities appears to be related to age. That is, younger children tend to exhibit an independent functioning of modalities while adults are more likely to have an integrated approach to learning (Reiff, 1992). In addition, culture appears to be related to modality function, African Americans tending to favor aural, tactile, kinesthetic modes of process information in contrast to visual modes (White, 1992).

Multiple Intelligences

Gardener's theory of multiple intelligences expands the narrow view of intelligence which has been dominant in psychological research (Gardner, 19**). He defines intelligence as the ability to create products or solve problems that are valued in one or more cultural settings, and argues that there is a tendency to reinforce certain types of intelligences by labeling children as "gifted", "learning disabled" or "at risk".

Gender Differences

Gender differences have also been found between males' and females' learning styles in classrooms. Girls prefer to use a conversational style that fosters group consensus by building ideas accumulatively. In contrast, boys learn more through argument and individual activity. It has been suggested that in schools at least, most discourse is organized around male learning pattern to the detriment of the learning styles of girls (Schwartz & Hanson, 1992).

In conclusion, a variety of individual differences can be found among children. These differences affect the ways in which they perceive and interpret information and the ways in which they interact with each other. Adult leader cognitive styles have an equally important affect on children's experiences. Also, while researchers have found that these differences can, to a certain extent, be divided along gender and ethnic lines, it is important to remember that

there are within-group variation. Thus, each child should be allowed to express his or her own individuality and not be stereotyped because he or she is part of a certain group. In addition, it must be pointed out that the differences described above are often discussed in terms of extremes. While some children may fall on one or the other end of a continuum (for example, a child may be classified as field dependent *or* field independent), many children may fall in the middle and exhibit a mixture of qualities associated with the different cognitive styles. In other cases, children may be predominantly one or another cognitive style but may be flexible in their use of strategies or willingness to participate in other modes of learning. Finally, organizations can take advantage of individual differences by using a committee structure, so that not everyone is working on the same thing. Children should be allowed to self-select activities they will be involved with, and be allowed to switch if they feel things are not working out.

Recognizing children with special needs in the design of participatory programs

Children may have special needs because of orthopedic, visual, auditory, or mental challenges. Because of this range, somewhat different accommodations must be made in order to include the children. Children with orthopedic challenges have no overt impediment to fully participating in meetings or in office work. They may differ (on an individual basis) in the field activities in which they can comfortably participate. For example, in a community playground building project, assignment of jobs might take into consideration that a wheelchair bound child cannot climb steps to hand materials to someone. And this need not be done in a paternalistic manner either; by consistently describing tasks before asking for volunteers, for example, situations awkward to a child can be avoided.

Visual and auditory challenges are of greatest concern in making full and natural communication possible. Lacking cues such as raised hands or body positions or even a lineup of speakers at a microphone, something as elementary as turn-taking may pose a difficulty of visually impaired children. Even greater communicative challenges ensue when auditory challenges exist. Measures such as a signing interpreter or other accommodations (e.g., to facilitate lip-reading) can be used.

A number of factors enter into how special children are perceived by others. Most obviously, young children may not be able to anticipate how others feel, or may not be able to modify their behavior to take into account their understandings of other persons' feelings. As reported elsewhere, although some evidence of empathy has been found among children as young as three years of age, young children are not able to coordinate their thinking with someone else's; when there is an incongruence between the thoughts of self and other, one's own thoughts and feelings inevitably take precedence. Only later are children able to reflect upon their thoughts and actions so that they can use their knowledge strategically in interactions (Goffman, 1969, Elkind, 1967).

There are also irrational fears. To the extent that the social cognitive processes that contribute to the aforementioned prosocial behaviors rely on comparison of self to others, these same processes may be the source of fears and antipathies. If it is explained that a child is "just like you," except for some observable difference such as a wheel chair, leg braces, loss of a limb, or blindness, it is understandable that another child might want to assert how he is indeed different from that child. Indeed, it has been reported that rejection of children with more minor disfigurements (e.g., missing a few fingers) is more intense and widespread than rejection of wheel chair bound children. Since in these cases the difference between self and other is indeed small, the desire to accentuate the difference may be especially strong. Mythological contagion fears, or rationalizations that "blame the victim" may also play a role.

8. Summary of the Benefits of Children's Participation

Learning with peers

Opportunities for children to freely spend time with their peers in unprogrammed activities are decreasing due to changing family structure and work, parental fears for children's safety and related restrictions on children's freedom. Middle class society is responding with a wide range of highly programmed activities. Poorer families have fewer substitute opportunities. Related to these issues is a general sense of the collapse of community. All children, rich and poor, need more public-like, open, settings where they can learn from one another in more interactive and horizontal ways than the classroom setting.

Development of autonomy

The growth of autonomy in a child is not simply a matter of gradually pulling away from dependence on a parent. If children are always subject to authority and do not have opportunities for establishing rules through relationships with mutual respect, they cannot develop as autonomous selves. Seen in this light, children's participation is not just an approach to developing more socially responsible and cooperative youth; it is the route to the development of a psychologically healthy person.

The development of social competence and social responsibility

Adolescents struggle to find meaningful roles in society. If they do not find opportunities to develop their competence in ways that are responsible they will find others that are irresponsible. Involvement of young people in projects leads to a sense of responsibility for the maintenance and protection of those products which are created through participation.

Development of self concept and identity

In late childhood and adolescence, group membership is crucial for different reasons. Children ages 8 through 12 develop their sense of competence, independence, and self-worth in the context of social interchange which provides opportunities for mirroring that children require to test their self-concepts. Adolescents engaged in the consolidation and differentiation of their ego identities seek group membership, which allows for symbolic work with the possible identities they are constructing, as well as to meet basic affective interpersonal needs. Thus, for adolescents, groups serve, in part, as a stage for the identities they are creating, while for younger children groups serve more as work places, in which they demonstrate competence and the first flourishes of independence.

Community identity and community development

Participating in community projects can be a valuable way for children to express their common interests to one another, and thereby help them forge a sense of group or community. Allowing young people to redesign and transform the place where they meet is obvious first step for any group in the establishment of community identity.

Political self-determination

Participation is an important antidote to traditional educational practice which runs the risk of leaving youth alienated and open to manipulation. Through genuine participation in projects, which involve solutions to real problems, young people develop the skills of critical reflection and comparison of perspectives which are essential to the self-determination of political beliefs. The benefit is twofold: to the self-realization of the child and to the democratization of the society.

Cognitive development

Participation in group activity is an integral part of children's cognitive development. In particular, children develop by synthesizing new approaches as they confront differing perspectives, opinions and ways of doing things to their own.

9. Summary of Guiding Principles for the Participation of Children and Youth in Community-based Programs for Envrinmental Change

A role for children's organizations in the formation of children's sense of competence

The structure of environments in which children live can play an important role in the development of their sense of competence. Environments like school that emphasize self-restraint and a strict sense of duty in doing what one is told - if carried to the extreme - make children dependent and overly restrained, which spoils the child's desire to learn and work. At the other extreme, relying entirely on free play to learn what one must do only by doing that which one likes to do, can lead children to a feeling of confusion. Children "like to be mildly but firmly coerced in the adventure of finding out that one can learn to accomplish things which one would never have thought of by oneself, things which owe their attractiveness to the very fact that they are not the product of play and fantasy but the product of reality, practicality, and logic ". Thus, environments that steer the middle course "between play and work, between childhood and adulthood, between old-fashioned and progressive education" serve children ·best in resolving the crisis of industry versus inferiority - developing a sense of competence that is a milestone of healthy personality development during the school-age years.

Organizations for children ages 8 through 12 can provide contexts and purposes that allow children's sense of industry to flourish. The projects must be viewed as authentic and manageable by children so that the competing tension at this age - the tendency to feel inferior if their efforts are thwarted - does not overwhelm and paralyze their sense of industry. They need opportunities to engage in meaningful tasks with peers and adults who are subtle models of the competence and social efficacy that children seek. Children will only feel empowered if their actions make a difference. This need not however mean a physical change; it could mean a change in how others think about their community or a social change as a result of a service offered by the children. Children need to be given responsibilities at this age and the freedom to work independently, but they also need supervision so that they can avoid unnecessary failure.

Early adolescents focus more internally, so their projects need to allow for and ideally build upon their need to do extensive comparison and contrast of self/other in emotionally intense contexts. Thus, participation in artistic and dramatic humanitarian projects may be most attractive to adolescents. As with younger children, the organization must provide the psychological and social space to allow developmental contexts to play themselves out in safe ways.

Recognizing the construction of identity and youth culture

If the organizations are going to attract and serve Young people in a way that these youth can participate in and serve their communities, they need to allow organization of the culture to be deeply formed by and through youth. Symbols function as the observable glue of youth cultures, and these include aspects of language, dress, music, rituals and activities. An important function for youth organizations is to provide a context in which youth can establish a culture in ways that supports personal and social identity.

As in any culture, economic, social, and political stresses will undermine the positive development of youth culture. The organization needs to ensure that members are seen as important and resourceful in complex and diverse ways. Thus, adults need to provide basic structure and resources. It is important, to provide some stability, mirroring, and opportunities to genuinely participate in decision-making.

• Youth organizations need to allow for complexity - in particular allowing young people's participation in multiple cultures, multiple identities, defined in their own ways.

• Youth benefits from having the opportunity to play a range of roles and to be experts in these roles as well as apprentices.

• Adults in the organizations cannot over-determine the culture of the organization but need to provide a trustworthy base, to maintain a sense of purpose, to understand the issues, purposes, and needs of youth as they define them. Adults can honestly convey their values and compare and contrast their values with those of the youth, but this should not take on the form of evaluation, which diminishes the sense of responsibility and identity work in the young people.

Recognizing the development of children's understanding of the social world

Although young children (about 3-6) can recognize feelings and thoughts, they do not differentiate the physical and the psychological; and this results in confusion between acts and feelings or between intentional and unintentional behavior. From 7 or 8 years of age on, children's descriptions increasingly emphasize behavioral description of persons and with the onset of early adolescence, psychological characteristics of persons gain increasing prominence in descriptions of oneself and others. By adolescence, the individual is not only aware of the other person's thought, but also grows to be acutely aware that other people might be thinking of them. Such reflective capacities allow for strategic planning of interactions with others. A useful way to understand how this can inform work with children is to look at how these "levels" of perspective-taking relate to children's developing conceptions of peers, friendships, and leadership (Figure 1).

At each age socio-cognitive capabilities such as the degree of self-awareness and the ability to understand others has direct implications for how a child is likely to interact in groups. Although a statesperson-like stance is not to be expected until early adolescence or later, children at each age are capable of making contributions to group activity. Even preschool children can enjoy participating on projects alongside others and can be counted on to express their own preferences. And we must not forget how infrequently we see adults functioning consistently in a selfless way that puts the good of the community ahead of their own interests. Thus, figure 1 might be used as a tool in designing organizational structures for activities which might optimize the functioning of participants at particular ages. Participants should not be expected to always function in these optimal ways. Nor will organizational structures rigidly determine participant's functioning.

A strategic role for children's organizations in peer relationships

In considering the place of children's organizations in children's social lives it is useful to consider how children come to form friendships. Central to an analysis of the development of a children's pattern of friendships is the extent to which they make contact with others through "*naturally occurring proximities*" with siblings, relatives, and neighbors, "*accidental proximities*" created by chance meetings with other children, and "*planned proximities*" arranged by parents. We may hypothesize that with the decreasing ranges of children's free movement in their neighborhoods, more children in the USA are forming friendships through planned proximities.

Neighborhoods have been an important factor in the establishment of friendships in school. Typically, school friends aged 8 to 13 lived closer to each other than do other students and classmates. In addition there has been some data indicating that high school friends who live near each other interact more frequently, have known each other longer, and are closer psychologically in their feelings of friendship. The design of residential areas, and the density of children per housing unit also affect opportunities for children to meet other children. While housing can facilitate the building of community it can also lead to ghettoization, which is all too common in public housing projects. Fortunately, the physical environment can only influence, not determine, how children associate and children's organizations can play an important role in countering such social and cultural segregation. Knowing the ideologies which produced the spatial arrangements we live with is important in helping to articulate one's own ideology and programs which can counteract that which we have inherited. Furthermore, children and youth can join in a critical evaluation of their own living conditions as a powerful means of rising above these constraints.

The values of mixed-age interactions

There are limitations to the role adults can play in children's social development. Children 6-8 year old and younger tend to obey adult wishes in interactions, motivated by a desire for material rewards and maintenance of the relationship. In the middle childhood years adult-child interactions continue to be characterized by authority relations and unilateral constraint. Significant transformation of the child-adult relationship does not emerge until early adolescence, when perception of adults grows from recognition of authority figures to awareness of adults as individuals; adult deficiencies are now recognized and a greater range of relationships with adults is possible.

Interactions among peers are considered to provide greater developmental opportunities because adult-child interactions are usually characterized by adult instruction of children, a one-way relationship. In contrast, peer relationships allow for a greater degree of bi-directional give-and-take. Children actively construct the parameters of these relationships, in contrast to primarily acquiring guidance from adults who assume positions of superior power and knowledge. The greater flexibility afforded by peer interaction allows children to test their understandings and adapt them to the requirements of ongoing interaction. Same-age interactions might provide optimal conditions for such experiences, but other benefits may be derived from mixed-age interactions.

While too great a difference in ages (e.g., adolescents and preschool children) can yield the same differential of power and knowledge that characterizes adult-child interactions, mixed-age groupings are generally beneficial for all participants. School work in such groups benefits children of lower ability or younger age by exposing them to more sophisticated approaches to tasks, and has no averse effect on the most sophisticated children in the group, who may even benefit from an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities or even assuming an instructional role. Older children can try out assertive roles, both prosocial and antisocial, while it can provide younger children with a non threatening opportunity to seek assistance.

Recognizing and supporting the development of social cooperation between children

The equal status of peers, unlike adult-child interaction, requires them to listen to each other and attempt to resolve disagreements to reach a common understanding. Helping children find ways to do this better is a fundamental role for adults to play, from the sidelines, and is one that is not generally done well by schools. Even preschool children as young as three and a half or four can be encouraged to generate rules for group behavior. The value of such simple exercises in democratic self-governance are apparent in the steady buzz of cooperative talk found in progressive classrooms in contrast to traditional classrooms where rules are imposed by the teacher .

Children aged 6-8 tend to act with a strict reciprocity, that is an act is responded to in exactly the same way. Older children gradually attend to psychological factors including the intent and personality of the actor as well as the action itself, so that reciprocity is maintained in more complex ways. After about 8 years of age other children begin to be recognized as individuals and in comparative terms such as differences in possessions, ability in school and popularity they cooperate better through recognition of one another's strengths and weaknesses.. By 9 to 11 years of age reciprocity operates in a broader way, so that cooperation becomes based on expectations of equality between participants.

The establishment of *group identity* is a factor of great importance in the development of true social cooperation in contrast to individualistic motivations for social cooperation The goal of any program should be to appeal to the highest levels of children's altruistic potential.

A program must allow ample time for democratic process to unfold. There is always a tension between getting the job done and doing so in a way which maximizes democratic process and opportunities for the participants to grow. A quasi-military type organization, with orders and standard operating procedures emanating from an upper echelon, may well be the best way to get a discrete task completed. But, because it does nothing to empower participants, they are unlikely to continue to pursue those ends when not ordered to do so, or when there is not a clear (and redundant with previous efforts) way to proceed. Developmental theory suggests that the optimal conditions are equality of status among participants, a goal that is defined by participants (in contrast to an imposed goal), a great deal of latitude in how to proceed, and a variety of inputs to serve as rich material to work with. Of course this is not the best way to get a rally or clean-up effort together on short notice, but it need not mean that the group be unnecessarily concerned with group process either.

A clear demarcation can be made between assisting other groups with their projects (e.g., rallies, petition drives, cleanup efforts, etc.) and emphasizing democratic efforts within one's own group. Group efforts should not be rigidly structured by preconceived notions; they should allow for maximal flexibility in goal and manner of achieving it. Since the pressure of timetables can wreak havoc with good democratic process, and with meaningful work as well. Another suggestion is to consider the extent to which participants are truly functioning as equals. If group tends to dominate due to age or gender, it may be good to allow for subcommittee work where there is greater equality among participants; such experience may serve to empower participants within the larger group. In some instances, it may be desirable to talk about the principles of representative democracy and majority rule, including their disappointing aspects when you are neither a representative nor in the majority. However, it is unlikely that just talking explicitly about the dynamics of working together (e.g., the benefits of confronting new points of view) will be at all effective.

If reward schemes are to be included as incentives they should not work against the cooperative structure of the group. If a competitive structure is set up,

where individuals are appraised only for their own efforts, that is the kind of work that will be promoted.

Research on peer rejection has found that skills training sessions, including rules established cooperatively with children, can bring together a group of pre-adolescent children who have difficulty getting along.

How children's organizations can further children's ability to work together on projects

Developmental theory suggests that the optimal conditions for democratic participation are equality of status among participants, a goal that is defined by participants (in contrast to an imposed goal), a great deal of latitude in how to proceed, and a variety of inputs to serve as rich material to work with. Of course this is not the best way to get a rally together on short notice, but it need not mean that the group be primarily concerned with group process either. Several suggestions follow.

• Clear demarcation can be made between assisting other groups with their projects (e.g., rallies, petition drives, cleanup efforts, etc.) and creating unique efforts within the group.

• Group efforts should not be rigidly structured by preconceived notions; they should allow for maximal flexibility in goal and manner of achieving it.

• Consider the extent to which participants are truly functioning as equals. If group tends to dominate due to age or gender, it may be good to allow for subcommittee work where there is greater equality among participants; such experience may serve to empower participants within the larger group.

Neither teaching nor modeling are effective methods for promoting democratic participation. More appropriate methods involve dialogue of several types. Children and adolescents become more aware of their own and others' perspectives in disputes with peers and attempts to convince others, as well as differences of opinion which emerge in topical discussions. These reflective abilities can inform future social interactions. Although the guidance of an adult (in a moderator capacity) may be necessary at times, the participants should be encouraged to construct their own democracy as much as possible.

Recognizing gender differences in peer relations and friendship formation

Friendships become increasingly sex-segregated as boys and girls move from middle childhood to preadolescence. But both boys and girls desire friendship that is amiable and cooperative where friends can control their impulses and share common interests with them.

Girls generally have fewer friends and make friends less rapidly than boys. They are commonly more sensitive to the boundaries between friendship and acquaintances, and are more likely to discourage interactions with those who are not close friends. In middle childhood, girls tend to have a tight jealously guarded relationship with friends. In later teenage years they are more tolerant of friends who differ from them.

Boys typically have larger groups of friends and more friends of different ages. Boys have learned to compete with one another in rule-bound games, while girls are socialized more into cooperative activity and to greater sensitivity to relationships; rules are only implicit. Boys of middle school age prefer to spend more time away from direct adult supervision. Teenage boys have greater concern with resistance to authority and need to assert their independence from the control of adults by forming an alliance with a group of friends. For them a sensitivity to need and a validation of worth are achieved through action and deeds, more than through interpersonal disclosure of personal thoughts and feelings.

Individual differences in ways of knowing, thinking, and behaving

In order for a child or youth organization to involve all children it needs to recognize individual differences in ways of knowing, thinking and behaving. Becoming aware of one's learning style (or cognitive style) is an important aspect of preparing to work as a facilitator with children exhibiting diverse cognitive styles. Unawareness of one's own cognitive style and of the existence of diverse cognitive styles can lead to a number of problems: (1) intolerance of children's cognitive styles that are different from one's own (2) misunderstanding of children with a different cognitive style (3) preference for students with a similar cognitive style (4) mislabeling of children as "at risk," "attention deficit," or "slow" instead of seeing them in terms of different cognitive styles which may be incongruent with instructional style.

In order to maximize young people's participation, facilitators need to recognize such differences as analytic versus more visual and global thinking and impulsive versus more reflective thinking styles. The concept of "multiple intelligences" has recently expanded the narrow view of intelligence which has been dominant in psychological research. Certain types of intelligences have been reinforced in society by labeling children as "gifted", "learning disabled", or "at risk". Rather than defining intelligence as something that can be measured by an I.Q. test, it should be defined as the ability to create products or solve problems that are valued in different cultural settings.

Including children with special needs in the design of participatory programs

Children may have special needs because of orthopedic, visual, auditory, or mental challenges. Accommodations must be made in order to include these children in ways that are neither tokenistic or stigmatizing.

Children with orthopedic challenges have no overt impediment to fully participating in meetings or in office work. They may differ in the community activities in which they can comfortably participate, but these can all be accommodated and any young people's participatory program will need to explicitly state that in its promotional materials. Visual and auditory challenges are of greatest concern in making full and natural communication possible. Lacking cues such as raised hands or body positions or even a lineup of speakers at a microphone, something as elementary as turn-taking may pose a difficulty of visually impaired children. Even greater communicative challenges ensue when auditory challenges exist. Measures such as a signing interpreter or other accommodations (e.g., to facilitate lip-reading) can be used.

Members of a group be prepared to accept special needs children, through open discussion will help reduce the tendency to put special needs children in the foreground and thereby accentuating their differences.

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