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COOL GIRLS, INC. AND SELF-CONCEPT: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

by

JESSICA D. THOMASON

Under the Direction of Gabriel P. Kuperminc

ABSTRACT

Social capital and self-concept were measured in a sample of 86 primarily African American female adolescents before and after participating in the Cool Girls, Inc. program, and in 89 comparison girls. Two dimensions of social capital (the diversity of girls' social networks and the number of life domains in which girls were able to access help) were examined. It was hypothesized that participation in Cool Girls would be associated with increases in social capital and that this would mediate the relationship between participation in Cool Girls and increases in self-concept. Cool Girls participants experienced increases in social capital. Cool Girls and comparisons both experienced gains in most domains of self-concept, except for behavioral conduct, that were related to increases in number of help domains. Furthermore, there was a significant indirect effect of participation on social acceptance, global self-worth, and body image mediated through number of help domains. Implications are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Social capital, Youth development, Self-concept

COOL GIRLS, INC. AND SELF-CONCEPT: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

by

JESSICA D. THOMASON

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2010

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Jessica Dana Thomason

2010

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August 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES v

LIST OF FIGURES vi

1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 *Self-concept in adolescence* 2

1.2 *Youth Development Programs* 4

1.3 *What is social capital and why is it important?* 5

2 METHOD 10

2.1 *Program description* 10

2.2 *Participants* 11

2.3 *Procedure* 12

2.4 *Measures* 13

3 RESULTS 16

3.1 *Preliminary analyses* 16

3.2 *Primary analyses* 20

4 DISCUSSION 25

4.1 *Limitations* 29

4.2 *Implications* 32

REFERENCES 34

APPENDICES 41

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Demographic variables for Cool Girls and Comparisons 12

Table 2 Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for pre-test and post-test self-concept measures 15

Table 3 Means and standard deviations for Cool Girls and Comparisons 15

Table 4 Correlations among all study variables by participation in Cool Girls 19

Table 5 Cool Girls participation predicting increases in social capital from pre- to post-test 20

Table 6 Social capital predicting increases in self-concept 23

Table 7 Indirect effects of participation on self-concept 24

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Theoretical model of hypothesis three 9

INTRODUCTION

The neighborhood and school conditions in which youth are raised can create barriers or opportunities for their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Many inner-city neighborhoods are isolated from social resources that may provide opportunities for social mobility and psychological or emotional support (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2000, 2005; Fitzpatrick, Wright, Bettina, & LaGory, 2005). As a result, many ethnic minority youth living in inner city, low-income communities grow up in conditions that limit their access to social support. It is essential that all youth have the support they need, particularly during adolescence, so they may develop positive self-concept. Indeed, research has revealed a link between increased social support and certain dimensions of self-concept for adolescents (Gaylord-Harden, Ragsdale, Mandara, Richards, & Petersen, 2007; Demaray, Malecki, Rueger, Brown, & Summers, 2009).

Researchers use the term *social capital* to describe the extent of an individual's access to multiple people with diverse resources and view it as a resource that can provide opportunities, aid in social mobility, and provide psychological and emotional support. One way to increase social capital, particular for youth in socially isolated conditions, is through participation in Youth Development Programs (YDPs). Evaluations of YDPs have been shown to have many positive outcomes (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998; Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 1998). However, self-concept is rarely examined as an important outcome of YDPs. Developing a healthy self-concept is critical during adolescence, and there are gender differences in the way adolescents experience development (Bearman & Stice, 2008; Peterson, Wingood, DiClemente, Harrington, & Davies, 2007; Zimmerman, Copeland, Shope, & Dielman, 1996). Therefore, many YDPs are geared specifically toward girls, and may focus on increasing self-esteem (Royse, 1998) by challenging gender role stereotypes and encouraging self-

determination (Cool Girls, Inc. 2010; Girls, Inc., 2010). Additionally, with women continuing to be underrepresented in positions of political power and in the fields of mathematics, science, technology, and engineering (Else-Quest, Hyde, & Linn, 2010), young girls may not see these opportunities as available to them due to the gender stereotyping of certain roles. Therefore, it is important for YDPs for girls to increase participants' access to social capital in the form of women in these and other professional fields, expanding their worldviews and creating confidence for the future. The present study seeks to examine the ways in which one YDP, Cool Girls, Inc., increases the self-concept of their participants through the acquisition of social capital.

Self-Concept in adolescence

Self-concept is defined by how one feels about his or her strengths and weaknesses in multiple areas of life. Rather than assessing how people feel about themselves generally, as with self-esteem, many researchers examine self-concept because it assess how one feels with regard to multiple dimensions (e.g., scholastic competence, behavioral conduct) (Harter, 1999). Research has shown that developing positive dimensions of self-concept during adolescence is extremely important as youth negotiate their new roles and relationships with others (Harter, 1992; Harter, 1999). For example, perceived social acceptance has been related to several youth outcomes such as peer-reported hostile and aggressive behavior, peer-reported companionship, pro-social behavior, and teacher reported adjustment on internalizing and externalizing behaviors and social problems (McElhaney, Antonishak, & Allen, 2008; Pakaslahti, Karjalainen, & Keltikangas-Ja¨rvinen, 2002; Waldrip, Malcom, & Jensen-Campbell, 2008). It may be difficult for youth in urban settings to experience social acceptance if their communities are struggling and unable to provide them with social support. While youth may have access to their peers,

feeling socially accepted might arise from knowing that there are people in your life you can turn to for help.

Research has also found significant gender differences in certain dimensions of self-concept, including body image (Nishina, Ammon, Bellmomre, & Graham, 2006; Peterson et al, 2007) and self-esteem (Zimmerman et al, 1996). While the literature shows that both genders struggle with body image issues (Jones, 2004; Bearman & Stice, 2008; McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003), girls are more likely to develop a depressive disorder (Cambron, Acitelli, & Pettit, 2009) and there is evidence to suggest that higher depression levels in girls are related to body dissatisfaction (Bearman & Stice, 2008). Unfortunately, past research suggesting African American girls have more positive body image compared to their White peers (Crago, 1996) has led many to dismiss this population as being at risk for negative body image. However, there is evidence that African American girls (Seigel, 2002), and Latina girls (Toro et al, 2006), experience negative body image associated with depression, often as a result of media images portraying sexual stereotypes (Peterson et al, 2007). Furthermore, some research has shown that girls are more likely than their male peers to experience declines in self-esteem during adolescence, particularly as they transition to middle school (Simmons, Blythe, VanCleave, & Bush, 1979).

Additionally, adolescent girls still experience a great deal of inequality in their schools and communities, often related to gender role norms, which has the potential to affect several dimensions of girls' self-concept. These include negotiating their "proper" gender roles as females while maintaining academic achievement (Skelton, Francis, & Read, 2010), poorer math attitudes and stress related to stereotype threat (Huguet, 2009; Else-Quest et al, 2010), which also hinders math performance (Good, 2008), and a lack of self-efficacy in relationships due to

gender role stereotypes (Miller & White, 2003). Self-concept is important for all adolescents, and because of the unique experience of girls during this time, the present study will examine self-concept using an adaptation of the Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982) which measures five dimensions: social acceptance, behavioral conduct, scholastic competence, body image, and global self-worth.

Youth Development Programs

Youth Development Programs (YDPs) have been designed and implemented in neighborhood and school settings with goals of increasing the social resources available to youth in distressed communities. Such programs are characterized by strategies to promote physical and psychological safety, clear and consistent structure with adult supervision, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong and for skill-building, support for efficacy and mattering, positive social norms, and the encouragement of the integration of family, school, and community efforts (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Furthermore, YDPs seek to create an environment for youth that is supportive and empowering, while helping to broaden their horizons and promote skill building (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Many YDPs are geared specifically toward minority youth living in distressed communities. These programs may focus on civic engagement (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2006), which encourages youth to be politically and socially aware of social issues in their communities and to become empowered to make change. Other YDPs may be geared specifically toward girls, and focus on increasing girls' self-efficacy and self-esteem (Royse, 1998) by challenging gender role stereotypes and encouraging self-determination, and by connecting young girls to successful women in their communities (Cool Girls, Inc., 2010; Girls, Inc., 2010). In essence, YDPs seek to expand the social capital

networks of youth by putting them in contact with different people in their communities with various knowledge and skills.

What is social capital and why is it important?

The term *social capital* has its roots in modern sociological literature. According to Bourdieu (1983), social capital refers to membership in a group or network of people that contributes to an individual's access to material, practical, symbolic, or socially instituted resources (such as a family name). The amount of social capital held by a person depends on the size of his or her network, as well as the amount of capital held by the other members. The connections one has with individuals who have capital themselves, can lead to increased social and economic status via further connections, advice, financial loans, etc (Wall, Ferrazzi, & Schryer, 1998; Bourdieu, 1983).

Like Bourdieu, Coleman (1988) believed that increasing individuals' social capital would lead to increases in social and economic status. With a focus on understanding the social capital necessary for youth to remain in school, Coleman examined aspects of social capital within the family, which consists of family background, the physical presence of adults in the family, attention given to children by adults in the family, and parental expectations for children's success (e.g., expectations, that the child will go to college). Coleman also pointed to the importance of capital outside the family that exists in networks of social relationships among parents, parent relationships with institutions in a community, and religious involvement (Coleman, 1988). The present study considers aspects of social capital described by Coleman: youths connections to important people within the family, school, and community setting.

Bourdieu and Coleman both argued that social networks that exist within and outside the family are vital in increasing social and economic status in communities and society at large.

Putnam (1993) also notes the lack of connections available to members in poor American communities; for example, job seekers have less access to job referral networks. However, Putnam's analysis is primarily concerned with the ways in which social capital can increase strong, democratic social institutions through civic engagement, for example, through participation in sports and cultural associations and voting. He found that youth living in cities with high civic engagement were more likely to complete school, have a job, and avoid drugs and crime, even when controlling for individual characteristics (Putnam 1993). Putnam also notes the racial and class inequalities that exist in the acquisition of social capital, and that the life chances of today's generation depend not only on parent's social resources but also on the social resources of the parents' ethnic group. Youth Development Programs for lower income, urban girls may help increase access to social resources and create otherwise lacking social connections by bringing members of the community together.

While each of the theorists discussed above have different conceptualizations of the specific ways social capital is acquired, each agrees that membership in a social network of people with access to resources is essential. Ferguson (2006) further differentiates family social capital and community social capital (or, social capital outside the family), and reviews how each have been operationalized since the early 1980s. Family social capital has been measured by family structure, the quality of parent-child relationships, adult interest or investment in the child, parental monitoring of the child, and extended family exchange and support (Ferguson, 2006). Social capital outside the family has primarily been measured by examining the social support networks of and among parents, and specifically their access to increased resources (Ferguson, 2006). In this sense, children are often passive recipients of the social capital generated by their parents' social networks. However, community social capital has also been

measured by civic engagement, feelings of trust and safety, degree of religiosity, quality of school, and quality of neighborhood (Ferguson, 2006). These represent a more direct assessment of social capital generated by the networks of the youth themselves.

Whereas social capital can be conceptualized in several ways, most theorists agree that social capital consists essentially of membership in a network or group of people that leads to valuable resources that are, in turn, used to support someone through skill building, increased opportunities for social mobility, and psychological and emotional support. Aside from the work of Ricardo Stanton-Salazar (2001; 2005), there have been few studies that have directly measured the social support networks of youth themselves. Stanton-Salazar's work has focused the social support networks of low-income, Mexican-origin adolescents. Using quantitative methods as well as in-depth, qualitative interviews of primarily Latino youth in several urban communities in San Diego, California, Stanton-Salazar (2001) explored the youths' social networks and identified seven categories of adults as providing social support among the most resilient participants: older siblings, parents, extended family members, friends of the family, school personnel, community or university based informal mentors, and role models. Stanton-Salazar (2005) later expanded this work to explore the importance of peer social networks, including platonic relationships between males and females, on the positive development of Mexican-origin youth. He found that platonic relationships with the opposite gender were important, particularly for males, to acquire emotional support through a mature relationship.

Stanton-Salazar's (2001) study on the social networks of resilient youth highlights the importance of having a large, diverse social network comprised of family members and individuals outside the family in institutions such as churches or schools. With a diverse social network, youth are more likely able to find someone to support them in multiple areas of their

lives. Parents cannot always help with schoolwork, and teachers may not always be available to help each student solve a life problem. In the present study, social capital is measured by the number of domains in which young people are able to access support (school work, problem solving, support and guidance, and goal setting), and the diversity (or, number of different relationships, i.e. mother, teacher, coach, etc) represented in their social capital networks.

Youth Development Programs and social capital. Despite being considered one of the 'active ingredients' in the success of YDPs, social capital and its role in promoting youth development has rarely been studied directly. However, the studies that do exist show YDPs may play a promising role in increasing social capital. For example, in their qualitative study of three programs for urban youth, Jarrett, Sullivan, and Watkins (2005) found that youth had increased access to supportive adults who provided them with multiple resources including information, assistance, exposure to adult worlds, and support and encouragement. Additionally, in a qualitative study of seven primarily urban youth programs, Sullivan & Larson (2010) found that youth described receiving information, skills, and access to adult worlds, even if these relationships were brief or superficial. These studies highlight the potential for YDPs to play a critical role in increasing youths' access to adults who provide valuable resources.

Youth self-concept and social capital. Social capital has been related to several youth outcomes such as academic achievement (Kao, 2007), extracurricular participation (Glanville, Sikkink, & Hernandez, 2008), substance use (Curran, 2007), dropout rates (Groninger & Lee, 2001), and indicators of health and well being (Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowen, 1998). A few studies have demonstrated a link between social support and dimensions of self-concept (Demaray et al, 2009), and research on social-support and youths' social networks provides some clues as to how increasing social capital might contribute to the development of a positive self-

concept. For example, Rosenfeld, et al. (1998) examined the social support of predominately African American and white/non-Hispanic youth, involved in a dropout prevention program. The authors found that youth who reported low social support had significantly lower self-esteem than those who reported an average amount.

Colarossi and Eccles (2003) examined perceived social support from several key relationships (mother, father, friend, teacher, etc) in a sample of 217 predominately white youth aged 15 – 18 years old. Questions about social support included items such as how often each person helped the youth with something that was “really important” to them, gave him or her advice, and let the youth know she or he cared about them. They found that youth self-esteem was significantly and positively related to reported friend and teacher support. Demaray et al (2009) examined the perceived importance and frequency of social support among youth in elementary to high school, and found that social support was positively associated with three dimensions of self-concept: self-image, academic, and social. While these studies measured aspects of social support and not necessarily social networks directly, they indicate how membership in a social network of people who can potentially lend support can affect the self-concept of youth.

Figure 1. Theoretical model of hypothesis three

Due to the link between social resources and dimensions of self-concept and the potential for YDPs to increase social capital, the present study seeks to examine the way an Atlanta-based YDP develops the self-concept of their participants through the acquisition of social capital (see Figure 1). Because this program seeks not only to provide access to social resources directly, but also to teach girls how to seek out the support they need, it was hypothesized that girls who participate will report significantly more social capital than those who do not participate. Because of the hypothesized relationship between social capital and self-concept (the study's second hypothesis), the third hypothesis posits that the social capital acquired from participation will mediate the relationship between participation and increases in self-concept. In other words, those girls who participate will report a significantly more positive self-concept by program exit than those who do not, due to the social capital that is acquired through participation.

METHOD

Program description

Cool Girls, Inc. is a Youth Development Program located in Atlanta, GA. The primary focus is the empowerment of low-income girls to "… become self-assured and to break cycles of poverty, teen pregnancy, racism, and sexism" (Cool Girls, Inc., 2008). This multi-component program includes an after school club for life skills development, several programs for academic support, a technology program, business program, and a one-on-one mentoring program in which girls are matched with female volunteers to provide personal support, friendship, and role modeling (Cool Girls, Inc., 2008). The Cool Girls, Inc. theory of change asserts that increasing access to social resources and teaching girls how to seek out help when in need will aid their positive development. Like many YDPs, Cool Girls, Inc. draws on the talents of volunteers from the community with various skills (computer technology, business, academic tutoring, etc) who

share their knowledge and support with program participants. Cool Girls, Inc. seeks to increase young girls' social capital by enhancing their social networks with people who have the potential to provide valuable resources. In addition to providing the girls' with access to talented and caring adult volunteers, the Cool Girls Club program (the after school component) seeks to help each girl be "…able to identify when she needs resources and support and knows how to access them" (Cool Girls, Inc., 2008). All girls enrolled in the program are expected to attend Cool Girls Club every week. If the girls have missed a certain amount of weeks they are no longer considered to be in the program. At Cool Girls club, the girls participate in Cool Scholars academic program, Cool Fitness for physical education, and Cool Tech, a program focused on increasing technological skills. Additionally, Cool Girls has several summer programs that are optional for girls. These primarily focus on entrepreneurship, money management, career choices and leadership skills. Girls are exposed to women in several fields such as business, the medical field, and women considered to be in "non-traditional" roles such as players from the Atlanta Dream Women's Basketball team.

Participants

Data were drawn from a 2005-2006 evaluation of Cool Girls, Inc. that utilizes a quasi-experimental demographically matched comparison group design. Pre-test data were collected from 175 girls (86 Cool Girls, 89 comparisons) at four elementary schools, two middle schools, and two schools that had both elementary and middle school aged students in Metro Atlanta, GA. Eighty participants were in elementary school, and 95 were in middle school, with ages ranging from 9 – 15. Eighty-eight percent identified as African American, 4% as Latina/Hispanic, 2% as Asian/Vietnamese, 1% as Caucasian, and 4% as "other." Ethnicity data were missing for 2 girls. Post-test data were collected for 150 of the girls. An independent samples t-test for age found no

significant differences between Cool Girls and Comparisons, $t(173) = 1.33$, $p = .18$. Chi-Square tests were conducted for grade, $\chi^2(6, N = 175) = 8.44$, $p = .08$, and living with extended family, $\chi^2(3, N = 175) = .41$, $p = .52$, and there was no significant difference between Cool Girls and Comparisons. However, Cool Girls were significantly less likely to be from a two-parent family, $\chi^2(3, N = 175) = 4.89$, $p < .05$. Independent samples t-tests were computed for all study variables at pre-test and no significant differences were found between Cool Girls and comparisons. This suggests that they were relatively well matched with regard to social capital and self-concept at pre-test.

Table 1. *Demographic variables for Cool Girls and Comparisons*

	Cool Girls (*N* = 86)	**Comparisons** (*N* = 89)
	Frequency	**Frequency**
Grade		
4th	20	29
5th	16	15
6th	31	21
7th	16	13
8th	3	11
Family Composition		
Two-parent	33	49
Other	53	40
Lives with Extended Family		
Yes	31	28
No	55	61

Procedure

Data were collected from Cool Girls, Inc. participants who attended the after-school Cool Girls Club and a demographically matched comparison group. Girls in the comparison group were identified in two ways, 1) through school guidance counselor nominations and 2) by asking

program participants to name 2-3 friends who were not in Cool Girls but whom they thought would answer questions the same way they did. A letter was sent to all Cool Girls participants and nominated comparison girls explaining the study to families. The Georgia State University Institutional Review Board approved these procedures; signed parental consent was obtained, as well as youths' assent to participate.

Pre-test data were collected in the beginning of the 2005 fall semester and post-test data were collected at the end of the 2006 spring semester. Participants completed surveys at the pre and post-test in group sessions that lasted approximately 30 minutes. Each question was read aloud by an evaluator to account for variations in reading level. Participants were reminded that their answers were confidential and that they could withdraw their participation at any time. Snacks were provided after completion of the survey to thank participants for their cooperation.

Measures

Social capital. Social capital was assessed in 4 domains, by eliciting information about helping resources with regard to schoolwork, support and guidance, problem solving, and goal setting (see Appendix A for survey questions). Participants provided information about whether they had someone to help them when they experienced difficulty in each domain (e.g., "Everyone needs help with school work some times. I have someone to go to for help with school work."). If they responded that they did have someone to help, they provided a name and indicated the person's relationship to the participant. Responses were used to assess two aspects of social capital: the number of domains in which the participant reported having help and the diversity of her network. Number of help domains was calculated by counting the total number of domains in which the participant reported having help. Relationships of helping resources to the participant were coded into 5 categories: immediate family (1), extended family (2), non-

familial adult (3), friend/peer (4), and other (5). Diversity of network was calculated as a count of the total number of different relationship types represented among each participant's social capital resources.

Self-concept. Self-concept was measured using an adaptation of the Self-Perception Profile for Children (see Apendix B for survey questions) (Harter, 1985). The original scale consists of a positive and negative statement, and participants are asked to choose which one is truer for them as either "sort of true" or "really true." However, previous studies have reported difficulty in administering this type of scale to younger age groups (Kuperminc, Darnell, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008); therefore, the scale was revised to be a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Not true" to "Always true." The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranged from .58 to .77 and are listed in Table 2. The scale measures the self-concept of youth based on several domains that have shown to contribute most to global self-worth (Harter, 1982; 1990), including social acceptance (e.g., "It is hard for me to make friends"[reverse scored]) , behavioral conduct (e.g., "I act the way I am supposed to"), scholastic competence (e.g., "I am good at my schoolwork"), and body image (e.g., "I wish my body was different"). The scale also includes a separate measure of global self-worth (e.g., "I am happy with myself"). The present study will examine each domain of self-concept in this sample.

Table 2.
Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for pre-test and post-test self-concept measures.

	Pre-test	Post-test
Social Acceptance	.71	.58
Behavioral Conduct	.63	.77
Global Self-Worth	.77	.73
Scholastic Competence	.67	.68
Body Image	.69	.65

Table 3.
Means and standard deviations for Cool Girls and Comparisons

	Cool Girls		**Comparisons**	
	Pre-test	**Post-test**	**Pre-test**	**Post-test**
	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)
Social Acceptance	3.04(.59)	2.99(.51)	3.02(.53)	2.99(.51)
Behavioral Conduct	2.90(.64)	2.84(.54)	2.77(.66)	2.67(.59)
Global Self-Worth	3.31(.57)	3.33(.53)	3.33(.55)	3.33(.46)
Scholastic Competence	2.91(.51)	2.96(.42)	2.80(.60)	2.74(.54)
Body Image	2.99(.61)	2.92(.58)	3.05(.50)	2.94(.53)
Number of Domains	3.70(.67)	3.74(.48)	3.55(.88)	3.49(.87)
Diversity of Network	2.16(.75)	2.13(.66)	2.08(.77)	1.90(.66)
Grade Level	5.60(1.14)	-	5.57(1.40)	-
Family Composition	.38(.49)	-	.55(.50)	-
Extended Family	.36(.48)	-	.31(.47)	-
Length of Time in CG	.49(.50)	-	.00(.00)	-

RESULTS

Preliminary analyses

Attrition analysis. There was a 14.3% attrition rate from the pre- to post-test assessments. Nine comparisons and 16 Cool Girls dropped out of the study at post-test. To examine potential contributors to differential attrition, individuals who dropped out were compared to those who completed the post-test using t-tests or Chi-squares (for categorical variables) on all study variables. Individuals who remained in the study had significantly higher global self-worth ($t(173) = 1.99$, $p < .05$). Also, individuals who remained in the study were significantly more likely to be from a two-parent home ($\chi^2(1, N = 175) = 8.45$, $p < .01$). There were no significant differences between the groups on any other self-concept measures, any social capital measures, age, grade, or living with extended family. To assess differential attrition, individuals who dropped out verses those who completed the post-test were compared using a Chi-square for program participation (Cool Girls verses comparisons), and there was no significant difference.

Missing data analyses. The percentage of missing data in the study variables ranged form .6 to 14.9 percent. Patterns of missing data were examined by using Little's MCAR test to determine whether missing values were missing completely at random. The test was not significant $\chi^2(14, N = 175) = 19.30$, $p = .15$, suggesting that all missing values were missing completely at random; thus, missing values were imputed using the expectation maximization (EM) algorithm as suggested by Widaman (2006).

Examination of potential covariates. Given the wide age range spanning elementary and middle school years, age and grade level were examined as a possible covariates in the analyses. Additionally, because family composition might affect young people's access to social capital networks and the development of self-concept, family composition (two-parent home or other)

was examined as third possible covariate. Additionally, because African American youth are more likely to live with extended family members, such as grandparents, than other ethnic groups (Robbins, Briones, Schwartz, Dillon, & Mitroni, 2006), living with extended family was examined as fourth possible covariate. Some Cool Girls participants were starting their first year in the program at pre-test. Therefore, length of time in Cool Girls was examined as a potential fifth covariate. Comparisons and first year Cool Girls were dummy coded "0", and Cool Girls who were in their second year or higher were dummy coded "1". T-tests comparing the groups showed second year and higher girls had more diverse networks, $t(172) = -2.83$, $p < .05$, and higher scholastic competence $t(172) = -2.11$, $p < .05$. T-tests comparing Cool Girls and comparisons on age and grade level were not significant. The Chi-square comparing Cool Girls and comparisons on living with extended family was not significant. However, Cool Girls and comparisons did differ significantly on family composition, such that comparisons were more likely to be from a two-parent home than were program participants χ^2 (3, $N = 175$) = 4.89, $p <$ .05). Associations of age, grade level, family composition, extended family, and length of time in Cool Girls were further explored in multiple regression analyses that examined their role in predicting change in each dimension of self-concept and social capital by post-test controlling pretest levels of each self-concept dimension and program participation. None of these variables were found to predict post-test levels of self-concept or social capital and therefore none were entered as covariates for analyses.

Correlations among variables. Correlations were obtained for all study variables (see Table 4). For Cool Girls, as expected, most pre-test self-concept variables were significantly correlated. However, behavioral conduct was not correlated with scholastic competence or body image, and scholastic competence and body image were not correlated. At post-test, only

behavioral conduct and body image were not significantly correlated. For comparisons, all pre-test and post-test self-concept variables were significantly correlated, suggesting the measures were fairly stable over time.

Correlations among pre-test and post-test social capital variables between Cool Girls and comparisons were significant, suggesting the measures were fairly stable over time. However, among Cool Girls' measures, post-test diversity of social capital network and post-test number of domains were not significantly correlated, suggesting there were significant changes in these variables over time.

For Cool Girls, there were no significant correlations among pre-test self-concept and pre-test social capital variables. However, for comparisons, number of domains was correlated with each self-concept variable except for behavioral conduct. For Cool Girls, post-test diversity of network was not significantly correlated with any post-test self-concept variables. However, post-test number of domains was correlated with each self-concept variable. For comparisons, post-test diversity of network was not significantly correlated with post-test self-concept. However, post-test number of domains was significantly correlated with post-test social acceptance and body image.

Table 4.
Correlations among all study variables by participation in Cool Girls.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
1. Social Acp1	-	.24	.60	.42	.43	.00	.08	.57	.27	.53	.32	.51	.24	-.11
2. BehavCon1	.41	-	.39	.15	.07	-.07	.06	.00	.58	.26	.14	.06	.06	-.21
3. GSW1	.48	.52	-	.21	.62	-.03	.09	.30	.35	.76	.19	.65	.23	-.11
4. ScholComp1	.50	.58	.49	-	.08	.12	-.00	.18	.20	.14	.53	.08	.21	-.05
5. Body Img1	.42	.35	.64	.34	-	-.04	.08	.14	-.01	.45	.05	.56	.10	.16
6. # of dom1	.33	.19	.37	.34	.28	-	.40	.18	.17	.12	.25	-.04	.51	.20
7. Diversity1	.03	-.16	.15	.04	.07	.47	-	.25	.23	.08	.01	-.01	.18	.40
8. Social Acp2	.51	.21	.25	.35	.19	.21	.05	-	.30	.52	.40	.49	.35	.06
9. BehavCon2	.27	.63	.46	.43	.38	.15	-.03	.42	-	.43	.37	.19	.33	-.03
10. GSW2	.51	.27	.43	.30	.48	.20	-.01	.64	.37	-	.25	.76	.41	-.13
11. ScholComp2	.34	.43	.37	.59	.22	.12	.02	.55	.55	.47	-	.25	.28	.00
12. Body Img2	.24	.12	.27	.05	.60	.07	-.05	.44	.31	.58	.24	-	.22	-.05
13. # of dom2	-.04	.05	.00	.13	.11	.20	.19	.24	.06	.15	.15	.27	-	.20
14. Diversity2	.01	.01	.09	.07	.15	.14	.16	.12	.05	-.13	.05	.05	.54	-

Note. Numbers on the lower diagonal of the table are for comparisons; the upper diagonal is for Cool Girls. All values > .21 or < -.21 are significantly different from zero. Social Acp is Social Acceptance, BehavCon is Behavioral Conduct, GSW is Global Self-Worth, ScholComp is Scholastic Competence, Body Img is Body Image, # in Ntwk is the Number of people in one's social capital network, and Diversity is the diversity of one's social capital network. The numbers 1 and 2 indicate either pre-test (1) or post-test (2).

Table 5.
Cool Girls participation predicting increases in social capital from pre- to post-test

	Number in Domains			
	b	*SE*	*ß*	ΔR^2
Step1.				.09***
Pre-test # of Domains	.26	.07	.28***	
Step 2.				.02*
Participation in Cool Girls	.21	.10	.15*	
Total R^2				.11***
	Diversity of Network			
	b	*SE*	*ß*	ΔR^2
Step1.				.08***
Pre-test Diversity	.24	.06	.27***	
Step 2.				.03*
Participation in Cool Girls	.22	.10	.16*	
Total R^2				.10***

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Primary analyses

Participation in Cool Girls and social capital. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to examine the hypothesis that participation in Cool Girls contributes to significant increases in help domains and the diversity of one's network (Table 5).

Number of domains. Pre-test number of domains was entered in step one of the equation. Participation in Cool Girls, the primary independent variable, was entered in step two. The overall model was significant, and participation accounted for a significant increment in explained variance, indicating that participation in Cool Girls is associated with increases in the number of domains with help.

Diversity of network. Pre-test diversity was entered in step one of the equation. Participation in Cool Girls, the primary independent variable, was entered in step two. The overall model was significant, and participation accounted for a significant increment in

explained variance, indicating that participation in Cool Girls is associated with increases in the diversity of one's social capital network.

Social capital and self-concept. Hierarchical multiple regressions were performed to assess whether reported number of help domains and diversity of network was associated with increases in each dimension of self-concept, including social acceptance, behavioral conduct, scholastic competence, body image, and global self-worth (see Table 6). For each model, pre-test level of self-concept, pre-test number of domains and pre-test diversity of network were entered in step one. Post-test levels of number of domains and diversity of network were entered in step two. Because pre-test levels of social capital were covaried, the effects reported for post-test levels of social capital can be interpreted to suggest that *changes* in social capital were contributing to *changes* in self-concept.

Social acceptance. The overall model accounted for 34% of the variance in change in social acceptance from pre-test to post-test. After accounting for prior levels, number of domains was significantly associated with increases in social acceptance.

Behavioral conduct. Although the overall model was significant and accounted for 39% of the variance in change in behavioral conduct from pre-test to post-test, neither number of domains nor diversity of network significantly predicted increases in this dimension.

Global self-worth. The overall model was significant, accounting for 38% of the variance in change in global self-worth from pre-test to post-test. After accounting for prior levels, number of domains with help was significantly associated with increases in global self-worth.

Scholastic competence. The overall model was significant, accounting for 30% of the variance in change in scholastic competence from pre-test to post-test. However, there was only

a trend (p = .05) in significance for number of domains, suggesting that this may be associated with increases in scholastic competence.

Body image. The overall model was significant, accounting for 43% of the variance in change in body image from pre-test to post-test. Number of help domains was significantly associated with increases in body image. However, diversity of network was significantly related to decreases in body image.

Table 6.
Social capital predicting increases in self-concept

	Social Acceptance			Behavioral Conduct			Scholastic Competence			Body Image			Global Self-Worth		
	b(SE)	ß	ΔR^2	b(SE)	ß	ΔR^2	b(SE)	ß	ΔR^2	b(SE)	ß	ΔR^2	b(SE)	ß	ΔR^2
Step1.			.31***			.40***			.32***			.34***			.37***
Pre-test Self-Concept	.47 (.06)	.52***		.53 (.05)	.61***		.48 (.06)	.54***		.59 (.06)	.60***		.52 (.05)	.59***	
Pre-test Number of Domains	.00 (.05)	.00		.03 (.05)	.05		.01 (.05)	.01		-.06 (.05)	-.09		.01 (.04)	.02	
Pre-test Diversity of Network	.05 (.05)	.08		.07 (.05)	.09		-.01 (.05)	-.01		-.03 (.05)	-.04		-.04 (.04)	-.07	
Step 2.			.04**			.01			.01			.07***			.04**
Post-test Number of Domains	.16 (.05)	.22**		.07 (.05)	.09		.09 (.05)	.13+		.23 (.05)	.29***		.15 (.05)	.22**	
Post-test Diversity of Network	.00 (.05)	.00		.01 (.06)	.01		-.01 (.05)	-.01		-.15 (.06)	-.19**		-.06 (.05)	-.08	
Total R^2			.35***			.41***			.34***			.41***			.40***

+*p*<.10, ***p*<.01, ****p*<.001

Mediation analyses. Preacher and Hayes' (2009) bootstrapping method for testing indirect effects was used to assess the hypothesis that increases in social capital as a result of participation in Cool Girls would lead to increases in each dimension of self-concept. The post-test level of self-concept was entered as the dependent variable. The independent variable was participation in Cool Girls. Post-test social capital measures were entered as potential mediators. Covariates included pre-test levels of self-concept and pre-test levels of social capital.

Table 7.
Indirect effects of participation on self-concept

	b(SE)	CI
Social Acceptance		
Help Domains	.04(.03)	.00 - .12
Diversity of Network	.00(.01)	-.02 - .03
Total		.00 - .12
Behavioral Conduct		
Help Domains	.01(.02)	-.01 - .06
Diversity of Network	.00(.02)	-.02 - .04
Total		-.01 - .06
Scholastic Competence		
Help Domains	.02(.01)	-.00 - .05
Diversity of Network	-.01(.01)	-.04 - .02
Total		-.01 - .04
Body Image		
Help Domains	.05(.02)	.01 - .11
Diversity of Network	-.03(.02)	-.09 - -.01
Total		-.05 - .05
Global Self-Worth		
Help Domains	.03(.02)	.01 - .08
Diversity of Network	-.01(.01)	-.04 - .01
Total		-.01 - .06

Note. Confidence intervals that do not cross zero are considered to be significantly different from zero.

For each dimension of self-concept the overall model was significant and accounted for between 39% and 43% of the overall variance. As shown in Table 7, there was a significant indirect effect of participation on changes in each dimension of self-concept, except behavioral conduct, through number of domains. Additionally, there was a trend toward a significant indirect effect on changes in scholastic competence. There were no significant indirect effects of participation through diversity of network for any dimension of self-concept except for body

image. Increases in diversity of network mediated the effect of participation on decreases in body image.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the process by which participation in Cool Girls, Inc. may contribute to the development of self-concept. It was hypothesized that program-related increases in the diversity of social capital networks, and in the number of domains in which young women felt that they could access needed help, would lead to increases in self-concept. Moreover, it was hypothesized that social capital would mediate the associations between program participation and indices of self-concept. Results indicated support for each hypothesis.

Drawing from Cool Girls, Inc. theory of change, the first hypothesis posited that this program would contribute to expanding the social capital networks of its participants. Two indicators of social capital were considered: (1) the number of developmental domains in which girls felt they had access to helping resources and (2) the diversity of people in their social networks that girls felt they could go to for help. Support was found for both components. The results showed that girls experienced statistically significant increases in the diversity of their networks and in the number of help domains. This suggests that Cool Girls is potentially meeting two of their most important goals: increasing access to social resources and teaching the girls to know how to seek out help when they need it.

The second hypothesis posited that girls, regardless of participation in Cool Girls, who had increases in social capital from pre-test to post-test would experience increases in self-concept. There was support for this hypothesis for each dimension of self-concept except for behavioral conduct. Specifically, girls who experienced increases in the number of help domains experienced increases in social acceptance, global self-worth, body image, and tended to

experience increases in scholastic competence. This is consistent with prior research documenting a link between social support and self-concept for adolescents (Arslan, 2009; Johnson, 1996). Diversity of social capital network was not associated with increases in self-concept. However, unexpectedly, increases in network diversity were associated with declines in body image. It could be that the quality of social support, rather than the diversity of people, is more important when it comes to body image for this population. In other words, it could be that having a close, intimate relationship with fewer people, or maybe one person in particular, would contribute to a positive body image but that the quality of support in this area gets lost with increasing numbers of people. Alternatively, it could be that increasing the diversity of one's network means increasing the number of people "judging" your body. If girls are participating in a club where they have more access to peers and women, they could be more harshly judging their bodies in comparison to others. Indeed, some literature suggests that girls engage in social comparison with peers and that this can negatively affect their body image. For example, in their study on body dissatisfaction in adolescence, Nelson, et al (2007) found that youth who participated in conversations with their peers about appearance were more likely to internalize appearance ideals, compare themselves to peers and media images, and experience body ideal discrepancy. McCabe and Ricciardelli (2003) found that social comparison with peers was more frequent than with media images, although both were related to more negative body image for boys and girls. Additionally, girls were more likely to engage in social comparison with peers and this was related to more body dissatisfaction in girls. Jones (2004) examined girls' appearance culture within close relationships, and found that girls who were involved in more appearance conversations were more likely to engage in social comparison and experience decreases in body dissatisfaction over time. Therefore, it could be that increasing girls' access to

peers and other women increases the diversity of their social capital networks, but leads to more peer conversations about physical appearance, social comparison with peers and media images, thereby decreasing body image. Future research should investigate whether increasing network diversity increases social comparison.

Interestingly, behavioral conduct was the only dimension of self-concept that was not affected by increases in number of help domains. It could be that aspects of social capital that affect behavioral conduct were not addressed by the measures in this study. For example, *intergenerational closure*, which is the extent to which members of one's social capital network know one another, has been shown to contribute to reductions in externalizing (delinquent or aggressive) behavior (Fletcher, 2001), though in Fletcher's (2001) study of intergenerational closure this was only true for European Americans and not for African Americans. Additionally, Thorlindsson, Bjarnason, & Sigfuxdottir (2007) found that school levels of intergenerational closure were related to decreased alcohol use. Indeed, Coleman (1988) argued that intergenerational closure was key in producing social norms among youth about appropriate behavior. It could be that increasing the intergenerational closure of program participants' social capital network would lead to increases in behavioral conduct. Cool Girls participants may have had access to a more diverse social network, but if there were no ties among these individuals, girls' attitudes about their behavior may not have been affected. Future research should assess intergenerational closure of YDP participants by asking the extent to which parents, YDP staff and volunteers, teachers, and other helping resources know one another.

The third hypothesis posited that participation in Cool Girls, Inc. would increase self-concept through the acquisition of social capital. These results mirrored that of the second hypothesis, in that number of domains mediated the relationship between participation and social

acceptance, global self-worth, and body image and tended to mediate this relationship for scholastic competence. The number of domains did not mediate the relationship between participation and behavior conduct. Diversity of network was involved in the link between program participation and only one dimension of self-concept; network diversity mediated the relationship between participation and body image, although this was a negative relationship. These results are particularly relevant for Cool Girls, Inc. because they reveal a specific process by which the program increases the self-concept of its participants. Therefore, Cool Girls, Inc. may want to focus their program goals around increasing social capital resources for their participants, particularly by increasing the areas of their lives in which they have help. The results of this study indicate that support and guidance, help with school work, problem-solving, and goal-setting are critical areas in which having a person to go to makes a significant difference in self-concept. However, Cool Girls, Inc. may want to investigate the body image of their participants and possibly focus more on this dimension of self-concept. Programs for college-aged women that focus on media literacy with regard to idealized body images have found that critical media analysis can change the way women view these images and increase body esteem (Irving & Berel, 2001; Chambers & Alexander, 2007). Programs for adolescent girls implemented in schools and communities with the goal of preventing eating disorders have also had success is increasing positive body image by using similar techniques. For example, one program called “Full of Ourselves: Advancing Girl Power, Health, and Leadership” (Steinter-Adair et al, 2002), was implemented in twenty-four middle schools in Tulsa, Oklahoma and other parts of the Northeastern United States. The program’s curriculum focused on improving girls’ body image through viewing “weightism” as a social justice issue and through critical media analysis. Girls in the program aged twelve to fourteen then designed their own sessions to

teach their younger peers aged nine to eleven. In Steiner-Adair et al's (2002) evaluation of the program, program participants experienced increases in knowledge about healthy weight and body esteem compared to the control group. Although social capital was not evaluated in this program, the model is similar to Cool Girls, Inc. in that it was a program designed for girls who socialized with one another and with adult volunteers. Such programs for adolescent girls may be one way in which YDPs can help them use their increased social capital to empower one another. While it is unknown whether social comparison is the culprit in decreasing body image in this study, Cool Girls and other YDPs for girls may want to spend more time on body image programs such as "Full of Ourselves". Additionally, future research on YDPs for girls should investigate whether increasing the diversity of one's social capital network increases social comparison and if so, what practitioners can do to eliminate this effect. One way of tapping into this phenomenon may be to include qualitative data surrounding these issues. For example, focus groups with girls enrolled in the program asking questions about body image, social comparison, and media exposure may provide insight into how girls view these topics and discuss them among one another. Asking the girls themselves may help researchers understand what types of pressures they feel, if any, when enrolled in a social club that encourages interaction with one another and adults.

Limitations

Although attempts to account for change over time were made by controlling for pre-test levels of study variables, this study is limited in its ability to measure long-term programmatic effects due to its pre-test, post-test design. According to Cole and Maxwell (2003), measuring mediation over time with only two time points can lead to misleading results due to the inability to accurately measure the stationarity the variables. Stationarity refers to the stability of the

effect of one variable on another over time, and this is only accurately measured with three or more time points. The authors recommend three-wave models for measuring mediation over time. In the future, researchers plan on assessing program effects at three time points: the beginning of school year one, the end of school year one, and the end of school year two. Although it is unknown whether or not these are adequate time lapses, the fact that the present study found evidence of change over time using a two-wave design leads us to believe three time lapses will allow for an even better assessment of trajectories of change over time and longer-term program effects.

Additionally, the measurement of social capital was limited in several ways. The initial intent of the survey items was to assess what areas participants have help. Cool Girls, Inc. determined that the three of the domains assessed (problem-solving, help with school work, and goal-setting) matched with the goals of the program. The fourth domain, support and guidance, was originally part of a question assessing whether or not participants had an adult natural mentor. Therefore, the possible responses were limited only to adults, whereas respondents were free to report friends or peers for the other three domains. This limited the variability of the measure. Additionally, this study was not a comprehensive evaluation of the Cool Girls, Inc. program because there may be other domains that are important to assess. For example, sexual efficacy is a critical part of development for young adolescent girls, and particularly relevant for a program like Cool Girls, which seeks to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy. In the future we plan on asking participants whether or not they have someone they can go to for questions about sex.

The measure of diversity of social capital network was limited in that responses were coded as immediate family, extended family, non-familial adult, friend/peer, or “other”. It was

difficult to put some responses into these limited categories. For example, many participants responded with “God Dad” or “God Sister”. Without knowing the ages of some of the individuals nominated, it was decided that these responses would be put into the “extended family” category. The relationship categories chosen for this study may be less meaningful to some populations. For example, some girls may consider grandmothers to be immediate family members, particularly if they live with them. Fathers, siblings, or stepsiblings may be more like extended families to some girls if they do not live with these relatives. Therefore, a better way of measuring the diversity of social capital network may be to simply count up the number of different people instead of categorizing relationships. Furthermore, two important aspects of social capital were not measured in this study: the quality, or helpfulness of social resource (Ferguson, 2004) and intergenerational closure (Glanville, Sikkink, & Hernandez, 2008; Kao & Rutherford, 2007; Coleman, 1988). It could be argued that being able to report someone you can go to for help is meaningless unless that person actually is able to deliver the help you need. Additionally as mentioned above, intergenerational closure may be an important aspect of social capital that can address specific dimensions of self-concept such as behavioral conduct. Researchers plan on including survey questions assessing the helpfulness of social resources in future evaluations of Cool Girls, Inc. Also, focus groups with parents of Cool Girls participants should provide valuable information about the intergenerational closure that exists between parents and other adults in the girls’ lives, such as teachers, program staff and volunteers.

This study is also limited in its ability to account for the extent to which individual girls were exposed to the full Cool Girls program (i.e. “dosage”). As mentioned before, all girls enrolled in the program are expected to attend the Cool Girls Club, once a week after-school component. According to Cool Girls, girls who do not attend this after a certain amount of weeks

are considered no longer enrolled. However, there is no way of knowing if they adhere to this rule and how often each girl attends, as there attendance data were not available. In addition to obtaining program records of participant attendance, subsequent evaluation surveys have included a self-report question asking each girl how often she attends Cool Girls Club, but this question was unfortunately unavailable for this study.

Implications

The results of this study have several implications for applied settings, specifically for those interested in developing Youth Development Programs for girls in urban settings. First and foremost, participation in the program led to increases in both aspects of social capital networks. Cool Girls, Inc. brings girls together, attracts community volunteers to help support their program, and teaches their participants how to seek out social support when needed. Programs that seek to increase the available social capital of their participants may look to the techniques of Cool Girls, Inc. as an example. Second, regardless of participation in Cool Girls, Inc., girls who experienced increases in social capital also experienced increases in multiple domains of self-concept. This suggests that social capital is an important part of developing self-concept for this population, and one way in which practitioners may enhance multiple dimensions at once. Third, it is apparent that one way Cool Girls, Inc. was able to increase the self-concept of its' participants was by increasing their social capital. These findings also have important implications for the literature surrounding Youth Development, by providing insight into the ways YDPs develop the positive self-concept of participants, specifically by increasing the number of domains in which they have help. Although, it is apparent that while increasing help domains for girls led to more positive body image, this effect was offset by a negative association in which network diversity contributed to decreased body image. The study of social

capital networks in the context of Youth Development Programs is an important direction in understanding how such programs play a role in promoting positive developmental outcomes, particularly for adolescent girls growing up in socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Adaptation of Harter's Self-Perception Profile for Children

		Not True	A Little True	Often True	Always True
1.	It is hard for me to make friends.	1	2	3	4
2.	I like the way I behave.	1	2	3	4
3.	I am unhappy with myself.	1	2	3	4
		Not True	A Little True	Often True	Always True
4.	I am good at my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4
5.	I am happy with the way that I look.	1	2	3	4
6.	I have a lot of friends.	1	2	3	4
		Not True	A Little True	Often True	Always True
7.	I usually do the right thing.	1	2	3	4
8.	I don't like the way I am leading my life.	1	2	3	4
9.	I am just as smart as other kids my age.	1	2	3	4
		Not True	A Little True	Often True	Always True
10.	I am happy with my height and weight.	1	2	3	4
11.	I would like to have more friends.	1	2	3	4
12.	I act the way I am supposed to.	1	2	3	4
		Not True	A Little True	Often True	Always True
13.	I am happy with myself.	1	2	3	4
14.	I am slow in finishing my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4
15.	I wish my body was different.	1	2	3	4
		Not True	A Little True	Often True	Always True

16.	I do things with other kids.	1	2	3	4
17.	I get in trouble for things I do.	1	2	3	4
18.	I like the kind of person I am.	1	2	3	4
		Not True	A Little True	Often True	Always True
19.	I often forget what I learn.	1	2	3	4
20.	I wish my physical appearance (how I look) was different.	1	2	3	4
21.	I wish more kids my age liked me.	1	2	3	4
		Not True	A Little True	Often True	Always True
22.	I do things I know I shouldn't do.	1	2	3	4
23.	I am happy the way I am.	1	2	3	4
24.	I do my class work well.	1	2	3	4
		Not True	A Little True	Often True	Always True
25.	I wish something about my face or hair looked different.	1	2	3	4
26.	I am popular with other kids my age.	1	2	3	4
27.	I behave well.	1	2	3	4
		Not True	A Little True	Often True	Always True
28.	I am happy with the way I do things.	1	2	3	4
29.	I have trouble figuring out the answers in school.	1	2	3	4
30.	I think that I am good looking.	1	2	3	4

Appendix B. Questions from which social capital measures were derived

1. Everyone needs help with schoolwork sometimes.
I have someone who can help me with schoolwork. **YES** **NO**

If yes, the next time I need help with schoolwork, I will ask

_____ . This person is my _____ .
(Name) (Relationship to you)

2. Everyone needs help setting and achieving goals sometimes.
I have someone who can help me with setting goals. **YES** **NO**

If yes, the next time I need help with goals, I will ask:

_____. This person is my _____ .
(Name) (Relationship to you)

3. I have an adult other than my parents or guardian that I can go to for support and guidance.
YES **NO**

If yes, this person is:

_____ . She/he is my _____ .
(Name) (Relationship to you)

4. Everyone needs help solving problems sometimes.
I have someone who helps me solve problems. **YES** **NO**

If yes, the next time I need help solving a problem I will talk to:

_____. This person is my _____
(Name) (Relationship to you)