

# **Building Bonds and Bridges: 8 to 12 year old Volunteers and the Opportunity to Generate Social Capital**

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# Background

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- Attitudes about youth and their ability to contribute
- Communities need to engage citizens
- Younger youth are a resource that can be mobilized to become capital
- Focus of social capital and youth has been within two structures: family and schools
- Purpose: Investigate bonding and bridging capital of younger youth and community context

# Methodology

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- Urban and rural Boys and Girls Clubs in Atlantic Canada: NB, NS, PEI, and NL.
- 73 younger youth (8-12 years of age); 7 Executive Directors (ED)
- Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with younger youth and EDs
- transcribed, coded, analyzed

# Ages of Youth Participants

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<b>Age</b>	<b>No. of Males</b>	<b>No. of Females</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
8	2	5	7	9
9	9	4	13	18
10	8	14	22	30
11	6	12	18	25
12	6	7	13	18

# Bonding with Peers and Expanding Friendship Circle

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- Volunteering provided an opportunity to strengthen existing relationships
- Nature of the experiences resulted in development of social relationships with those outside primary friendship circle
- Younger youth valued bonding opportunities

*“I just think it's so fun to do and I get to meet other people and talk to other people and make friends with kids I didn't know” (Female, 12 years old)*

# Need for Welcoming Opportunities

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- Desire to create social ties between youth and other members of the community
- Facilitators faced challenges in providing opportunities

*“I think a lot of times the value of having [youth aged 8 to 12] volunteer is overlooked by other organizations; for sure by other nonprofit organizations in the area, and especially nonprofit organizations that don't have a direct connection to the kids.” (ED 4)*

# Bridging Capital with Community Members

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- Broadening the social network
- Diversifying the social network
- Building social capital in community as opposed to being recipients of community social capital

*“It's really exciting too cause you get to meet different people... like older people and the less fortunate.”  
(Male, 10 years old)*

# Discussion

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- Bridging capital enhances connection to community
- Exposes younger youth to diversity
- Bridging capital may improve attitudes toward youth
- Need to recognize the capacity of young people and circumstances that support their contributions