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Trust Formation When Youth and Adults Partner to Lead School Reform: A Case Study of Supportive Structures and Challenges

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INTRODUCTION

Schools that build and support high levels of trust between stakeholder groups have been shown to support greater collaboration amongst those groups, including parents, teachers, administrators, and students (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). When stakeholders in schools feel the sense of psychological safety that accompanies trust, they are more willing or likely to engage in the behaviors that support continuous improvement, including speaking up about concerns or mistakes, seeking help or feedback from one another, innovating, and engaging in relational bridge-building across traditional institutional boundaries (Cosner, 2009). In addition to fostering collaborative behaviors, trust has been found to be related to a host of other positive organizational outcomes, such as the establishment of more just organizational structures in schools (Hoy and Tarter, 2004), greater organizational attachment by teachers (Bryk and Schneider, 2002), and healthier school climates (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2015). These conditions are, in some ways, mutually constitutive: as a school is able to achieve greater collaboration and effectively distribute leadership amongst its stakeholders, it achieves greater organizational capacity to achieve its goals, which in turn feeds the collaborative process (Cosner, 2009).

Research has focused on understanding the practices that support trust formation between various stakeholder groups in order to better support school leaders at all levels in fostering trust in the course of their work, including trust between principals and teachers, teachers and teachers, teachers and parents and parents and principals (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Seashore-Louis, 2007). However, the majority of these studies have focused on trust between adults, assuming the passivity of young people in the continuous improvement process, despite the fact that student learning is often the object of that improvement. Because of its strong association with positive youth development, trust between youth and adults is most often studied to understand the factors that contribute to

youth's secure attachment or connectedness to adults in their lives and schools (Flanagan and Stout, 2010; Grossman and Bulle, 2006).

Rarely, however, has trust between youth and adults been studied to understand how it might contribute to their successful collaboration and accomplishment of organizational goals or objectives (aside from student learning itself). This tendency is likely due to a strong institutional bias towards positioning students as the passive recipients of organizational reform efforts, rather than as active participants or collaborators in designing reforms to better serve their needs (Bragg, 2007; Cook-Sather, 2002; Fielding, 2001). Youth involvement in school governance, for example, is often valued by practitioners as an opportunity for positive youth development, rather than a need to involve youth as stakeholders to reform a system that is designed to benefit them (Cook-Sather, 2002). As a result, little is known about the dynamics of trust formation between youth and adults as partners in, or co-leaders of, educational reform efforts.

This study seeks to identify the factors that led to trust formation between youth and adult teams engaged in one such initiative: a collaborative peer review project which engaged administrators, teachers and students in a quality review process developed as an alternative to the typical pathway to accreditation. Three schools participated in this alternative program in which joint teams of administrators, teachers, and high-school aged youth from each school used a variation on the practice of instructional rounds to gather information for continuous improvement efforts. The central research questions were: *How was trust established between youth and adults working within collaborative peer review teams? What practices, beliefs and processes did participants perceive supported or undermined the formation of trust within these teams?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

As young people enter adolescence, their desire for secure relationships with adults other than their parents increases as they focus on identity formation and separation from the family (Hoffman, 1984; Grossman and Bulle, 2006). Meaningful inclusion of youth in school governance is one iteration of youth-adult activity that has been shown to support this attachment (Mitra and Gross, 2009), with a range of positive outcomes documented for participating youth including an increased sense of agency, belonging, competence, articulateness and civic efficacy (Mitra and Serriere, 2012). As a result, youth voice is often promoted in schools because of its perceived effect on student engagement and the positive outcomes for participating youth.

Student voice, youth-adult partnerships and trust

The literature on school-based youth-adult partnerships and student voice, however, describes the behaviors and capacity building that must occur within schools to support the acceptance of students into school leadership roles at all. First, shifting the mindset of adults to accept youth as legitimate co-leaders of school initiatives requires contravening the traditional hierarchy and power distribution of schools as institutions themselves (Brasof, 2015; Cook-Sather, 2002; Taines, 2014). Additionally, it requires avoiding the common traps of tokenism, instrumentalism, and manipulation that often accompany attempts to include youth voices in what are essentially adult-driven and defined initiatives (Hart, 1992), often as window dressing or in service to Hargreave's (1994) notion of contrived collegiality. To support youth-adult partnerships, both parties must learn new patterns of interaction with one another that support their continued work together, including how to function as a community of practice within a context that reinforces adult power over youth, rather than with them (Akiva and Petrokubi, 2016). However, few, if any, studies make the explicit link between successful collaboration between youth and adults and the importance of trust formation to supporting the continued

willingness of youth and adults to collaborate with one another. As a result, it can be difficult to explain why adults become willing to collaborate with youth, or why youth discontinue participation in youth-adult partnership initiatives.

In the United States, genuine examples of youth-adult partnership, or co-leadership, of school initiatives are rare. This is in part due to the decentralized nature of education and also the fact that the US still has not ratified in the United Nation's *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which advocates for genuine student leadership and youth-adult partnership within schools (Mitra and Serriere, 2012). Additionally, where student leadership does authentically exist, it is often directed by adults to focus outward on the community, rather than inward on the pedagogical and curricular heart of schools (Mitra and Gross, 2009). As a result, there are few opportunities to understand the dynamics of trust formation and the practices which support teacher trust in students as co-leaders of school reform and instructional improvement within the US context.

Trust development in youth-adult contexts

Youth-adult partnerships are recognized as the concerted efforts of youth and adults to work together to achieve mutual goals (Wheeler, 2000). Therefore, trusting relationships between teachers and students engaging in youth-adult partnerships are an essential element for success. In order to engage in these practices effectively teachers must trust that students will be willing to engage and be open to the possibility of non-professionals having a voice in their practice.

Models of trust development suggest that there are differences between initial trust development and durable trust development. There is some evidence to suggest that initial trust in interpersonal interactions is often colored by perceptions of social likeness or reputation (Cosner, 2009). For youth-adult trust, beliefs about the nature and stages of youth development

may be an important feature of initial trust formation with youth as adults perceive youth as in the process of becoming, rather than agents in their own right. Cook-Sather (2002) suggests that the institutional positioning of students within schools, built on a century-old industrial model, carries enormous power and resonance for both youth and adults, even in the face of efforts to shift towards agentic conceptions of learning necessary for student-centered classrooms. Furthermore, research on social exclusion suggests that many factors, including poverty, class, race, and ability, may contribute to snap judgments that bias an individual against initial trust in another (Ridge, 2002). As a result, some youth may be doubly disadvantaged in initial trust formation with adults. Evidence from studies on school discipline suggest that this may be the case, particularly when it comes to implicit bias based on factors such as race or ethnicity (Skiba et al., 2016). Repeated interaction, however, can lessen the effects of initial trust judgments and lead to durable, relational trust formation.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's corpus of work on trust represents the most prevalent model for trust within the field of education and the study of schools as organizations and draws on a broad base of research from organizational studies, business, psychology and education (see Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2009; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). This study uses their model of both trust development and their definition of the five facets of durable trust to explore trust formation in the context of interdependence that is youth-adult partnership.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) suggest that durable trust is built through an individual's perception of the presence of five dispositions and behaviors within collegial relationships that allow one party to be willing to risk vulnerability to another party: benevolence, reliability, competence, openness and honesty. Benevolence is the belief in another's goodwill towards one's well-being, while reliability is belief in the consistency of a trusted party's actions

and that one's expectations, particularly with regard to expectations about benevolence, will be reasonably fulfilled. Competence is an important corollary of reliability, as reliability without necessary skill will not engender trust if one's expected results cannot be reasonably delivered by a given individual. Honesty is the perception of a person's authenticity or integrity, while openness refers to an individual's transparency, but also to their own vulnerability, usually taken as a sign of "reciprocal trust" (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000, p. 557). When these dispositions or behaviors are present in interactions between stakeholders, greater trust between these stakeholders is thought to grow and collaborative decision-making is better able to flourish (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Conversely, in Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) model, trust between stakeholders is undermined by actions that transgress established norms or culture, or by poorly handled conflict (Cosner, 2009).

Interactions between youth and adults in schools are often mediated by an assumption of a binary between obedience or transgression. Compliance and submission to pre-identified learning objectives can sometimes be the motivating idea behind opportunities for choice and voice (Bragg, 2007). Therefore, the boundaries of acceptable behavior for youth within school contexts may be narrower than the boundaries tolerated between adults who work in collaboration with one another (Taines, 2014). Similarly, youth may have greater expectations that adults demonstrate certain qualities, such as competence, in school settings where they assume the role of teacher. In the absence of a careful examination of trust development in youth-adult partnerships in school settings, it is difficult to know the extent to which work on trust development between adults holds when youth are invited to act in concert with adults as leaders of school reform.

CASE BACKGROUND

In 2014, principals of three high schools in the Eastern region of the US came together to explore alternatives to the external accreditation process that is recommended to fulfill their

state education agency's (SEA) mandate that they submit to external evaluation of their programs. They wanted to design a process that would more fully engage all stakeholders – particularly youth – in their organizational review. To facilitate this process, they were granted permission by their SEA to contract with the intermediary organization ASPIRE[1] (Adults and Students Partnering in Reforming Education), which provides training and on-going technical assistance to schools wishing to involve youth in educational leadership. A year-long course was created for teams of youth and adults from each of the three schools that included administrators, teachers, and students. The three schools were demographically similar to one another, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographics of three participating Collaborative Peer Review Schools*

School Name*	Locale code	Grades served	# of Students	% FRPL	% White
Mountain Union School	Rural, fringe	7 - 12	492	35%	96%
Redleaf High School	Rural, distant	7 - 12	526	39%	96%
Palmer Academy	Rural, distant	7 - 12	349	39%	96%

Data collected from State Agency of Education, 2014--2015
*Pseudonym

School administrators invited both faculty and students to participate based on their own selection criteria. At Redleaf High School, the organizing administrator chose students who had previously been active in other types of student leadership roles such as student council or theater. The students in this group were described by adults as academically successful high-flyers with busy extracurricular schedules. At both Mountain Union High School and Palmer Academy, administrators chose a cross-section of students that they believed represented a

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[1] A pseudonym

heterogeneous student population, including students attending the regional technical school for part of the day. All of the participating students in the CPR initiative were white, reflective of the wider demographics of their participating schools (See Table 1). Participating teachers at each school were generally mid-career teachers with between five and twenty years of teaching experience.

CPR Teams convened in August of 2014 for a two-day class session focused on learning the core principles of the Collaborative Peer Review program and understanding their objectives for the year. The cornerstone of the CPR work was the successful execution of site visits by the course participants to each school participating in the review process. In keeping with the strengths-based focus of the program, the principals of the three teams, as well as the ASPIRE faculty, steered participants away from the use of the word "evaluation" to describe the work of the teams, opting instead for the term "review" which was determined to connote less judgment and more constructive feedback.

Each participating team was responsible for hosting a site visit to their school. The hosting teams for each school took on the responsibility of preparing the faculty and student body for observations by the visiting teams, coordinating the logistics for visiting teams, including the schedule for the two days as well as a schedule of classroom observations that included all of the classes within the school. Site visits included the following elements:

- An orienting tour of the school led by an adult and a student from the host team;
- A data analysis session in which visiting youth-adult teams examined the student handbook and course catalogue;
- Ten-minute observations of all classrooms in the building by small groups of youth and adults;
- Time for visiting youth-adult teams to summarize and condense their observations according to a pre-determined framework;

- Sharing their top strengths and questions with the host team and allowing them an opportunity to select the most important ones to share with the faculty; and

- An hour-long faculty meeting facilitated by the visiting youth-adult teams to share their observations and facilitate dialogue.

In addition to these two days of peer observation, each school team spent time analyzing several quantitative data sources from their school to supplement the observations generated by the visiting teams. These included survey data collected from teachers and students as part of a schoolwide survey on school climate, as well as a self-assessment completed by faculty using the Global Best Practices tool from the Great Schools Partnership. These data were then collated into a comprehensive report, and the report was shared with school board members, faculty, and students through presentations and facilitated dialogues focused on capturing stakeholder perceptions of next steps. These dialogues have since formed the basis of action plans to set a future course for continuous improvement for these participating schools.

Throughout the process, youth and adult teams were expected to work together as partners to accomplish these goals, supported by the CPR course structure and the ASPIRE course facilitators. Both youth and adult course participants had not worked in partnership with each other previously and were committed to this year-long project by their participation in the dual-enrollment course. As a result, the CPR program represents a bounded system within which to examine the structures that support or undermine youth-adult trust formation when co-leading continuous improvement processes in schools. The program represents an instrumental case because of its ability to shed light on the initial stages of trust formation between youth and adults when youth are invited into leadership in school settings.

METHODOLOGY

This study approaches the CPR program as an instrumental case to understand the dynamics of trust formation between teachers and students when student co-lead school change for continuous improvement. While the study focuses on the collective experience of youth and adults in the course, the researcher also examined experiences of each school's youth-adult teams to understand variations in trust formation between the three teams. To achieve this, three sources of data were used: documents, interviews, and observations.

Document analysis: All participants in the CPR course completed short and long reflective pieces during the year, including reflections on site visits, at the mid-year, and at the course conclusion. The prompts for these assignments were open-ended, but included questions about group dynamics, changing perceptions of the school, and the usefulness of the course activities and tools. In total, 105 assignments were reviewed.

Observations: One of the two-day site visits was observed in the Fall of 2014. The researcher shadowed CPR teams and documented their process of observation and interactions with one another. Detailed field notes captured the conversations and interactions between team members. The researcher remained apart during these interactions and did not participate in the activities. Additionally, the course facilitators provided the researcher with several videos of CPR teams presenting their work to their local school boards. These videos were also reviewed and field notes and observations were recorded.

Interviews: Ten interviews were conducted with nine of the 23 course participants in the spring of 2015. Administrators, teachers, students, and community member course participants were interviewed from each of the three participating schools. These interviews served to probe and triangulate the data provided in the course reflections. The exact list of individuals

interviewed by their role is not included to maintain confidentiality because of the small number of total participants in the course.

The data were analyzed using a continuous comparative method. The researcher first open-coded data from all three source types to understand from the participant's perspective what aspects of this work were relevant to trust formation (Saldana, 2013). During this open-coding, many themes emerged, including well-known benefits and challenges of youth-adult partnership, such as access to adequate time and resources, the balance of youth and adult voices and participation, the learning curve of being an adult working in partnership with youth, and the disbelief or excitement of youth in having their voices acknowledged and heard in a school setting. Additionally, some codes unique to the CPR experience emerged such as challenges in working with the quantitative data, uncertainty around the school perception of the initiative, and the differences in participants' perceptions of their own schools versus the ones they visited. In the second round of coding the researcher focused on understanding when participants identified or experienced the five facets of trust (benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness) throughout this process, as well as when participants indicated their own vulnerability, or willingness to be vulnerable, in the process. Sources of distrust were also coded for including conflict, lack of vulnerability, frustration, suspicion or disappointment. These were noted along with the circumstances that gave rise to these feelings. Selectivecoding was then used to link participant experiences of these facets of trust to the circumstances or structures that generated those feelings, as well as to identify patterns between different subsets of participants, such as youth, adults, or amongst different CPR teams. This resulted in codes around shared language, the 4Rs, accessibility of adults, relatability, new sight, asset-based thinking, confidence in facilitation and time/resources, as well as immaturity, lack of reliability, and inconsistency.

As with any study, several limitations circumscribe the findings. First, while the researcher was able to interview some youth, there was some difficulty in accessing a large number of youth participants in the class for group interviews or focus groups. As a result, the youth perspective represented in this evaluation has predominantly been drawn from the classwork which youth generated and not from interview questions which could have allowed for more probing specifically regarding their experiences with youth-adult partnership in the class. Additionally, no educators or youth outside of CPR teams were included as participants in this study. While this study has focused on participant perceptions of the practices and beliefs that supported trust formation within youth-adult CPR teams and between teams and school-based stakeholders, it should be noted that statements made about the willingness of school-based faculty or students to engage with youth on CPR teams is self-reported by participants or was noted during school-based observations by the researcher. Therefore, the scope of this study has been limited to the examination of the tools which support or undermine trust formation for the participants in the CPR initiative during their coursework and in the course of their formal activities within their schools.

FINDINGS

The findings from the study are organized around the practices and beliefs that participants suggested supported or undermined trust formation between youth and adults in the CPR process. While the CPR teams' activities encompassed many activities, including organizing site visits, hosting visiting teams, conducting classroom walkthroughs analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, as well as organizing faculty dialogues, only some of these activities emerged in the analysis of the data as central to facilitating trust between youth and adult partners. These included three key supportive practices, including shared, accessible language to discuss classroom practice and student learning; strengths-based dialogue to

create space to use this language; and regular opportunities to engage in dialogue through scheduled meetings and events. This also included problematic practices, particularly the practice of framing youth as "colleagues"

Participants pointed to the ways in which these tools changed the patterns of interaction typical to youth-adult relationships in school settings, allowing for greater trust between youth and adults in the context of both these leadership teams and across the school setting. However, youth and adult participants' perception of these changes and their implications for acceptance of youth leadership in this space differed. While youth were more likely to focus their reflections on feelings of empowerment to change pedagogy and classroom practices gained through these supportive structures, adults identified distinct gray areas of interaction between youth and adults where differing expectations led to conflict within groups and undermined trust and collaboration in youth-adult teams.

Key practice: A shared, accessible language

The establishment of shared language through a framework which ASPIRE calls "the 4Rs" focused the work of the CPR teams and facilitated the creation of shared meaning across two traditionally divided worlds – that of educators and students. Relevance, rigor, relationships, and shared responsibility formed the guiding framework for school improvement used by the CPR initiative. In introducing the framework in the first class, ASPIRE staff emphasized the research base behind each R (see Beattie, Rich and Evans, 2015; Hattie, 2009).

Before participants became comfortable using the Rs to discuss classroom practice, adults observed that youth were quiet and reserved, participating rarely. An educator suggested,

> You have almost every educator in the room has two or three degrees. I know for a fact we are using a lot of language that these students just do not know. We are saying

heterogeneous or homogeneous, they do not know what we are talking about…That kind of makes them -- they stop on those couple of words and after a while of hearing those things they just kind of blank out.

However, youth participating in the CPR process reported that after repeated exposure to the 4Rs, having a shared language to discuss these issues with their teachers changed their patterns of interaction with adults in several ways. First, it increased their ability to decode and interpret classroom practice, which in turn increased their belief in their teachers' competence. Students often referred to this process as "having their eyes opened" or "being able to see" in a new way. As one youth wrote,

> The 4R's are an interesting way to compartmentalize things that you experience in a classroom. Since I was introduced to them I have been able to see them in everyday life. They help identify what is useful and not useful in a learning environment…They help guide you towards finding what you want to about an educational environment.

In the words of another student:

> I can see what other teachers do relating to the 4R's that may not be as obvious to the average student. Not only can I see when teachers use the R's, but I look for it. I use what we have learned to see if my teachers use them. Most of the time, they do!

For these students, the 4Rs framework provided a tool needed to reflect critically on their daily lived experience in the classroom in ways that moved beyond reactions driven by emotion or preference, likes and dislikes. An example of the depth and detail of the observations resulting from CPR students' engagement of their own and other's classrooms through this framework can be seen in one student's written reflection on observing a teacher's instruction looking specifically for evidence of "relationships":

> I noticed that the communication and degree of familiarity within a classroom (especially between teachers and students) had a huge impact on the attentiveness, atmosphere, and effectiveness of the class. When the teacher addressed the students by their first name, or easily asked personal questions that applied the world to what they were learning, or when the teacher drew upon aspects life outside of the classroom, it added a richness and depth, as well as trust and mutual respect to the subject being taught.

Students were able to see patterns in classroom interaction in new ways because of their ability to use the 4Rs, helping them understand the skills that teachers were using to teach and the

structures that were being created to help students learn. Adults also noticed the difference in students' engagement in the CPR process as they became comfortable with the 4Rs framework. As one teacher related,

> At the outset, most students were not really willing to share their opinions, or in some cases they might not even know what their opinions were! They are so used to teachers as leaders and students as followers; it was hard for them to step out of that mold. I have seen our students really take an interest in the betterment of our school… It's good to hear them recognizing where our school has strengths and weaknesses using the 4Rs, and looking at our school from a very "adult" perspective.
>
> As a result of engaging at this level of detail and depth with their teachers' instruction,

many students found that they developed an empathy for the challenges of classroom practice faced by their teachers that they previously had not had. In the words of one student,

> Understanding the framework of the 4Rs affected my experience as a learner [in] that it's easy to relate to teachers having difficulty on getting their point across and how it's difficult to make sure every student understands a certain topic. Having to go through this process made me look at the big picture. Teachers *do* care about our education, not just about a pay check. They love their job, but more importantly, making a difference in a student's life.

For this student, her previous disillusionment about teachers' motivation had given way to feeling newly connected to the pedagogical challenges teachers face every day in the classroom and a belief in her teachers' care, or benevolence, in facing those challenges. Many students also suggested that the common language of the 4Rs has enabled openness between themselves and their teachers about classroom practice, an essential element for trust. As a result, some students reported feeling closer to, and more trusting of, their teachers because of their new understanding of their work. One student stated,

> I'm either really, really close to my teachers or I completely distance myself. Now I definitely feel as if I could be close with any teacher if I really wanted to be or really had to be, if I fell in behind in class or whatever. So I definitely took that out of it, and that's going to be a helpful tool for the rest of my life.

This student's comments suggest that these feelings of closeness, predicated on their belief in their teachers' benevolence and willingness to be open to student voice, gave this student the

confidence that, outside of the course, he would be able to initiate close, trusting relationships with teachers in other situations in school.

It is clear that CPR youth perceived the 4Rs framework as laying the foundation for increased communication and openness between student and teachers by focusing on what teachers perceived to be the core elements of teaching and learning, allowing them to show students the places where they take the most risks, and building in youth an appreciation for the challenges of that work. Additionally, by allowing youth to decode and better understand the technical and professional knowledge of their teachers on their own, without having to "take an adult's word for it", youth were able to better appreciate the ways in which their teachers actually demonstrated both benevolence and competence in classroom settings, leading to greater trust of adult behaviors because of enhanced understanding.

Key practice: Opportunities for dialogue combined with a strengths-based focus

The CPR process placed dialogue between stakeholders at the center of the continuous improvement process. Not only CPR principals and teachers, but also students, assumed the role of facilitative leadership for these dialogues. Using a variety of formal protocols designed to support dialogic exchange created by the National School Reform Initiative (NSRI), the observations of visiting CPR teams were shared with host schools, and in turn, shared by each CPR school with key stakeholders in their school community, including the faculty, the school board, and with the student body. Examples of these protocols included fishbowl activities (where one group takes a turn speaking and is observed by another group which then is given a chance to speak), wagon wheel protocols (in which ever-changing pairs are given the opportunity to share insights with one another), and chalk talks (silent dialogues conducted on paper in response to carefully worded prompts). Participants suggested that protocols were an important tool for facilitating both team-based and cross-team conversation within this process as well as conversations between CPR facilitators and school-based faculty. Their importance

stemmed from their ability to deliberately create space for youth voices as facilitators of and contributors to conversations about school improvement.

Participants indicated that the power of these dialogic spaces, however, was catalyzed by the strengths-based focus embraced by the CPR process itself. CPR teams were urged in their class assignments and course meetings to, "Ask what's possible, not what's wrong." Conceptually, this approach derives from the practice of appreciative inquiry, a process that seeks to reframe organizational change processes as maximizing what organizations are doing well rather than focusing on organizational problems (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010).

The ten-minute classroom observations which constituted the bulk of team school visits led to condensing notes from a whole day of classroom observations into bulleted "wows" and "wonders" feedback that could be reported back to the host school. Examples of "wows" that different teams discussed included observations about high student engagement, well-integrated technology use, close student-faculty relationships, and or notable classroom decorations or behavior management systems. Examples of "wonders" included questions about the degree to which technology was enhancing/supporting or distracting from instruction, or about the extent to which higher order thinking skills were being engaged by particular instructional strategies. To facilitate this condensation, small groups of youth and adults worked through specific protocols to allow for parity between youth and adult voices as they made sense of the data. As one adult reflected,

> There was a chance to get to discuss the classes through the eyes of the other team members, especially the youth team members, whose observations were sometimes different than my more experienced and maybe jaded adult observation. It was not just the observation but the resulting dialogue that made the experience worthwhile.

Another teacher wrote about the benefits of the regular opportunities for youth-adult dialogue that participating in the year-long CPR process provided, saying,

> I feel that students and adults did forge a good partnership in the process through discussions and site visit contributions. I feel that we did use the opportunity to learn

from one another in the process of evaluating current practice and investigating possible changes. At Mountain Union, we have been working as partners and gathering as a full group weekly. This method has allowed for deeper discussion and better sharing at group meetings.

Just as the 4Rs contributed to cultivating empathy by allowing new communication between youth and adults through a shared language, so these opportunities for dialogue between youth and adult team members built into the CPR process allowed youth and adults an opportunity to engage in new patterns of dialogic interaction. In the words of one youth,

> This experience has opened my eyes to the different ways that people are able to see the same issue, specifically teachers and students. I have been introduced to the opinions and understandings that I have previously had almost no contact with, since in a traditional classroom setting, the students and teachers do not interact on as intimate a level as we have on this project.

This student differentiates between the patterns of interaction structured by regular classroom engagement with a teacher and the type of engagement facilitated through the CPR process of dialogue, suggesting that new understanding emerged for her through her ability to engage openly in these dialogic spaces. These comments all point to the openness that was cultivated through the creation of these dialogic spaces, an essential component for creating trust, by subverting the traditional youth role of listener and adult role as informer.

Participants noted the ways in which the explicit focus on strengths, or assets, supported non-participating adults' acceptance of the findings of the teams themselves (shared out through dialogic faculty meetings) and trust formation between CPR youth-adult teams and school-based faculty. It was clear in participant interviews and school-based observations that there was a high level of apprehension at each of the schools around what the faculty reaction would be to the institution's participation in peer review. In the words of one adult participant,

> As teachers we are taught to be certain, to carry ourselves with a certain amount of confidence. We can't show weaknesses and certainly never admit that we might be wrong or that there is a better way to do things than what we might have been doing for years. For decades in education, teaching has been a "closed door" experience.

Another adult participant suggested that the "state never asks about our strengths," implying a culture of high-stakes evaluation contributed to the teachers' lack of trust in current evaluation practices of their teaching.

Knowing that faculty willingness to be vulnerable to other teachers and students within the existing culture of these three schools might be low, it became important to the many of the teams that their strengths-based approach be clearly communicated to the faculty at their schools, often explicitly. As one CPR adult team member described,

> At the faculty meeting, when we first introduced it, we did a lot of talking. The kids and the adults on the team all talked about the fact that it wasn't to judge, it was to look for positive things, it was to look for specific elements, so that if this thing is happening in your classroom, that's what we're looking for. We're not saying you're a good or bad teacher if it does or doesn't happen. We're just looking for it. From there, we'll see what this will tell us.

Participants suggested that an important outcome of the strengths-based approach, was the way in which it allowed teachers at participating schools not on the CPR leadership team to be open to the findings of the CPR teams, particularly as those comments were introduced and dialogue around them was facilitated by youth. As one adult observed,

> We were just there to observe, we were just there to write down our "wows" and stuff like that. I feel like it made it better for the kids in the class and the teacher. I think we went in with smiles and "Thank you for having us" and that sort of thing, and I think that made a huge difference. Otherwise, had we just gone in with the clipboards and whatever, sat there all steely-faced... The first responses were usually very close to the vest, I guess, and then as people relaxed and saw that we were really there to be helpful and positive and supportive, they really seemed to loosen up.

This adult perceived that the strengths-based approach communicated the underlying benevolence and positive intention of the work within an expanding context of high-stakes teacher evaluation that fosters suspicion of evaluative practices. However, participants recognized that the process of building trust in the CPR approach to peer review was likely to be more developmental than immediate. In the words of one adult participant,

> Although 'willingness to be disturbed' can be a very personal undertaking, a school as a whole can set a tone of acceptance and trust, and if everyone in the school community

steps forward to take a part of the work toward school improvement, the load will seem less daunting.

Taken together, the CPR focus on strength combined with opportunities for stakeholder dialogue were perceived as powerful supports for building trust, both within CPR teams, as well as between CPR teams and school-based faculty. The strengths-based focus helped to support a tone of benevolence, particularly in the process of peer review and in sharing observations and trends with school-based faculty.

Key practice: Regularly scheduled meetings

The CPR process, embedded as it was within the context of a year-long course, incorporated regular opportunities for each school's youth-adult CPR team to meet, providing physical and temporal space for the other structures that supported youth-adult trust formation, such as a shared language and opportunities for strengths-based dialogue, to be effective. The accountability of working within a course structure also created the need for each CPR team to meet outside of regular course times at their own schools to continue to move the peer review work forward. Although regular times to meet and interact seem like a basic requirement for trust to grow and to facilitate collaboration, this structure is worth mentioning if only because of participants' perception of how difficult it was to procure time within the context of the regular school schedule. Attending CPR classes required students, teachers, and administrators to miss competing obligations such as other class and extracurricular commitments, or time with their families or friends on weekends. In the words of one teacher,

> We all feel as though we are being pulled in every direction for something different with minimal production in any direction. We are working around four different sports schedules and adult meeting schedules that are filled daily.

For teams able to find regular times to meet, such as Palmer Academy, course participants (both on and outside of that team) observed that there was an elevated sense of mutual commitment between the youth and adult participants to the work that the team was doing together. Amongst teams that were unable to find regular times to meet, such as

Mountain Union, participants reported greater feelings of suspicion or disappointment in their other team members, particularly in adult perceptions of youth reliability as co-leaders of the initiative. One Mountain Union adult said,

> [There] was a misunderstanding that came from the schedule that we expected them to maintain. A few of the students were shocked that they would miss their regularly scheduled classes as visiting team members, even though this had been part of the original discussion with them and it was part of the syllabus. Similarly, when we planned the meetings for the work on the data, some of the students balked at the work. As much as we work in partnership, I still found that we needed to provide guidance and not expect them to be adults, but youth working in concert with adults.

Youth hesitance about the scheduling commitment raised questions for this adult about their commitment, suggesting that what is at stake when time to meet cannot be found amongst busy team members is perceptions of reliability. The subsequent conclusion reached by this adult, too, around the need for guidance of youth in these arenas is symptomatic of broader issues challenging trust formation between youth and adults within this process, including adult perceptions around the appropriateness of calling youth "colleagues" or "equals" in this process.

Key challenge: Framing youth as "colleagues"

As with any working relationship, CPR team dynamics developed and changed over the course of the year-long process. While participants indicated that learning to use a shared language, engaging in dialogue with a focus on strength, and meeting regularly provided opportunities for new patterns of interactions between youth and adults that supported their belief in each other's benevolence, competence, reliability, openness and honesty, adult participants indicated that there were also moments of interaction that caused them to doubt the trustworthiness of their youth partners in this process. These feelings were, notably, far different than those expressed by youth participants in their written reflections and interviews, who indicated overall greater feelings of closeness with school-based adults through this process and greater feelings of personal empowerment around their educational experiences. As one youth wrote,

It's not often that schools have an opportunity to change at their core, especially when that opportunity requires students and teachers working together as colleagues, and requiring students to take charge of their education. The CPR program does both of these things, and has been quite effective in using this to explore the options of changing education, and to break down societal barriers formed by age stereotypes.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) suggest that behaviors which undermine trust formation often relate to conflicting or unfulfilled expectations, leading to a lack of confidence in one party of the other's benevolence, reliability, openness, honesty or competence. For adult participants in the CPR teams, it seemed that the explicit positioning of youth as "peers" or "colleagues" in this process within the context of the hierarchical institution of schooling led them to feel disappointed when youth required them to fulfill the traditional mentoring and custodial roles more typical of school-based youth-adult interaction.

Some adult participants expressed some hesitation around the framing of youth as colleagues within the CPR process, despite the fact that both youth and adults were enrolled as equal participants in the CPR course structure and ostensibly bore the same responsibility for progress, course assignments and facilitative leadership. In the words of one teacher,

> The thing at the very beginning that really got me ticked off, that I did not buy into, was the whole thing of colleagues, youth-adult colleagues, because not for nothing, but I haven't lived 60 years and gotten three degrees for nothing. You know? I do have a certain level of understanding of the way things work in my field that a kid doesn't have, so I really objected to that.

While this teacher objected to the framing of youth as colleagues as a matter of deference to her life experience, others found that the construct left them feeling conflicted when youth did not live up to their expectations of "collegiality." Adults expressed disappointment, for example, about youth cell phone usage during meetings, lack of participation, being mentally "checked out", and relying on adults to organize logistics of group attendance at class meetings, rides to and from the course meeting venues, and finding space and time to meet at school. As one adult wrote, "In this partnership as equals, it is frustrating to deal with inconsistent effort." Another adult reflected, "As we attempted to be equal members, we often found that the

students deferred to the adults when we made decisions about meetings and work." Another

adult described in her end of year reflection how a subset of these behaviors affected her

perception of youth as "colleagues" in this process:

> Some students have held back from the teamwork, which disappointed me, given the clear opportunity they had to take part in the process. It makes me question where the responsibility lies when a student is more engaged with her phone than the work at hand, or when an entire group of students is staring into space rather than listening to a presenter in the group.

Adults seemed torn between addressing issues around problematic group dynamics using the

traditional tools and patterns of interaction characteristic of their role as teachers and

administrators, or trying to address these issues with youth as they would with "colleagues."

Ambivalence over their role led to frustrations they felt could not necessarily be openly

addressed, leaving adults with few options for conflict resolution.

Gradually, the language of youth as "colleagues" was phased out of the rhetoric of the

CPR initiative, although youth-adult partnership as a principle was retained. Greater emphasis

was placed in the latter half of the year on the unique skill sets that youth and adults bring to

partnership, as can be seen reflected in some of the comments by both youth and adult

participants in their end of the year reflections. One youth wrote, "Being a part of youth-adult

partnership has helped me realize that adults are just like teenagers, but have more knowledge

than us." Similarly, an adult reflected,

> As we look to further youth – adult collaboration as we move forward, I will have to remind myself that a partnership does not mean equal in all regards. All members of a team need direction and norms to move the team forward. Some students need a little extra guidance in these areas. Similarly some adults need additional guidance in these regards…Just because it is a youth–adult partnership does not make it impervious to the pitfalls of other teams.

CONCLUSION

The structures this study has identified that support trust formation between youth and

adults are supported by the literature: opportunities for strengths-based dialogue, regular

meeting times, and shared, accessible language to focus group conversations are essential to healthy trust formation in adult collaborations, as well ones with youth (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Cosner, 2009; Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999). These findings suggest that youth-adult partnerships for school reform may require, as one of the adult participants in this study suggests, many of the same supports to ensure healthy group processes as adult coalitions to address these issues. This case study, however, makes clear how critical it is for schools to invest in greater engagement with these specific supportive practices if they are to move beyond involving youth in tokenistic or manipulative ways towards a culture of shared leadership.

When it comes to including youth voice in school governance and continuous improvement, many school leaders may wish to simply invite youth into existing adult leadership teams, or other existing school structures, to gain the "youth perspective" on a given topic. While these existing structures do have the advantage of institutionalization – scheduled times to meet, a clear place within the school hierarchy and well-defined arenas for which they provide oversight – this study demonstrates that simply inviting youth into these spaces will not be enough to allow youth and adults to build trust and find ways to be able to talk to each other equitably. These findings clearly demonstrate the importance of clearly defining the purpose of youth participation, both for the youth and also for the adults, and picking a clear, accessible framework for discussion that defines key terms around teaching and learning will allow the fair entry of both youth and adults into the discussion.

Furthermore,, it is clear from the adult participants' reflections on their ability to fully trust youth CPR participants as partners that simply creating supportive structures within school environments is not enough to overcome the hesitance that some adults will feel around the concept of "youth-adult partnership" as a tool for school governance and organizational capacity building. In fact, the case demonstrates that there seems to be a perception gap between youth

and adults around the meaning of partnership within school contexts when this issue remains unaddressed, a gap that contains several dangerous potentialities. While CPR youth experienced genuine interest in their perspective as a net gain in empowerment within an institutional context that rarely affords such opportunities, CPR adults experienced youth satisfaction with this incremental gain in empowerment as evidence of either their immaturity or of their low stake or lack of interdependence in the process of reform. This perception gap may unintentionally feed the focus on youth-adult partnership as a structure that is primarily beneficial as a positive youth-development intervention, rather than one which can genuinely support the expansion of a school's organizational capacity. While positive youth development *can* be an important goal of youth-adult partnership, the collapse of youth-adult partnership's potential to this singular benefit may a) lead schools to continue to integrate youth into adult-dominated spaces such as leadership teams or school-board meetings in tokenistic ways that are focused on developing their individual leadership rather than distributing leadership to youth as a stakeholder group; or b) subvert a focus on the potential of involving youth as partners in school reform or governance as a way of re-centering conversations in schools on the experiences of marginalized youth in schools. Additionally, for adults without a strong philosophical commitment to partnership, this gap in youth and adult perception, particularly in a context where youth and adults are framed as equals, might discourage their perseverance in experimenting with ways to scaffold youth leadership development from within the context of youth-adult partnership initiatives, particularly in the context of implementing school reform processes increasingly concerned with organizational outcomes.

However, the linguistic shift which took place over the course of the year within the CPR initiative from framing youth and adults as equals or colleagues to stakeholders with unique strengths and perceptions suggests two additional structures important to the successful formation of trust within these groups: the foregrounding of youth and adults unique strengths,

and critical, holistic reflection on group process such that the cause of group dysfunction is not assigned solely to youth immaturity or inexperience. Because youth-adult partnership, youth leadership, student voice, and pupil consultation are often used interchangeably, the framing of youth-adult co-leadership of initiatives in schools often remains vague. Explicit framing of the impetus for involving youth as partners in school reform may help to reassure educators – particularly in the current political context that often undervalues teachers' professional knowledge – that their experience and perspectives are still valued for their unique strengths as well.

The nature of this study has been exploratory and perceptual; however, given the expansive literature on trust between adults, particularly in schools, there is significant opportunity to build upon these findings to adapt quantitative trust measures to understand how initial trust in youth as partners relates to trust formation over time, or how the presence or absence of certain climate factors in schools, such as trust and voice amongst the faculty and principal, relates to faculty willingness to trust youth as partners in school reform efforts. If schools seek to expand the role of youth in school governance, this study has shown that deeper understanding of the factors which affect faculty trust in youth is crucial to facilitating this expansion.

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