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Those Decent Fellows!
Social Capital and Young Adult Volunteers*

Abstract: The main purpose of this essay is to determine whether organized voluntary activity is *always* equated with social capital by evaluating the results of the research work entitled "Young Adults, the Family and Pro-social Behavior: A Study of the Organized Volunteer." The author also reflects on whether or not the young adults who voluntarily do such work are good *fellows* outside of that context (for example in their family life) and outside of the narrow sphere of their professional commitments (for example in society at large). For this reason, the author's analysis is not confined to the voluntary activities of the young people but seeks to explore other dimensions of the issue. For the author, the research objectives of this paper can be achieved only by examining the familial, friendly and romantic relationships of the young people, along with their values and moral viewpoints.

Keywords: solidarity, social capital, filial bond, inter-generational relationships.

Introduction: Social Capital and Good-heartedness

Our intention is to provide an answer to the following question: Does organized voluntary activity *always* equate with social capital? With respect to the voluntary work carried out by young adults, are the good *fellows* who do such work also good people outside of that context (for example in their families) and outside the narrow sphere of their professional commitments (for example in society at large)?

Before going on, we need to establish what we mean by social capital. We do not wish to go into an *excursus* of the many definitions of social capital that have been considered.[1] The approach we wish to follow is the relational one put forward by Donati (2003a; 2007). What do we mean when we say that social capital is composed of (and does not *have*) relations? This does not so much deny social capital is merely an instrumental resource of the individual which permits him to establish links with the external world, or suggest that social capital is simply a resource expressing a collectivity which enables him to strengthen internal bonds. Instead, it affirms that social capital is i) both an instrumental resource and an expressive resource, ii) both an internal and an external bond, *because*[2] iii) social capital is that dynamic relational

* I would like to thank my peer reviewers for their many helpful comments.

[1] See Tronca (2007).

[2] The reader conversant with relational theory is fully aware that this "because" is a logical consequence of what Donati says on page 252 of *Teoria Relazionale della società* (1991).

quality "that enhances the relationship between the actors in terms of trust, normative reciprocity and cooperation in the construction of common interrelationships on the basis of a typically associational credo" (Donati 2003b: 372). In real social contexts, this quality can be either primary or secondary, so one can talk of either primary or secondary social capital.

When Donati states that social capital originates in "the family system and in the system of civil organizations, and more precisely in their *reciprocal interactions*" (Donati 2003a: 95) he seems to be wishing to emphasize the fact that the two go together and are mutual support systems. That is to say that he defines them in terms of the essential internal relations between them. Social capital is seen as a quality emerging from and not solely arising from participation in voluntary activity, whether it be civic, political or of any other type—in a nutshell, from participation in civil society. Therefore, social capital can be considered as a relationship embodying the complementariness and reciprocity between the family system and the social community. In fact, recently, he has redefined social capital as a *form of a relationship* which increases goods or services through exchanges that are neither economic, nor political, nor 'a pure gift' but reciprocal social exchanges (Donati 2007: 18).

Recently, some scholars have realized that "voluntary associations are not the main *creators* of civic attitudes and behaviour" (Hooghe and Stolle 2003: 240). Social capital, as trust, social interaction, civic commitment, cooperation and tolerance (id.) thus comes "deeply *embedded* in the triangular relationship among the state, the family and civil society" (Stolle 2003: 36, my italics). Again, it appears that social capital should be represented as an emerging quality or property of a relational kind. This emerging quality is neither within nor outside of a specific social sphere but is at the same time both inside and outside it.

So, coming back to our *good fellows*, the analysis will not confine itself to the voluntary activities of the young people but will seek to explore other facets of the issue. Indeed, the answer to the question we have set for ourselves can only be found if we examine familial, friendly and romantic relationships alongside the values and moral viewpoints of the young people *via* the presentation of the results of the research work entitled "Young Adults, the Family and Pro-social Behavior: A Study of the Organized Volunteer."[3]

The Current Study

The research[4] was conducted on a sample of 461 young adults (24—31 years old) residing in Lombardia and Emilia-Romagna and employed by charities working with

[3] For a full presentation of the data, see Boccacini and Marta (2003) and Guizzardi (2004).

[4] The research was sponsored and financed by the Istituto Veritatis di Bologna with a contribution from the Ministero dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca, was supervised by Professor Eugenia Scabini and Giovanna Rossi, and carried out in 2002 by a group from the Family Studies and Research Centre of the Catholic University of Milan, composed of Lucia Boccacin, Elena Marta, Roberta Bonini, Chiara Guglielmetti, Claudia Manzi, Davide Margola and Maura Pozzi.

children, adolescents and young people up to the age of 18 years old for a minimum of three hours a week or for 21 consecutive days in a year.

From the juridical point of view, the overwhelming majority (63%) of the voluntary organizations selected are legally affiliated organizations that are members of a national federation, an international federation, or a union. The rest of the organizations are: informal associations (18%), mutual agreement groups (9%), foundations/confraternities /moral companies (8%), or private corporations (1%). The main object of those organizations is to carry out recreational activities for minors (42%) and, secondarily to provide educational activities (26%). They work in the social structures-parish youth clubs (46%), in schools (29%) and in friendly communities (29%). The range of action is either municipal (69%) or more restricted (neighborhood, a specific area).

Inside the organizations, there are more girls than boys, 61% vs. 38%, and the voluntary staffs are especially young: 63% of the fellows are between the ages of 18–29, whilst 35% are up to 64 years old.

In our sample, there were more girls than boys: 54.2% vs. 45.8%. Concerning the age studied, we have subdivided it into three brackets: the young adults between 24 and 25 (39.8%), between 26 and 28 (36.5%) and between 29 and 31 (23.7%). With regards to the gender split inside of each band: in the first, 36.7% were boys and 42.4% were girls; in the second one, 35.7% vs. 37.1%; in the third one, 27.6% vs. 20.4%.

The results of the bivariate analysis that we will presently discuss were computed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and all of them were statistically significant.

In the Annex, we have put the data concerning the socio-cultural characteristics of our younger interviewees.

Voluntary Activities of the Young People

We may wonder what paths lead the *good fellows* to pro-social activity. Statistical analysis allows us to identify three different types of pro-social agents: the first is composed of *expansive pro-social volunteers*, who account for 50.2%, the second is made up of *limited pro-social volunteers* or 32.9% of the total population in question, while the remaining 16.9% of the volunteers can be termed *instrumentally pro-social*.

The expansive pro-social group: Members of this category cut across the three age groups. In this first cluster 53.4% were between 24 and 25, 49.7% were in the 26 to 28 bracket, and 46% were between 29 and 31. These are young people with either 2–5 years of service in a voluntary organization or more than 5 years service who entered this field mainly on their personal initiative, encouraged by a friend or relative already in service. They remain there because they share the values that their organization promotes and not for the satisfaction they derive from the work they do.[5] As for their decision to enter voluntary work, the young people in this category felt that their families, friends or teachers had influenced them.

[5] In the sense that 57.4% of the sample did not choose this option.

Exactly what do the volunteers do? It is worth pointing out that much of what they do, they do with their friends and not as individuals: when working alone they engage in educational activities, counseling and recreational functions. They also have organizational responsibilities: more than half discharge administrative functions within their organizations. The young people believe that their voluntary groups succeed in transmitting their values and principles, their pro-social inclinations, and affection and trust. Since the onset of their involvement with voluntary work, young people in this group felt that they have become more sociable (60.7%), more self-aware (57.4%), and more tuned in to socio-political issues (73.8%).[6]

We can suppose, then, that the fact that over half of the young people gave a high rating to the work they do arises from their assiduous and multi-faceted devotion to their work, a force capable of transforming their attitudes in relation to lasting sociableness, awareness and socio-political commitment. The pro-social behavior of the young people in this first cluster is noteworthy and is reinforced by the fact that they frequently collect money for marginalized members of society and that they devote part of their own money to charities working for the cause of social solidarity. Even on a narrower interpersonal level, they are always ready to offer advice and moral support.

Within the family, we note that they have strong ties of consensual solidarity (57.7% was average and 41.2% expressed a high value) and a high level of emotional solidarity (the average was 53.9% and the high value was 56.3%).[7] They place great importance on the opinions their fathers and mothers have of their voluntary work and the feedback these two figures provide about their commitment, expressed in terms of interest, involvement and approval. High intensity communication with both parents is characteristic for this group. The religious leanings of both the youngsters and their parents appear to be identical: more than 60% of the sample was composed of practicing Catholics.[8]

Offers of help and assistance, which are in daily circulation in families, originate from all the members of the family—mother, father, grandparents, brothers and sisters—seem to be extremely active and solicitous in taking care of the various members of the family, relatives and neighbors, in need. The satisfaction expressed by the young people with regards to intimacy within the family, the amount of time spent together, respect for their privacy, and their points of view is high (53%). As for pro-social action or voluntary commitment taken by other members of the families of these young people, it tends to take the form of giving to charitable causes, both to deserving individuals and organized charities.

The circle of friends that these young people keep is largely made up of other volunteers, whether they are in the same or other voluntary organizations. Excluding the likelihood that they will never marry, their emotional partnerships could well lead to marriage but it is a prospect they regard with apprehension (69.2%), regard as

[6] The three percentages given refer to respondents who marked high scores on the corresponding items (sociableness, awareness and socio-political commitment).

[7] For the significance we attach to these three dimensions we refer you to par. 3.

[8] Greeley's neglected lesson (1997)!

a distant event (50%) or as certain (51.3%). In their romantic relationships, shared ideals and values, reciprocal comprehension, respect and fidelity all play critical roles in ensuring their serenity and permanence. Their value systems hinge around religion (73.4%), politics (60.9%), social commitment (57.4%), solidarity (85.7%) and the family (53%). By contrast, values considered more "materialistic" such as sex and power scored less highly (63.3% and 54.1%).

The transition to adulthood for the young people of this group is marked by significant stages in a relational sense, of which the most important—in the first two—is a sense of responsibility for the other, manifest in marriage (64.2%), becoming parents (52.4%), stable work (60.1%), and reaching adulthood (66.7%).

Why do we refer to these subjects as being *expansively pro-social*? Because for these young people pro-social behavior is not merely a feature of their voluntary activity, but an attempt to maintain principles of openness, responsibility, care, attention and faith in every relationship in which they are involved. Young people in this group attach positive value to necessity and dependence: they seek emotional closeness, intimacy, recognition, support and consensus, as much in their intergenerational relationships with their own parents, as in their intra generational links with friends. It would seem that for expansively pro-social people it is absolutely indispensable that they can live in a world that models their ideal of the world (as shown by their quest for consensus and the importance of parental approval for what they do and who they are). If voluntary work in a wider sense can be construed as a profession imbued with values like solidarity and gratuitousness, in the sense that whoever engages in this type of work is seen by others as someone who has embraced such values, then the young people of this group try to act in such a way that the dominating ethic of the world of voluntary activity also permeates their social practices.

The limited pro-social group: This is formed primarily of older young people, age 29 to 31 (45%). Almost half of the people who have been active in the voluntary field for no more than a year belong to this group.

Their decision to enter the world of volunteering owes practically nothing to the influence of family, friends or educators: television, however, appears to have played a more important role (50%).[9]

Unlike those in the previous group, these young people indulge in solitary recreational activities and supply health services with their own friends and they don't have organizational responsibilities. Their experience in voluntary organizations has not produced changes in these young people: they do not feel that they have become more sociable (64.3%), that they understand others better than before (71.4%), or that they have grown more mature and responsible (76.2%). Nor do they feel they have met more generous people through their work (52.3%) or become more religious (56.1%). Moreover, all of them have *never* realized the other forms of pro-social behavior mentioned above.

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[9] Probably, making the most of Putnam (2000) on the connection between electronic entertainment and social capital, it is no coincidence that these young people name television as their main channel of information.

In the eyes of these young people, the voluntary group to which they belong does not seem to have transmitted values and ideals, pro-social inclinations or affection.

If we examine their family environment, in general we identify something far removed from the serene and positive atmosphere that was so characteristic of the families of the young people in the previous cluster. Indeed, indices of consensual solidarity and emotional closeness are low (32.1% and 38.3%), as are those relating to satisfaction with the family environment and primary networks (45% and 38.6%). This unease is matched by the low estimation that these young people attribute to their parents assessment of them. Nor are they particularly interested in their parents' assessments of their voluntary activities.

Communication with their mothers is often of low intensity, and communication with their fathers is often virtually non-existent. The network of reciprocal support and active assistance within the household on a daily basis is extremely tenuous. Parents and their offspring tend to share the same religious orientation: they are atheists, agnostics or indifferent.

The network of friendships that these young people maintain seems to be rather similar to the family relationships just discussed. The importance that these young people attach to the opinions that their friends might form of their activities is as low as the opinion they believe their friends to have of them.

As these young people see things, shared values are not considered to be an integral part of a romantic relationship, and reciprocal understanding is likewise believed to be of little consequence (100%). None of the young people in this group rated mutual fidelity as a critical element in a romantic relationship. For the overwhelming majority, raising a family does not enter into their calculations (75%). It is surely no surprise that for more than half of this sample, marriage is not regarded as a rite of passage on the road to adulthood (68%). For these young people this transition is marked by quite different events from those expressed by the preceding group. The attainment of adulthood is not marked by a steady job (68.4%) or parenthood (60%), so much as simply reaching a mature age (60%).

However, on their scale of values, a scale diametrically opposed to that of the young people in the first cluster, we find that success and career (52.4%), sex (50.7%), and power (75%) are seen as being of great value.

Why then do we refer to these people as being *pro-socially limited*? As we have seen, the reason is that these young people discharge their social commitment only in the hours in which they carry out voluntary work. In other social spheres, and in the sense that they are not changed by the experience of doing voluntary work, pro-sociality is not applied and is not directly experienced.

The instrumentally pro-social volunteers group: Involved for no more than a year (19.8%) or for more than five years (20.6%), the young people in this group joined their voluntary organization in response to an advertisement, at the behest of their parish church or some other religious movement, in response to a family need, or because of some initiative originating in their university environment or world of work. They stay with the voluntary organization mainly to develop new professional skills (38.5%). Their work consists of counseling activities carried out with their friends

and the organization and the delivery of recreational activities, again with friends. As far as these young people are concerned, the experience has not wrought any changes in their ability to get on with others, in their interest in socio-political issues or in their degree of self-awareness. The young people in question rarely display other forms of pro-social behavior.

Features of their family situation include low levels of consensual solidarity (23.5%) and low indices of emotional closeness (22.3%) with their parents.

However, with regard to their love lives the people under consideration here are closer to their peers in the first cluster in that they consider the sharing of common ideals, mutual understanding and reciprocal respect as keys to healthy and positive romantic relationships. Concerning the transition to adulthood, the views of the members of this group mirror those of the first group examined, and the scale of values of these young people corresponds almost exactly with that of the members of the first category, except with respect to the matter of solidarity, to which they ascribe little importance.

But, if this group more or less mirrors the first group, what marks it as distinctive? For the young people who make up this group, voluntary activity is seen as an experience that can help the volunteer find work. In addition, we can also observe a thin fabric of family relationships, extremely lacking in support, collaboration, dialogue and consideration for the views of others. Why do we label people in this category as being *instrumentally pro-social*? Precisely because they exploit volunteer work opportunities to advance their future career goals they are *instrumentally* pro-social.

The differences in the cultural and pro-social characteristics of the young people interviewed are such as to allow us to hazard the view that in all probability the phenomenon of organized youth volunteering[10] is not associated with a culture of pro-sociality that defines unambiguously and indiscriminately all its young members. If the peculiarly role of the third sector in society is that of making concrete ethical values—as a style of civil living—and to generate the social cohesion—in terms of both its trust and normative aspects—of the social fabric (Donati 2004), this also involves the concept of relationship quality which emerges not only from voluntary activity itself, in the narrow sense.

The Family: A New Reading of Inter-generational Solidarity

What is transmitted to children—and how? Are they supported by their parents?

It is precisely through the lens of the multidimensional solidarity between generations (Bengtson *et al.* 1984; Bengtson and Roberts 1991; Bengtson and Harootyan 1994; Bengtson *et al.* 1995; Bengtson 2001; Bengtson *et al.*) that we will now proceed to analyze the relationship between adult children and adult parents, made up not only of values, material goods, knowledge, tradition and affection, that are transmitted in no uncertain terms from the latter to the former. This cannot be considered an exchange of favors to help meet the needs of everyday life, even if these do occur

[10] In the wake of the research by Prandini (2002).

in both directions. This relationship, because it must constitute a space and a time for the construction and maintenance of identity, must marry trust and equality. In particular, between generations of adults there must be the opportunity to find one's own sense of self in relationships between equals (Cicchelli 2001a; Guizzardi 2007). For this reason, the pure and simple transmission from one generation to those who come after cannot encapsulate the spirit of the contemporary family (de Singly 1996; de Singly, eds., 2001; Attias-Donfu *et al.*, eds., 2001). Thus, the recognition, by parents, of the personality of their children as adults, able to make choices, to take on responsibilities, to have interests and reference points and to provide for the welfare of their own parents is what we intend to investigate.

Do the young people feel supported by their fathers and mothers in their decision to take up volunteer work? This sharing on the part of the parents is not confined to the approval they display for what their children want to do, but also extends to whether they themselves consider voluntary work important, whether they expect continuity in the commitment undertaken and whether they would be concerned if their children were to give up voluntary activity. Support involving these different nuances, is low in 32% of cases, average for 44.6% and high for 23%. Above all, it is those young people between 24 and 28 years of age, students or workers, of left-wing persuasions or practicing Catholics, who live in two-generation families and give high scores on the support offered by parents who have similar left-wing leanings or are practicing Catholics. It is interesting to note, on a more detailed level, the positive reciprocal correlation between the evaluations the children make of their involvement with their parents and religious orientation: atheist or non-believing fathers tend to give very little support to their offspring, while on the contrary, in practicing Christian fathers their children find high levels of support; and it is from practicing Catholic mothers that children feel they experience greater attention and receive the most support.

Precisely because the index in question concerns the extent to which the children feel supported by their parents in their voluntary work, it seems fitting to me to investigate a possible connection between the pro-sociality of the parents themselves and their willingness or otherwise to share in a similar commitment with their children. Matching the data, a very curious fact emerges. Not only is there no such correlation, but also, in the great majority of cases, the young people who report average or high levels of support do not even say whether their parents are members of a charitable organization, give charity to individuals or organizations, or are active in direct volunteer work. There is though, a perfect match between the interest that parents show in their children's activities and the importance the children attach to their opinions. The less the young people feel supported by their parents, the less importance they place on the opinions their parents have of their volunteer activity. What is more, this opinion is significantly linked to the image the young men and women have of their own commitment. Those who see it positively, as a pleasant, gratifying experience tend to value the opinions of their respective parents. By way of contrast, the more frustrating, monotonous, unpleasant and irksome the voluntary activity is considered to be, the less weight is given to the opinions of the mother and father.

The commitment of the parents in the world of the volunteer becomes important when we analyze the young peoples' assessment of their relationship with them. The greatest satisfaction in the bond between the parents and their children and the positive assessment made of the latter by their children is in relation to the positive example of generosity and altruism that the children receive, not from the fact that their parents perform voluntary work themselves, make individual contributions, serve as members of organizations or give money to charities. Those very forms of behavior that the young people claim never to have discharged, or to have discharged very rarely in the preceding year, are those that play a major role in their formation of a positive impression of their links with their parents.

Taking up again the multidimensionality of generational solidarity as outlined by Bengston, it is possible to identify consensual, normative and affective solidarity. By consensual solidarity we mean the sharing by parents and their offspring of the interests and points of reference of the latter and the satisfaction that parents feel in the pro-social activities conducted by the latter. This is encountered most commonly in two-generation families and grows as the support received by the young people from their fathers and mothers increases. By normative solidarity we refer to the sense of responsibility that the children feel for the well-being of their parents; this is also more prevalent in two-generation families. Moreover, it is also correlated with the attention the young people display in relation to others and its capacity for social productivity, which is manifest in individual acts of assuming responsibility, in considerate, caring behavior and in dialogue—all indices of generativity. The more young people report a high index of generativity, the more they feel this responsibility. This type of solidarity is also associated with the evaluation that young people make of their relationship with their parents and increases as the quality of the relationship develops. Lastly, the support that the children receive from their parents for the social work they carry out correlates perfectly with their propensity to safeguard their well-being. By affective solidarity we mean the emotional closeness and the sense of well-being and security that springs from it, the certainty that the children feel that they can rely on their parents for help or advice and the recognition of their own skills and abilities. Affective solidarity is a feature of the two-generation family and once again there is a correlation with the index of generativity. The more young people feel close to their parents, the closer they feel to society. High levels of satisfaction derived from the support young people feel they receive from their own parents for their volunteer work equates perfectly with close feelings of affection and solidarity.

However much parents pass on to their children in terms of material goods, traditions and values, the stimulus to acquire knowledge, trust and affection, there is no absolute correlation with sociableness, political and religious commitment, and the tension associated with generativity or an inclination to pro-sociality and volunteer work. The good levels of support that the young people believe they receive from their parents and the high opinions that they have of their parents are linked with a healthy generative capacity, strong identification with the group with which they carry out volunteer work, a positive image of their activity, advanced pro-sociality and a well-developed propensity to generosity expressed in other ways (direct alms-

giving, subscriptions to organizations, membership in one or more organizations, and indulging in other volunteer experiences).

The intergenerational relationship, in terms of the transmission from parents to their children, is certainly important, however: substantial legacies—as emerges from the analysis of the data—are associated with the capacity of the family to be a great spur to the development of a social conscience in young people, in the emergence of their sense of trust in self, in their socialization, in the growth of their ability to take charge of their own lives and an economic support. This is a relationship that with Bengston we can define as functional solidarity. But what about affective solidarity, in both its consensual and normative variants? It is our view that with these we can speak of reciprocity in terms of equal levels of adulthood, rather than different positions in the family tree: the propensity of young people to create a solid social bond conducted in an active manner appears to depend on the quality of the relationship they have with their parents within this framework. Mere transmission from parents to children lacks this reciprocity, in the sense of the reciprocal sharing of abilities and commitments that young people seek. And the more this is experienced in their relationships with their parents, the more the young people display signs of positive social integration. In transmission, parents establish a contact bearing the stamp of their substantially unilateral authority, in which they reserve the right to give or to withhold and their children are mere recipients. However, what activates sociality in young people is when the relationship between them and their parents is characterized by reciprocal authority, an authority of the kind that exists between a man and his wife, between friends and people of the same age. Where both adult figures, the filial and the parental, participate in creating, accepting and reinforcing the rules of the relationship that a real social impulse develops in young men and women. The more the family nurtures and respects personality in reciprocal adulthood the more young people feel solidarity both inside and outside the bounds of the family itself. Solidarity is therefore recognition of a relationship of mutual dependency and reciprocated obligation. It is paradoxical that in this recognition of dependence and obligation the young adult finds personal liberty, a liberty that is then a reaffirmation of the value of the bond of intergenerational dependence. Therefore, it would seem that parents, rather than simply transmitting, must be capable of emotionally sharing and providing support, in other words of recognizing who their adult children are and what they do. In this way intergenerational solidarity goes beyond one-way giving and assumes the role of a common celebration and recognition of the dignity of the respective identities involved. Seen in this way, intergenerational solidarity is a symbol of the incompleteness and insufficiency[11] of who I am—and the idea that what comes before me is the fount of knowledge and sense.

Solidarity is a way of sharing, of making and being a community that now has a new face: it is not simply motivated by ethical concerns but also be affective considerations. In other words, it is an ethical-affective solidarity, or better, an ethical relational phenomenon. Solidarity promotes what we can call a fundamental truth, due to the

[11] To use Pulcini's words (2001)

fact that in the relationship "there exists something that is not negotiable" (Donati 1993: 76). The relationship is neither (not *has neither*) a unit of exchange nor a unit of value. But it has the value of truth: the bond of value—or the value of the bond—is its normal endogenous nature, relationally speaking, in that "Ego depends on Alter, and vice versa Alter depends on Ego […] Rendered in other words, this truth tells us: 'cut your links with others and you cut your link with yourself' " (Donati 1991: 69). Solidarity is understood then not in terms of a simple means/ends relationship, but rather in terms of criteria that revolve around *relational reasons* (Donati 1993: 227; 2008: 110 and follows), whose function is bound up with a value of belonging, a bond of belonging, a truth of belonging.

Solidarity is no longer conceived as being, shall we say, on an exalted metaphysical plane, expressed in terms of value systems and abstract, universal principles. Instead, it is lived, consumed and generated all at the same time, in the events of life, in concrete, affective and motivational relationships, and in the underlying attitudes that come to be realized in actions, or more properly in relations, in the search for a properly formed identity.

Conclusions

At this point we need to examine anew the voluntary activities undertaken by our *good fellows*.

The institutional and normative frameworks of voluntary activity are not enough in themselves to generate social capital among young people; what is lacking is a more properly motivational dimension. The analysis of what, with Parsons, we can call *societal community*, leads us inexorably to examine the origins of these feelings of belonging and commitment, or rather whether the young people in question see themselves as fully-fledged members of society, and whether they feel responsible for the good of the community and inclined to commit themselves to community life. Young people construct their own identities not through introspection but thanks to the dependencies to which they are prone and which they express through intergenerational links in the context of the family. They are dependent just as they make their own parents dependent on the mutual and reciprocal recognition of themselves as people worthy deserving of trust and support. The propensity, or otherwise, to generate social capital in the various spheres of the societal community can be seen as a problem—on the part of the young person—related to their capacity to make of themselves responsible adults deserving of trust and worthy of recognition. In this formative process it is particularly important that parents and their children share interests and common points of reference so that there is satisfaction experienced by the parents in the work done by the young, and the young feel for the well-being of their parents. All of this is bound up with reciprocal recognition: the children recognize the ability of their parents to look after them, to ensure their well-being, to reassure them with help and advice, and offer emotional closeness. Reciprocal recognition is the foundation of the process by which young people construct their identities, in so far as it allows action

to be attributed to individuals—in this case, young people—who develop through time as subjects and actors with responsibility for their behavior. But how can we explain how this reciprocal recognition comes about, without recourse to Kantian imperatives, Smith's innate sympathy or Hobbesian fear? Is it the amorphous raw material embodied by the Durkheimian individual to whom the collective conscience gives form? It would seem that it is interest in the care of the generation from which they come and to which they belong that is embedded in the form of productivity and creativity (both in the Simmelian and the Eriksonian sense). It all boils down to taking pains to care for what is *procreated*, *produced and created* (to use the three senses that Erikson attributes to the idea of generation) (Erikson 1982) and nurturing the desire to procreate, produce, create and add.[12]

Care for generational bonds is not limited to the family but can also take the form of pro-social action. Care for generational relations, as seen in the orbit of family, friends, and charities, symbolizes that reciprocal dependence that young people feel and desire to maintain with others because it lies at the heart of the process by which personal identity is formed and maintained. This concern for generational relations emerges in distinct complexes in which norms and value systems can be analytically teased out, as seen in the clusters examined. It can therefore be asserted that voluntary activity, in relation to social capital, serves to channel and to regulate it, rather than generate it from nothing. The generation of social capital by the young is not a problem that can be resolved simply by making them conform to the norms and the values of the structured or unstructured voluntary sector. For its part, however, voluntary service can be thought of as the institutional outward vestment of the impulse to look after the generations.

Social capital, understood as the foundation of the social bond, is comprised not so much of the adherence to and fulfillment of norms and values so much as an interest in the nurturing of generational links. Norms and values, on the other hand, serve to regulate and legitimize the relationships between generations and the generation of relations.

Analysis of the data has also shown how, especially within the family, concern for generational bonds operates with the logic or rationality of the reciprocal dependence that lies at its heart: reciprocal dependence and obligation in respect of others' welfare and identity. Concern for someone else's identity starts with the recognition of my own. Concern for generational linkage, as it occurs in the family, is a critical factor in social solidarity. The nurturing of generational relations is not merely a resource for young people, or for the individual in a wider sense, involving the transmission of all that allows him, speaking in a structural sense, to enjoy a smoother entry to society. Nor is the nurturing of generational bonds simply a matter of internal solidarity in the family between parties bound by ties of descendance and ascendance. It is expressed in the relationship between the family and the world outside: it is nothing less than the matrix that generates the social relations that the young people themselves seek to "generate." The bond of filiation between parents and children transformed into the

[12] "The formation of a person's will is most fundamentally a matter of his coming to care about certain thins, and of his coming to care about some of them more than about others" (Frankfurt 1998: 91).

bond of alliance between generations is the condition for weaving ties of belonging between the society and us.

Annex

1. Socio-structural data

Table 1.1

Age Group and Gender

Age groups	Males	Females
24–25	36.7	42.4
26–28	35.7	37.1
29–31	27.6	20.4

Table 1.2

Civil Status

Civil Status	Males	Females
Not-married	91.0	93.2
Married	8.5	6.4
Separated	0.5	—
Divorced	—	0.4

Table 1.3

Education Level

Education	Males	Females
Primary School	0.5	0.4
Secondary School	3.8	2.4
Certificate Vocational School	7.1	4.4
General Certificate of Education	67.8	61.6
Degree	19.0	27.6
Post-degree	1.9	3.6

Table 1.4

Current Position

Position	Sex	
	Males (%)	Females (%)
University Student	30.0	32.4
Worker	46.7	38.8
Working-student	18.1	19.6
Looking for work	2.4	6.0
Other	2.9	3.2

Table 1.5

Family Status

Family forms	%
2 Generations Family of Orientation	75.5
3 Generations Family of Orientation	5.9
Family of Procreation	9.8
Living Alone	3.7
Living with Friends	3.3
Other	2.0

Table 1.6

Working Conditions of Father

Working conditions	%
Fully Employed	51.0
Fully Retired	32.5
Irregularly Employed	0.7
Looking for Work	0.4
Disabled	1.1
Part-time Worker	1.5
Retired Worker	6.1
Missing data	6.7

Table 1.7

Working Conditions of Mother

Working conditions	%
Fully Employed	33.0
Housewife	33.0
Retired	22.3
Looking for a job	2.0
Retired Worker	2.4
Part-time Worker	5.6
Missing Data	1.7

Table 1.8

Father and Mother's Education

Education	Father (%)	Mother (%)
No Education	1.7	1.5
Primary School	15.6	19.7
Secondary school	22.3	24.5
Certificate vocational school	17.4	18.9
General certificate of education	23.9	21.7
Degree	15.8	13.2
Post-degree	1.5	—
Missing	1.7	0.4

2. Family Network

Table 2.1

Family Intergenerational Solidarity

	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)
Consensual solidarity	21.5	51.8	26.7
Normative solidarity	38.1	43.0	18.7
Affective solidarity	29.5	49.4	21.1

Table 2.2

Family Intergenerational Solidarity

		Father (%)	Mother (%)
Consensual solidarity	Low	18.9	19.8
	Medium	48.7	49.4
	High	32.4	30.7
Normative solidarity	Low	40.5	40.6
	Medium	42.2	44.4
	High	17.3	14.8
Affective solidarity	Low	26.4	25.6
	Medium	39.4	55.6
	High	34.2	18.8

3. Friendship Network

Table 3.1

Number of friends according to the following definition of friendship: 'A friend is a person who knows you very deeply, helps you when you're in need and is really trustworthy'

	%
None	2.0
Up to 3	31.9
4–5	34.9
6–10	18.4
More than 10	12.8

Table 3.2

Friends Typology

Friends Typology	%
Ex-school Mates	16.2
Members of the Same Voluntary Organization	35.7
Members of the Same Profession	4.6
University Mates	13.0
Childhood Friends	30.5

4. Voluntary Association Engagement and their Pro-social Behaviour

Table 4.1

Hours per week of Voluntary Service and their Current Position

Voluntary association engagement	University student	Employee	Employee-university student	Looking for a job	Other
At least 3 hours	48.6	31.8	21.8	30	7.1
4–5 hours	16.7	24.1	28.7	20	7.1
6–10 hours	18.8	24.6	23.0	30	64.3
11–25 hours	11.1	10.8	16.1	20	14.3
Over 25 hours	2.1	5.1	5.7	—	7.1
At least 20 days every year	2.8	2.6	4.6	—	—
Living in the group	—	1.0	—	—	—

Table 4.2

Pro-social Behaviour Last Year

Pro-social actions achieved in last year	Never (%)	Seldom (1–2 times) (%)	Often (At least once at month) (%)
Giving sum of money to charity (don't think of desultory alms-giving)	28.2	54.7	17.1
Giving blood	80.5	15.4	4.2
Engaging with one or more national/international organizations (AVIS, Amnesty International…)	43.7	29.9	26.4
Helping the others, giving advice	1.1	15.4	83.4
Giving moral support to people in difficult circumstances	0.2	21.6	78.2
Fund-raising for beggars and drop outs	47.9	40.3	11.8
Working for a political cause	76.3	18.3	5.4

Table 4.3

Voluntary Organization Transmission

What the voluntary organization transmits	Yes (%)	No (%)
Culture and knowledge	55.5	44.5
Trust and care	85.2	14.8
Kindness	44.9	55.1
Traditions and values	75.3	24.7
Material goods	1.3	98.7

5. Religious Inclinations and Political Orientations

Table 5.1

Religious Inclinations by Age Groups

Religious inclinations	Age Groups		
	24–25 years (%)	26–28 years (%)	29–32 years (%)
Non-believer/atheist	9.4	10.4	7.5
Agnostic	3.3	2.4	2.8
Believer in some generalized God	3.9	7.3	4.7
Not practicing Catholic	8.8	9.1	28.3
Practicing Catholic	72.9	70.1	56.6
Other faith	1.7	0.6	—

Table 5.2

Interviewee's political persuasion

Interviewee's political persuasion	%
Left	38,8
Centrist	6,5
Right	18,9
None	19,5
No answer	16,3

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