

Women and Social Capital

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WOMEN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

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Women and Social Capital

Here we present three papers, originally given at seminars organised by the Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group, on women and social capital. Recognising that social capital theories touch on issues that feminism has long worked to put on the political agenda, we were interested to explore the harmony and dissonance between the two. Feminists have noted the ways, for example, that social capital theories focus on networks and relationships, without reference to relations of power and gender. They have also noted that social capital theories have a conservative slant, and a primary interest in the ways that people build consensus, rather than how difference is negotiated. Feminists engage with social capital in different ways. There are those who see potential for adapting the concept to express women's creativity and participation in communities, recognising and correcting its universal qualities and gender bias. Others are critical of the theoretical and political assumptions that underpin the social capital concept, from its neo-functionalist sociology to its adherence to a troublesome communitarian perspective. Others still, argue that social capital theory is so detrimental to feminism that to 'add women in' is to give it unwarranted credence. In this working paper we address the concept of social capital drawing on feminist perspectives, to think not just about women and social capital, but about the ways that mainstream social capital places women un-problematically at the centre of community life.

From different perspectives, Irene Bruegel and Ruth Lister focus on informal social interactions, bringing women's lives and agency centre stage. Bruegel disentangles the idea of social capital from the logic of cohesion, stripping it down to its basic affinity with feminism, revealing its analytic and political potential, but realigning it with an analysis of power and social interests. This allows her to highlight the structural distribution of social capital and thus how gendered structures of power are reproduced and may be challenged. Rather than focusing on internal relations of bonding, bridging and linking, a more feminist approach, she argues, might be developed from Pierre Bourdieu to differentiate social capital by the degree of transformative power that it embodies. Bruegel recognises how social capital, in this sense, can furnish women with a degree of power that enables them to challenge the status quo, through solidaristic social networks. In this way, she argues, the transformative potential of social capital is developed through collective experience: 'feminist analysis helps to redefine social capital as a part of a system of competing interests and values within a multidimensional space of difference, framed by large inequalities of power'.

Lister too, focuses on women's agency and the potential for social and political transformation. In her paper, she sidesteps the concept of social capital, towards feminist citizenship theory which, she argues, offers ways of accepting and addressing social divisions and diversity of interests. In contrast to the 'bonding, bridging and linking' in social capital theory, through which people are said to build connections and share resources, Lister draws our attention to the work of Nira Yuval-Davis, who uses the image of "rooting" and "shifting" where people 'remain rooted in their own (multiple) identities and values but at the same time are willing to shift their views in dialogue with those subscribing to other identities and values.' Unlike social capital theory which is often linked to the idea of social cohesion, a citizenship framework captures conflict and gives space and visibility to disruptive forms of action. Thus, like Bruegel, Lister highlights the potential of women's agency to challenge and transform the status quo.

Ginny Morrow turns our attention to children and young people, and to the impact of their experiences of everyday life on their health and well being. Social capital is a useful tool, she argues, since it re-focuses research into young people's health towards social processes and interactions, and away from individual risk behaviour, like smoking. Once this focus is established, however, the limitations of the concept become apparent. For example, due to its lack of attention to gender, ethnicity, socio-economic inequalities and cultural change, Morrow finds that 'social capital' is too simplistic to capture difference in feeling and experience among the young people she interviewed; nor can it grasp the mismatch

between the ways young people see themselves, and the ways adults see them. If the potential of social capital, in mainstream approaches, lies in its strategic focus on social processes, feminist critiques of the concept illustrate that its downfall inevitably lies in its inability to span the wider contexts of social and political life.

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Social Capital and Feminist Critique

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Social capital is no golden goose or magic bullet (Halpern 1999). Critical social researchers have amply demonstrated in recent years that it is context specific; that it is neither inherently good, nor inherently bad; that it is not a unitary concept, but an amalgam of very different processes; and that many of the empirical observations that appear to demonstrate the positive benefits of denser and more frequent network activity, reflect tautological definitions and circular reasoning (Foley and Edwards 1999; Woolcock 1998; Stolle 2003; Baron et al. 2000). At the margins of the debate, too, feminists have pointed out how gender has been air-brushed out of discussion of social capital (O'Neill and Gidengill 2004).

For all that, this paper stresses how many of the basic ideas behind social capital reflect feminist concerns with the ethic of care and feminist criticisms of traditional neo-classical economics (Nelson 1996, Blaxter and Hughes 2000, Molyneux 2002). Furthermore, it is argued, social capital, properly defined, can help show how gendered structures of power are reproduced and how they may also be challenged. In that social capital can sometimes furnish women with a degree of power, as women, and as poor people, the question of where and how it is possible to mobilise such power should be of concern to feminists. But just as social capital theorists have ignored gender, feminists have until recently generally avoided discussion of social capital (Lowndes 2004, Kovalainen 2004).

Hilary Wainwright, in researching the development of New Deal for Communities (NDC) in Britain, came upon a dispute in East Manchester that neatly encapsulates the argument of this paper (Wainwright 2003). The local bowling club, which operated in this highly deprived area as a close knit 'male fraternity' for older men, wanted the council to build a six foot high fence to protect the bowling green from children and dogs. Previously the bowlers would have had their way. Manchester's leisure policy was summed up by council official as: 'we are happy if the bowlers are happy'. This reflected the close relationship between the Leisure Department and the powerful North West Bowls Council. In the event, the residents, led by local women who had build up social capital through long local association, bolstered by space and time provided by the NDC, were able to force the council to make the green and its hut accessible for all residents - including providing taster courses and open days for local youth - and to grow a low hedge rather than a fence. Getting a hedge rather than a fence may seem trivial, a sop, but it was a challenge that increased the women's self esteem and ability to press for wider changes from the council. The story could have been told, as most social capital theorists do, without gender, and indeed most people would assume that English bowls was not a site of gender conflict, but that would be to lose some critical aspects of social capital.

The points I want to draw from this example are

1. that the ability of the women to challenge the status quo was based on a solidaristic social network, which had been strengthened by the investment of the NDC. Characterising such a network as 'social capital' helps acknowledge the value women put on their sense of belonging and in highlighting the fact that investment - much of it public - was required to sustain such a network.
2. That the women used their social capital to provide resources for the wider community. A highly individualistic form of analysis might conceptualise this as exploitation; it is probably more helpful to regard it as an extension of an ethic of care beyond the family, and an illustration of how social capital is gendered, with both positive and negative connotations. In

- place of an individualistic framework, a more gendered approach to social capital would emphasise connectivity and the social structuring of individual wants and desires.
3. That the men used their social capital to exclude; to maintain the status quo while women - in this case - used it to challenge the status quo; more generally that social capital reflects an interplay between exclusion and inclusion sometimes along gender lines, sometimes across them.
 4. That social capital develops from collective experience and on that basis can be transformative, realising forms of collective agency. Just as physical capital is transformed and financial capital is accumulated as it is utilised, so social capital can be characterised as a process in which alternative values and goals may be developed and the power to effect change may be accumulated, depending on the wider context and circumstances.

The underlying argument of the paper is that there is an important gap between the potential of treating social networks, generalized trust and reciprocal values as forms of capital and the 'mainstream' Anglo-American literature and research on social capital. Central to gap between the potential and the actual is the failure of much of that social capital literature to consider relations of power both at the macro level and the micro, household level and the failure to take on diversity of interests, of values and of resources in a systematic way (Lin 2001, Baron 2000). The gap reflects the wider political context: social capital post-Bourdieu achieved prominence because it appears to provide unthreatening solutions to the problems created by market competition, solutions that do not undermine competition, or existing structures of power. Social capital sold itself as dealing with problems of deprivation and social cohesion, not inequalities of class, race or gender and therefore needs rethinking from a feminist perspective.

The designation of personal relationships, values, trust and reciprocity as 'capital' cannot be regarded as neutral, given the wider political context, but it is not necessarily sinister. Bebbington et al. (2004) saw the terminology as a way of getting bottom-up, everyday issues on to the agenda of those who can deploy vast resources: speaking to power in terms it understands. Such a pragmatic view has its limitations and opens up the danger that everything is reduced to economic calculus, and that financial capital is treated as just one form of capital amongst many. Certainly the proliferation of forms of capital is beginning to empty the term of any specific meaning.

While investment in social capital is rarely deliberative, the analogy with financial and physical capital helps us to recognise that social capital is not given – that resources can be invested and conditions created that can expand social capital and thereby enhance the power of individuals and groups to act in their own interests. By analogy, power can also be accumulated through the deployment of such capital. Arguing thus, I operate within the framework established by Bourdieu (1986), but see social capital as potentially constitutive of various nodes of power, not just that of the dominant social class.

The metaphor of social capital as capital ought to highlight how it can be depleted or destroyed where the conditions and resources needed for its development are absent, or denied (Mayer 2003). As with all other forms of capital there are issues of access, mirroring concepts of ownership, over which conflict can ensue. Though it is possible to consider social capital formation as a system of exploitation, especially of domestic labour, it is probably more helpful to see social capital as the social relations of inclusion and exclusion, in which the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are in constant flux.

The paper follows the points drawn from the East Manchester example, discussing them under five heads: Social capital as a valued resource and site for public investment; Social capital, trust, connectivity and the work of women; Social capital and rational individual agency; Social capital as gendered: bridging, linking and bonding; and Social capital as process. Within this framework the potentially positive contribution of the concept of social capital is discussed and the divergence between that potential and the reality analysed. The value of the distinctions between bonding and bridging on

the one hand, and bonding and linking social capital on the other, is considered in the context of the possible transformative qualities of social capital, followed by a sketching out of an alternative form of categorisation. The argument advanced is that gender is a very useful lens through which to view the concept of social capital as currently deployed within the Anglo-American literature, for its silences and gaps, but that it also could help rescue the concept for a more progressive form of politics.

Social capital as valued resource and site for public investment

In principle treating social capital as a valued resource resonates with the critical green and feminist discourses on the measurement of welfare and well being. In line with Sen's capabilities approach to evaluating economic change, it carries with it the recognition that well-being reflects social as well as material resources (Sen 1985). This is reflected in the World Bank's shift away from an exclusively top-down structural adjustment perspective towards a supposedly bottom-up approach (Bebbington et al. 2004).

Of course the new interest in bottom-up processes can serve as a means of legitimating cuts in welfare spending (Gamarnikow and Green 1999, Fevre 2000, Mayer 2003). But it need not. It can sometimes have the 'East Manchester' effect, of helping galvanise a community into effective resistance to any such cuts. At the basic level the development of social capital requires resources of time and space, the existence of safe, accessible public space, and the social and physical means of on-going, repeated communication. These require appropriate public investments and resources: in local schools, community centres, parks, local policing, adult education, even local post offices. The concept of social capital can therefore be deployed to help people defend and enhance such public goods in the face of narrow financial imperatives. Bo Rothstein (2001) makes clear that the high welfare statism of Sweden is not a bar to associational activity, and Putnam does not dissent from this view (Putnam 2002). Welfare expenditure and voluntary activity in Sweden are both higher than in the USA: there is no reason therefore to assume that the one 'crowds out' the other. Rather, employing the language of resources and investment makes clear how strong, resilient social capital rests on a bed of social and private investment. It may feel spontaneous and no more than the unintended consequences of social interaction, but that is taking for granted what should be analysed.

This is not to say that all local state activity furnishes appropriate resources. Indeed Mayer warns that: 'urban disadvantaged groups are transformed from social movement actors demanding recognition of their social rights into social capitalists whose belonging is conditional on mobilising the only resources they have as forms of capital' (2003:125). The sense that systems of partnership in British urban regeneration strategies sap energies and distort community ends, is all too evident (Taylor 2000, Smith 2001, Wainwright 2003, North and Bruegel 2001). The shaping of the resource package, as in Wainwright's example, is the critical issue. The New Deal for Communities in East Manchester estates was constructed on years of experience by tenants groups and other local activists, as well as years of criticism by urban analysts, of the limitations of 'integrationalist' participatory models which only provided formal access to existing structures of power, rather than the resources to challenge that power. In East Manchester having got themselves a place to meet and positions of power within the NDC, local women were able to redistribute access to the bowling hut towards those they deemed to be in greater need, namely the young. This in turn should have provided young people with a base on which to develop their own social capital. The form of state policy - the insistence, at the national level, that NDC is community led - provided the leverage. But it was only effective when there was already a bedrock of local linkages and experience - a rooted history - which could be drawn on.

So state structures can enhance social capital in the form of material provision and as structures which promote co-operative and democratic values (Rothstein and Stolle 2003), where an increasingly individualistic, consumerist ethic and 'choice agenda' in the provision of services will tend to undermine

the development of social capital. On the other hand excessively bureaucratic and paternalistic procedures can be said to 'crowd out' the development of civic society and social capital (Ostrom and Ahn 2001): to counterpoise social capital to state provision, either positively or negatively, is then far too simplistic.

The difficulty comes when the discourse of state policy pushes the metaphor of social capital beyond its limits. Social capital then becomes a quantitative resource, as in Mayer's analysis (2003), commensurate and substitutable with other forms of capital. Instead of being valued for themselves, women's community networks are only then valued insofar as they can demonstrate quantifiable returns, greater than other forms of investment to society, or LETS schemes are treated as failures for not opening up paid employment to people.

It is in the demands of policy makers for some kind of bottom line, and the willingness of social scientists to promise the measurement technology, that the gap between the potential of the concept – of acknowledging the wider importance of seemingly everyday, mundane interactions – and a reductive practice widens. The problem derives from the tendency of economists to allow slippage between the use of metaphor towards the literal, and further to the normative, from 'as if' to 'is' and 'ought'. This point, as feminist and other critiques of neo-classical economics have stressed (McCloskey 1990), operates across the board. The tendency to reductionism reflects then a far broader attempt to substitute technical procedures for what are political choices.

The argument of this paper is, however, that the concept of social capital is much more critical of standard economic analysis than is evident on first glance. In principle, at least, it highlights the importance of connection and interaction, the qualitative rather than quantitative, very much in line with feminist critiques of economic theorising and the core model of the rational autonomous decision maker. While the metaphor of capital might be designed to conjure up a picture of rational calculus of measurable returns by individual agents, in practice it rests on an under socialised view of market relations. I address this question by linking the role of women in providing the foundations of much social capital in the form of generalised trust, with a discussion of the limitations of a rigid conceptual separation between the market and the domestic sphere.

Social capital, trust, connectivity and the work of women

In principle the concept social capital derives from an economic sociology in which the market is analysed as a social, rather than a natural formation, in which the economy is in no sense prior to the social. Recognition of the way relations of trust underlie market processes should allow the value of women's time spent in creating social networks and relations of trust, both with and beyond the home to be better acknowledged. Once the neo-classical textbook picture of instantaneous transactions is dispensed with and hence endemic uncertainty recognised (Danby 2002), cultural capital embodied in non-written and often non-verbal communication becomes critical because it is impossible to specify all elements of a contract in advance. This is reflected in the practice of face-to-face interviews and the sense that what matters is who you know, not just what you know, but it goes far wider, into relations between workers, in the pseudo relationships of customer care and the associated emotional labour. The importance of trust to the functioning of the economy is increasingly conceded (Arrow 2000, Fukuyama 1995), though the implications are not agreed.

But where does trust derive from? Putnam (2000), famously, sees it as stemming from interactions in formal associations, but here gender-blindness really does undermine the understanding of social capital. Stolle (2003) and others make a critical distinction between generalized and particularistic trust. Unlike Putnam, Stolle sees no reason to assume that trust between members of associations spills over into trust and tolerance of others. Rather any statistical association between association membership and levels of expressed trust can be explained by a tendency of those who are trusting (outward going

and tolerant) to join associations more readily than those who hold different attitudes. She quotes research which showed that civic attitudes were not more developed amongst those that were active, as against passive members of associations. Analysis of the British Household Survey Panel (BHPS) in Britain yields similar results. Activists in organizations no more believed that 'people in general can be trusted' than did ordinary members, nor did membership of associations have any impact on change in levels of trust year on year. The BHPS data shows that generalized trust relates to education, age and sex and to immediate social situation: students, local authority tenants, the unskilled and the anxious recorded far lower than average levels of trust (Bruegel 2005). However far answers to such questions on trust reflect people's immediate situation, we can accept the arguments of Stolle and others that the capacity for generalized trust is developed through socialization and that interactions in associations generally only foster particularistic forms of trust.

Too often this argument takes on a communitarian spin – that traditional gender differentiated forms of family and community are the only ways to generate the necessary social capital (Smith 2001). Aside from writing the normative into the actual, this argument ignores the fact that the traditional forms of mutuality and trust were built upon high, rather than low, levels of gender differentiation; the cost was high gender inequalities, producing a highly gendered and unequal form of community and a rather limited form of co-operation and tolerance.

The recognition of women's domestic labour as the 'hidden element' holding the economy together (Gardiner 1997), and the fact that women spend a disproportionate amount of their time on 'kinwork' maintaining and smoothing ties within both their families and those of their partners (Rosenthal 1985), does not imply that this should be the province of parents alone or of one parent in particular. Indeed Coleman, drawing on the example of J. S. Mill, actually puts emphasis on the time fathers spend with children (Coleman 1988). While this automatically and unfairly defines lone mothers as deficient, it also suggests that the traditional single breadwinner family might provide a poorer foundation for the development of generalized trust, as against more egalitarian family forms.

Whether children are imbued with co-operative values, empathy and understanding of others and a genuine recognition of mutuality will depend, as Winter (2000) emphasises, on the quality and form of relationships within the family, not simply on the time spent with children as Coleman implied. It will also depend on time spent beyond the immediate family. In that, as in East Manchester, much of community organizing done by women is with the explicit goal of benefiting young or old people within that community (Gittell 2000, Lloyd 2003), it provides for a wider form of socialization into co-operative values.

Social capital and rational individual agency

Putnam's limited interest in socialization as a bedrock of social capital and of values of co-operation mirrors the concept of an autonomous rational individual born, in effect, with a complete map of preferences of mainstream economics. Feminist critiques show that such a model is far from genderless, but rather poses 'male' rationality against 'female' intuition and empathy (Nelson 1996).

Even diehard neo-classical economists accept that this is a model that abstracts from reality; that tastes come from somewhere, that market relations presume social relations of trust and organizational forms like firms and households. But the tendency is always towards methodological individualism, in which the associations, organizations and the development of trust are modelled as outcomes of rational individual decisions, albeit in situations of limited information and acknowledged inter-dependence and potential altruism.

In this way mainstream economics contains the challenge that social capital could represent. The social is simply subsumed within the traditional framework as an aspect of the imperialism of mainstream economics (Fine 2000). A further aspect of the gap between the potential of social capital and its current employment is thereby opened up: in the dominance of methodological individualistic analysis of social capital. Instead of looking at social movements, or forms of collective agency, the social, particularly in Putnam's work, tends to be written as the aggregation of genderless individuals in some geographical space or in some civic association. Thus the power that white men may gain as men through the exclusive white male clubs - the Elks, the Moose, Lions and Knights of Columbus - that he takes as exemplars of social capital (Servon 2003) is ignored. The issue is not that women's associations are forgotten, but the power that associations can wield tends to be ignored in the reduction to what is essentially a genderless individualistic analysis.

It is useful then to examine the concept of the individual further. Recognizing humans as social, connected beings entails the sense that what is desired and valued depends fundamentally on relations with others and how each is seen, understood and communicated with. This makes the idea of each person evaluating what to do on solely the basis of some individual set of preferences highly unlikely. Mainstream economics indeed rides both horses. Decisions are often seen as those of households or firms, or other collective agencies, so that what people want is intrinsically bound up with what others want, but the model of the autonomous individual decision maker remains unquestioned. If individual wants were not socially constituted, the notion of social capital as residing in shared norms and co-operative values across a group would be devoid of meaning.

While social capital is a resource which people call on, in calling on it their sense of themselves and what is acceptable develops and with it the preferences they are able to articulate. Social capital is then about connectedness, co-operation and shared values that can occur across many different groups, rather than being about adherence to traditional family values as implied in the more communitarian elements of the literature. What women often bring to political movements is a consciousness of this as process, when such movements tend to short-circuit this in over-emphasising the communality of formal goals and the espousal of seemingly common interests (Rowbotham 1989).

While the community involvement of women in low income areas maybe riddled with conflict, intolerance and competitiveness they still epitomize the kind of interactions that build social capital. It arises out of the specific context of prior collective identification and common values and, as is discussed below, of forms of exclusion as well as inclusion and generally reflects a long term history of common identification and habitus. Because it becomes taken-for-granted it is not necessarily reflected in the immediate degree of social interaction between the women, and is not easily analysed in a methodologically individualistic quantitative framework.

Social capital as gendered

The capital metaphor should help to recognize that the accumulation of social capital of one group may not be to the advantage of others (Montgomery 2000): 'closure, the very social structure that begets social capital also excludes entire groups' (Portes and Landolt 1996:19). As with financial capital, it is not a question of a zero sum in which what one group has necessarily reduces what another has - the ability of some to accumulate both types of capital can have both positive and negative effects on others. The bounded form of social capital nevertheless provides differential access to hierarchies of influence much in the way differential ownership of financial capital does. So the impact of women's community organization tends to get restricted to system maintenance, keeping heads above water, rather than effecting change in the underlying circumstances of the community, partly because women tend to get represented by men the higher 'up' the system one goes (Lowndes 2004, Taylor 2004).

The concept of social capital nevertheless provides a basis for understanding the deployment of gendered power. This is true both of the way social capital is used to exclude and to delineate separate spheres, even today, and of the way women have tended to sustain themselves in the face of male exclusion of all kinds, by building their own networks within the locality. For example women's networks serve to enable women in Africa to pool their resources and protect savings from their husbands (Tripp 1992). At a basic level, too, Columbian women flower growers have been found more able to resist sexual violence and to find a negotiated solution with their partners where they can call upon social capital, developed in this case through outside employment (Friedemann-Sanchez 2004).

Networks are no more autonomous than individuals; they are built and develop in specific contexts, often in reaction to external threat and external power. Out of their enforced domesticity and the conception of the responsibilities that went with that, women built community ties, pushing private domestic relations of empathy, care and connection beyond the home. Here the failure of the concept to live up to its potential rests in the unwillingness to recognize that social capital - of whatever form - is built on particularistic concerns and form of trust; that inclusion generates exclusion, even if that, in turn, provides the basis for the development of social capital amongst the excluded. Indeed the more extreme the isolation of a group, the stronger the bonds that are likely to develop within it (Gaventa 1979).

The idea that social networks underlie gender segmentation is not new - it is in fact built into the literature on the twentieth century family form and explicit in Bott's (1971) link between joint and segregated networks and differentiated gender roles. Bott wrote of course of segregated networks and roles as if they were on their last legs in London in the 1950s, but the point that gender identities are socially reproduced by interaction in networks still holds, even if we can point to multiple gender identities. Smith-Louvin and McPherson (1993) argue that by inhabiting different social worlds and benefiting from different information flows, initial differences in gender orientations, such as those theorized by Chodorow (1978), accumulate. If we add the dimension of norms and values, systems of co-operation and trust, shared preferences can be seen to develop into highly gendered forms of social capital, with bonds that can be difficult to bridge - as almost all the literature on men and women crossing the gender divide in jobs will attest. Though marriage and partnerships obviously involve some bridging social capital, one should not assume that social capital is a shared resource within a unitary household.

Indeed male resistance to female entry into their areas, however economic it may be at root, is all too frequently expressed in terms that women will disrupt their fraternity, and sense of themselves (Cockburn 1985). Feminists have long since noted that 'old boys' networks' are gendered as well as classed. Furthermore, every process of desegregation seems to set in train a process of re-segregation (Reskin and Roos 1990). While these are generally on traditional gender lines, they also reflect the tendency of women to network so as to establish themselves in the alien male cultures. The clustering that is observable - for example women builders are largely restricted to women's building co-operatives - reflects both exclusion and responses to it, in a way that illustrates the dual nature of social capital, as inclusionary and exclusionary.

This point can be taken further to understand the potential sources of power that social capital and kinwork provide women excluded in other ways. As compared with isolated Pakistani women in British cities, whose social capital, has been damaged by migration, as Werbner (1988) pointed out long ago, those that remain in their villages are able to make good use of networks. More generally Phizacklea and Ram (1996) showed that the use of networks to build up ethnic minority businesses was as much a response to expulsion from manufacturing jobs and exclusion from other forms of employment, as some in-born entrepreneurial instinct or 'natural' swarming within ethnic groups.

Consciousness raising groups in the early years of the women's movement also illustrate this double form of social capital: gaining strength from their new base excluding men, building links and

understandings that have sustained individuals over the years, and taking what were hitherto personal, individual problems of domestic violence and sexual abuse, eventually, into the political arena. The groups were built on pre-existing links and were typically exclusionary in ethnicity and class, but they collectively sought to change norms and behaviour and women's sense of their own identity. Indeed it is possible to see the fragmentation and quiescence of the second wave feminist movement as a reflecting such change (Bagguley 2002), which tempered the most obvious forms of exclusion of women as women.

The women's movement then forms an example of the exclusionary/inclusionary dialectic of social capital. In specific circumstances it proved possible to overcome wider exclusion by building out from new, relatively exclusionary bonds. Similarly bonding within ethnic minorities can develop from a defensive response to forms of exclusion, to powerful systems of exclusion themselves and the balkanization of economic activities into different ethnic territories (Waldinger 2003) which may in the right circumstances overcome the initial exclusion and create very different opportunity structures for later generations.

Bridging, linking and bonding: social capital as process

Such examples illustrate a fourth potential advantage the metaphor of social capital provides. That is in the recognition that capital can accumulate and be transformative (Hean et al. 2002) in specific circumstances. The interaction between communication, involvement, the development of trust and common values, on which broader involvement can be built, makes it a useful way of looking at social movements, not just in their growth, but in their stagnation and destruction. Putnam downplays social movements as carriers of social capital, dismissing them as marginal and partisan. The growth of the anti-war movement in the United States in recent years suggests that marginality can be short term; the charge of partisanship can, of course, be applied to almost every association or local grouping.

Here I want to develop two related arguments: firstly that social capital 'out there' cannot be neatly divided into bonding, bridging or linking forms - the division neglects the variety of dimensions of difference that might be bridged. Social interactions can be bonding, bridging and linking at one and the same time, and be homogenous with regard to one dimension like locality, but heterogeneous, that is bridging, with regard to others like gender and age. The problem becomes clear when the distinction is applied to the family, which is at once a system of bonded social capital and of bridging across age and gender and, sometimes, class, occupational status and ethnicity.

The second problem reflects the tendency of linking social capital in particular to evoke a singular form of inclusion; that is inclusion on the terms of those who hold power. This does not adequately allow for divergent interests, tending to characterize social solidarity as the opening up of ladders of upward mobility to individuals or small groups, rather than considering the way diverse ideas, practices and values might be allowed to flourish. The critical distinction is not then between those who have and those who do not have links 'up' the system, but whether such links tend to define the limits of what such movements can achieve.

While bonding can be inward looking, conservative and limiting of individual expressions of difference, in breaking down individual isolation, it can be a stepping stone to change. Most social movements start around common values amongst relatively homogenous people and derive some strength from the discovery of communality - for example amongst people with disabilities (Crow 2004). In this process, they build social capital and particularistic trust which can enable those involved to look beyond the immediate into adopting a more political outlook. Social movements refer constantly to the need to build alliances and link up, transforming bonded groups into something more effective (Wainwright 2003). But the concept of linking social capital, as a narrow link in a long chain, is far from unproblematic.

In spreading out, as women gained confidence, from consciousness raising groups into networking within various nodes of power: political parties, the trades union movement, professional associations, education and the media, women certainly built on the links they could make between their feminist concerns and their 'day jobs', but not without costs and tensions. As with community groups, links to political power tend to take the form of individuals forging new careers, with and through networks, but increasingly as distant from 'those on the ground' (Phillips 1995). This may happen less amongst women, as women are 'chilled out' by fear of the isolation and personal vulnerability of those who take positions of power (Cockburn 1991), and hence community theorists argue that female forms of local collective organisation are less prone to the tendency of activists to move on and up, dissipating the social capital (McCulloch 1997). Nevertheless the notion of linking social capital is far from unproblematic, since the values and perspectives of most individuals who can broker power will change with the milieu they inhabit. Although it is possible to view the mainstreaming of feminist demands (for nurseries, or protection from sexual assault) as an important example of how social movements built up through bonding social capital can, eventually, help transform hegemonic values, it is also true that 'mainstreaming' goes both ways; tempering demands and language to the acceptable and siphoning off of energy away from grass-roots activity.

To turn to the issue of varieties of difference, of multiple cross-cutting identities, the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital is relatively unhelpful. In moving beyond the family, to co-operate in local associations of women, pooling savings, or childcare needs, women might be said to be shifting from inward looking bonds to bridging forms of social capital, alternatively they could be said to be operating on the basis of their shared experiences of women-hood, in place of dependency on their fathers or husbands, or the bridges across gender and family background that marriage ties offer. When families invoke systems of social capital to keep young people in line (Bruegel and Warren 2003), particularly once they have migrated away from home (Silvey and Elmhirst 2003), they are using the bonds of local origin and shared values of parenthood to bridge across place in a bid to tie their young people within a given value system. What is bonding from one perspective is bridging from another.

In practice the distinction between bonding and bridging has been developed largely within a framework that looks to individual social mobility to redress inequalities and deprivation. Taking his cue from Granovetter (1995), who recognises that strong systems of family obligation limit possible avenues of individual advancement, Putnam takes associations to offer better opportunities for 'bridging' than local or ethnic social capital. The implication here is that individual social advancement is only the question at issue and that such advantages can be generalised. Weak ties and bridging social capital will however only furnish improved opportunities where they remain exclusive. If every young black in Brixton can call on a mentor in the City, the value of that tie in getting a job is much more limited than where such links are rare. Nor does it follow that where individual advancement arises from such contacts that it acts well as a positive model built upon a rights agenda, that is the effective outlawing of indirect as well as direct discrimination.

Conclusion

Depending on wider circumstance, bonding social capital can sometimes form the base for confident bridging between groups and for processes of politicisation, i.e. 'linking', even if bonding is more immediately concerned to protect boundaries and limit individual out-movement. In some situations 'bonded' communities and social movements can also develop an effective power base, without being immediately dependent on opportunities offered to them 'from above'. After all, the most powerful groups in society are not heterogeneous, weakly linked groups with varied value orientations, but quite cohesive, homogenous groups who have forged a common interest. Furthermore, as I have argued, bridging and linking processes of social capital are also exclusionary in some dimensions; as with all

capital, value rests on scarcity and dispossession, even if social capital (like financial capital) expands with deployment.

From this we can conclude that the critical distinction to develop relates to the power that social capital brings to different groups, rather than the degree of homogeneity and heterogeneity of the groups themselves. As Lin (2001) notes, the status of those with whom you network matters. So the ability to bridge 'upwards' is useful for any individual: if you can get amongst the A-list celebrities, you are doing well, but those who define what counts as A-list and what favours involvement hold far more durable power (Bourdieu 1986).

Rather than focusing on internal relations of bonding, bridging or linking, a more feminist approach should be developed from Bourdieu to differentiate social capital by the degree of hegemonic and/or transformative power embodied in it, recognising social capital as a 'bottom-up' process in which woman, as mothers and carers, are often centrally involved. Thus social capital as a collective survival mechanism would lie at the bottom of a hierarchy, and hegemonic social capital embodied in global corporations and their related institutions would lie at the top, with solidaristic social movements that transcend boundaries lying somewhere in between.

At base, it is reasonably easy to identify social capital as an important element in survival strategies: lacking the bonds of reciprocity and solidarity people can, and do, fall 'through the net'. The greater the external resources available through the market or through government policy, the less critical such social capital may be to physical survival, but the survival of a sense of identity and a sense of place, of meaning, will always remain important. Where individuals opt out, when they have the chance to move on and beyond the confines of a community of survival, they threaten that social capital, even if they send remittances and tokens of care 'back home'. Sometimes when the price of survival is too great, in terms of limiting individual room for manoeuvre, social survival is not possible, or even desirable. But the notion that survival in its narrow and fuller sense reflects the ability of the group to deploy social capital seems clear. Having social capital for survival does not however imply having the power to alter the context in which broad threats to survival continually reoccur.

Beyond that, reflecting perhaps the sense of a class-for-itself, not just in-itself, social capital can be seen as the basis for effective social and political movements, whether locally based or not. Social capital in this form, is potentially constitutive of collective agency, even if only in the form of resistance to change or incorporation. Here, as I have tried to suggest, international women's movements both of the early and late twentieth centuries can be identified as models; internal connections and relations were important and seen to be important to the development of an effective movement, which sought, and gained, wider social and political change. Such movements, unlike communities of survival, express conflicting interests and often find themselves in conflict with one another, whether in competing for limited resources or as ideologically opposed social movements. They develop and deploy social capital in the process of organising, forging common values and transforming individual perspectives about the possibilities of change – often, no doubt dashing simplistic ideas of how to foster change. They have transformative potential not, usually, in the sense of seeking to 'overthrow' the existing system but in the sense of seeking widespread reforms, or blocking any such reforms. Their goals obviously vary, as will the extent to which they seek to 'bridge' and 'link' with others in pursuing their goals, but the key point of differentiation is that they seek to capitalise on their potential power, which communities that use social capital as a mechanism of survival largely lack. In this sense there is social capital and social capital, relating to the ability to mobilise for wider change.

Lastly there is the social capital Bourdieu identifies. This is essentially the ability to draw together all forms of capital to structure the hegemonic framework within which others operate. In many ways this is beyond collective agency, written as habitus rather than as active coherent organisation. Just as social movements compete for resources and conflict politically so do different elements of the elite. Different

corporations or what used to be called 'fractions of capital' are manifestly in conflict with one another, but through cultural and social capital a coherence is forged, system maintenance, if you like, at a higher level.

This differentiation of forms of social capital reflects the spatial patterns of the bonding/bridging/linking distinction, power being associated with a greater spatial range of influence, from the home environment right up to the global. Where the two schemas differ most significantly is in the treatment of difference, homogeneity and power. Only by ignoring gender and age (and to some degree class) is bonding seen to be rooted in 'homogenous' populations. Only by treating exclusion as the exception rather than the rule and ignoring social capital as a response to, and resistance from, such exclusion are bridging and linking able to be characterised as mechanisms for building social solidarity across a hugely unequal terrain. On both these points feminist analysis helps redefine social capital as part of a system of competing interests and values within a multidimensional space of difference, framed by large inequalities of power.

The East Manchester example and other instances of women's local collective agency suggest that Mayer's (2003) and Taylor's (2004) pessimistic readings of the discourse of social capital may be too one-sided. Certainly the fault-lines between the potential of social capital as mode of analysis and the practice of its employment in social policy need to be addressed. By differentiating social capital according to its mobilising power we can begin to address the many gaps identified in the paper: most obviously the decontextualisation from power relations, and more specifically the tendency - despite the rhetoric - to view social capital as an instrument of top-down policy, of inclusion on the terms of the included. By linking social capital more firmly with the analysis of social movements and collective agency, some of the limits of an economic individual utility maximising approach can be addressed, while recognising that individuals vary in the extent to which they explicitly and consciously draw on social capital. A critical approach to social movements and collective agency that focuses on difference and the difficulty of forging collectivity should help to address the failings of unitary, undifferentiated communitarian approaches to social capital and collective values. Here again the women's movement has much to offer such an understanding. Lastly, the threefold differentiation of forms of social capital sketched out here attempts to draw on the generative and transformative aspects of the analogy with physical and financial capital, much of which is neglected in the literature. It is obviously not a one-way process, and certainly not one in which conflicts of interest and values are magically overcome, but it attempts to address the thorny question of how difference can be acknowledged and reworked through the development and deployment of social capital, drawing on the way gender differences and inequalities have been reworked in social interaction at the local, familial, level as well as at the national and trans-national levels over the last thirty years.

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Feminist Citizenship Theory: An Alternative Perspective on Understanding Women's Social and Political Lives

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Introduction

This paper is not about social capital as such. Instead, it uses feminist citizenship theory as an alternative perspective on the theme of understanding women's social and political life. Insofar as the paper engages with the concept of social capital, it does so in relation to the version that is more dominant today in public debate: that which is influenced by the work of Robert Putnam rather than by the writings of Pierre Bourdieu.¹

After a general discussion of the meanings of citizenship the paper will make the case for the importance of human agency to a feminist conceptualisation of citizenship. It will then focus on informal politics, which represent a vital expression of women's political agency. The final section will return to the question of agency specifically in relation to women in poverty. It will draw on an alternative literature, in particular the international development literature, to argue that the notion of 'resources', which is related to but broader than social capital, provides a useful language and framework for analysing how women in poverty exercise agency, particularly to 'get by'. The conclusion will return briefly to the question of social capital.

Meanings of citizenship

Citizenship is, of course, a highly contested concept. It is also a contextualised concept, so that its meanings vary according to social, political and cultural context and reflect different historical legacies. Although it is a Western concept and is associated with the global North, the discourse of citizenship, interpreted and sometimes transformed according to local context, has a growing salience for political movements in the global South. And a cross-national research group co-ordinated by the Institute of Development Studies is doing some really interesting research into the meanings of citizenship in different parts of the South.

Citizenship is at heart about membership and belonging. Traditionally it has been applied to membership of a national community, involving both the relationship between individuals and the state/nation and also the relationship between individual citizens. But contemporary citizenship theory emphasises its multi-tiered nature so that it can mean membership of a global or local, as well as national, community. And citizenship is expressed in local, national or global 'spaces and places' (Jones and Gaventa 2002: 19). Thus, for example, on the one hand the movement for global social justice could be said to represent a global citizenship community; on the other, research I have carried out with young people suggests that, for some, citizenship is about belonging to and participation in the local community (Lister et al. 2003).

Belonging has implications for identity, an aspect of citizenship that is taking on greater salience in the citizenship literature. Bryan Turner, for instance notes that citizenship confers not just a legal status but

¹ See, for instance, the Performance and Innovation Unit discussion paper, Social Capital, published in 2002.

also 'a particular cultural identity on individuals and groups'. He suggests that 'citizenship struggles in late twentieth century society are often about claims to cultural identity and cultural history. These struggles have been about sexual identity, gay rights, gender equality and aboriginality [to which I would add disability]. Most debates about citizenship in contemporary political theory' he adds 'are, as a result, about the question of contested collective identity in a context of radical pluralisation' (Turner 1997: 8).

Thus the politics of citizenship has increasingly been conducted as a politics of recognition, in which claims are made for cultural rights of recognition and representation, and feminism has played a crucial role in that politics. The challenge, articulated in particular by Nancy Fraser (1997, 2003), has been to integrate this politics of recognition with the more traditional politics of redistribution rather than to treat them as alternatives.

In T. H. Marshall's formulation, rights are a pivotal element of membership. Today the dominant political message is that of 'no rights without responsibilities' (Giddens 1998: 65). The nature of both rights and responsibilities and the relationship between the two is one of the most contested aspects of citizenship. From a feminist perspective the relative status accorded to paid work and unpaid care work as expressions of citizenship responsibility or obligation is a particular issue. However it is not so much this aspect of citizenship, i.e. citizenship as a status, that I focus on here, but citizenship as a practice – particularly a political (with a small 'p') practice. This meaning of citizenship provides a political edge that I think is lacking in more dominant contemporary articulations of social capital, which tend to equate it with social cohesion and which, typically, conflate very different kinds of activities as conducive to building social capital (Stolle with Lewis 2002).

Citizenship's potential political edge is most evident in feminist theorisations of citizenship that emphasise citizenship as participation. Rian Voet, for instance, argues that rights are a means to citizenship and it is the exercise of rights, especially in the political sphere, which is crucial to the full development of women's citizenship as part of what she calls an 'active and sex-equal citizenship' (1998: Ch. 11).

This position has been put most forcefully by Mary Dietz who advocates 'a vision of citizenship', which is 'expressly political and, more exactly, participatory and democratic'. In this vision, politics involves the 'collective and participatory engagement of citizens in the determination of the affairs of their community' and we conceive of ourselves as "'speakers of words and doers of deeds" mutually participating in the public realm'. She contends that it is only when active political participation is valued as an expression of citizenship that feminists will be able to claim a truly liberatory politics of their own' (Dietz 1987: 13-15).

Agency

One of the aims of Birte Siim's study of gender and citizenship is 'to contribute to shifting the focus of attention in feminist scholarship...to an analysis of the dynamic processes of women's participation in civil society and in public political life' (2000: 2). The sub-title of her book is *Politics and Agency in France, Britain and Denmark*. For Siim, like myself, agency lies at the heart of the theorisation and politics of women's citizenship. In the words of the Swedish political scientist Maud Eduards, agency embodies 'a transformative capacity', which has been vital to the development of women's citizenship (1994: 181). This is the case, even though that agency may still be constrained (to differing degrees reflecting other factors such as class, 'race' and age) by discriminatory political, economic and social institutions.

In my own book, I argue that to act as a citizen requires a sense of agency, the belief that one can act; acting as a citizen, especially collectively, in turn fosters that sense of agency (Lister 2003). Thus,

citizenship agency is not simply about the capacity to act and choose but it is also about a conscious capacity, which is important to the individual's self-identity. The development of a conscious sense of agency, at both the personal and the political level, is crucial to women's sense of themselves as full and active citizens on their own and in alliance with others, even if they do not themselves use a discourse of citizenship to describe that sense.

An important element here is self-esteem, defined by Susan James as 'a stable sense of one's own separate identity and a confidence that one is worthy to participate in political life' (1992: 60). Without it, it is difficult to speak in one's own voice and put forward one's own views in the polity. The importance of self-esteem and respect comes out in particular in the writings of both Black feminists and disabled feminists and is emphasised also by women with experience of poverty. As I will argue below, small scale political action at the neighbourhood level can be important in helping to strengthen women's self-esteem, particularly in the case of disadvantaged women.

More generally, citizenship as participation can be understood as an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship rights enable people to exercise their agency as citizens. In turn, this agency is deployed in an ongoing process of struggle to defend, reinterpret and extend a range of citizenship rights and to fight for the recognition of various marginalised groups as full citizens. Thus, for example, the disabled people's movement, which has characterised disability as the denial of full citizenship, is fighting for both their rights and recognition as citizens.

Thinking about citizenship in this way is particularly important in challenging the construction of women (and especially 'minority group' women and women in poverty) as passive victims, while not losing sight of the structural and institutional constraints on their ability to exercise their agency and to act as citizens. However, I would not go as far as construing participation as an obligation, for to do so could be to create a measuring rod against which many women, in particular because of their domestic responsibilities, and other groups such as chronically sick, severely disabled or elderly frail people might fall short. In order to resolve this dilemma, I have suggested we should distinguish between two formulations: to be a citizen and to act as a citizen. To be a citizen, in the legal and sociological sense, means the enjoyment of the rights of citizenship necessary for agency and social and political participation. To act as a citizen involves fulfilling the potential of the status. Those who do not fulfil the potential do not cease to be citizens (Lister 2003).

Informal politics

Having talked in the abstract about women's citizenship and agency, I want to apply what I have said to the more concrete example of informal politics. The notion of informal politics embraces both local community or neighbourhood based action and national/international social movements, though I will focus more on the local dimension as that is where social capital literature also tends to focus. It is a politics that is generated outside the formal structures of political parties and institutions, even though it may engage with those structures.

In the context of a discussion of women and social capital, it is perhaps worth dwelling on the significance of the two elements that make up the notion of informal politics i.e. 'politics' and 'informal'. From what I have read there seems to be a tendency in the social capital literature to lump together a variety of activities as conducive to building social capital. Thus, for example, membership of a sports club is treated the same as informal political action. While not wanting to propose hierarchies of action, from a citizenship perspective there is a particular quality associated with political action, rooted in the civic republican tradition's construction of the citizen as a political actor and of political activity as the key to citizenship. And political action is in essence about trying to achieve or prevent change, which could

be disruptive of social capital and the social cohesion with which it is often linked – a point to which I will return in the context of a discussion of diversity and social divisions.

The importance of the 'informal' tag lies in challenging civic republican's traditional narrow understanding of what constitutes citizenship politics (which is not to discount the importance of tackling the barriers to women's involvement in formal politics). It is rooted in feminism's redefinition of what constitutes 'the political' although I would argue that not all that is political is necessarily citizenship. I would still locate political citizenship in the public sphere but making clear that it cannot be divorced from what happens in the private sphere, which both shapes access to it and can be the proper object of citizenship struggles. In particular, the gendered division of labour and of time is critical here.

In fact, women's informal citizenship politics often takes place at the interstices of public and private. Women often move into public space to work with others, motivated by personal, domestic concerns, frequently but not necessarily affecting their children. As they express in the public arena needs and demands, which derive from their caring responsibilities, they are welding the private to the public. They are becoming active citizens in what Nancy Fraser (1987) has called the 'politics of needs interpretation', forging practices of 'everyday-life citizenship' (Joaquim 1998: 79). In Denmark, the term 'everyday makers' has been coined to refer to '(women) citizens actively engaged in politics in relation to local everyday life problems' (Siim 2000: 165). However, as Vivian Lowndes (2000) has pointed out, activities associated with care of children tend not to figure very large in mainstream social capital analysis.

An arena of women's citizenship

Having unpacked the idea of informal politics I want to look at how it constitutes an important arena for women's citizenship and discuss its significance both for individual women and for strengthening social capital; and then raise the challenge posed by the social divisions that exist within the category 'woman'.

The traditional conventional wisdom that women are less politically active than men reflects, in part, the narrow definition of the political, challenged by the notion of informal politics. In response, what amounts to an alternative feminist conventional wisdom has emerged: that women dominate in the political space of neighbourhood or community politics. However, it is not necessarily always called 'politics', even by those involved for whom formal politics may have become discredited.

Yet, on the face of it large-scale research into political participation does not support this alternative conventional wisdom. On the other hand, studies and more journalistic accounts, which start from the other end of looking at local community action itself, all tend to support the conclusion of a European study that 'women are often a driving force in local action' (Chanan 1992). I suspect that the disjunction arises from the fact that the kind of unstructured and fluid activism highlighted by more localised studies often escapes the net of even relatively broadly trawled research into political participation. Also, in-depth qualitative research can be better at catching such activism than quantitative surveys. This is exemplified by the qualitative study of young people's transitions to citizenship referred to earlier (Lister et al. 2003). This revealed a range of informal political actions among young people. Yet many of these were not identified in a question about such activities in a questionnaire they filled in at the outset. The disparity was particularly marked among the more economically marginalised.

The picture that emerges from a variety of more 'bottom up' accounts is that of a rich and inspiring nexus of citizenship-enhancing activities. A number of British studies have painted a vivid portrait of working-class women organising around issues of daily life, often unsupported by men. The pattern is evident in different configurations world-wide and among different groups of women. For example, in her study of Black women's organisations, Julia Sudbury (1998) uses an explicitly broad definition of

politics, rooted in Black women activists' 'everyday theorising', to highlight the extent and range of their political activity.

Northern Ireland provides a particularly telling example of the contrast between women's traditional invisibility and lack of power in formal politics and the force of their presence in working-class communities. The independent Opsahl Commission received many examples of how working-class women, both in women's groups and wider community groups, were working within and across communities, to improve conditions and in particular the opportunities open to young people. One witness, for instance, drew the Commission's attention to 'the phenomenal contribution of local women's groups in terms of keeping hope alive within and between divided communities' (Pollak 1993: 84). Cynthia Cockburn describes how Northern Irish women's community activism has 'signified politics with a small 'p' mobilizing and challenging big-P Politics as it is normally done', as well as transforming many women's lives (1998: 59-60; see also Roulston and Davies 2000).

Women are also playing an active role in what has been described as an emergent global civil society, in this case often making use of electronic communications. The UN summits of the 1990s demonstrated the strength of international women's organisations and lobbies. These global networks, nevertheless, need to remain rooted in local experiences. From the Southern hemisphere, Maria Suarez Toro explains that:

Because lobbying and advocacy at the international level are effective only insofar as they are grounded in the day-to-day experiences of women and reflective of the efforts of women's organizations working at local and national levels, grassroot groups must be recognized as critical components of the global movement (Suarez Toro 1995: 189-90).

Nourishing citizenship

Before arguing the significance of women's informal politics, some words of caution are in order, for I realise there is a danger of idealising women's community activism. As Marj Mayo (1994) has pointed out, often born of deprivation and disadvantage, such activism can sometimes be exhausting, dispiriting and burdensome.

Moreover, it is not necessarily always progressive in intent. I have in mind what happened in Paulsgrove a few years ago, which I found very troubling. It was perhaps an example of how social capital can be simultaneously built and destroyed when communities are divided. Residents (mainly women and children) of a disadvantaged estate carried out a series of, often violent, attacks on and demonstrations against anyone believed to be a paedophile. At one level, such action exemplifies what I am talking about: marginalised and powerless women emerged as effective actors on behalf of their children and 'the community'. Katrina Kessel, one of the leaders, said subsequently 'how else is anyone going to listen to a common person like me?...At least we were being listened to, and we got something done', and she maintained that 'looking out for our kids has helped bring people together' (The Observer, 4 February, 2001). Yet such action was taken with total disregard for the civil rights of those believed to be paedophiles, some of whom were forced to flee. So, when lines have to be drawn, I would argue that the denial of the citizenship of unpopular groups stands outside the bounds of genuine citizenship action, even though it may resemble that action and perform many of the same functions for the individual and (part of) the wider community.

At the community level, the contribution of women's political activism to the strengthening of 'social capital' can, as Vivien Lowndes (2000) has argued, all too easily be overlooked in formulations that ignore social capital's gendered dynamics and that foreground more male-dominated activities. An example is Mirza and Reay's theorisation of the implications for citizenship of their exploratory study of Black supplementary schools in London, mainly run by women. They argue that, through this work,

Black women act as 'collective transformative agents' to create a "'third space" of strategic engagement', disruptive of the public-private divide. In this 'third space', 'Black women educators' acts of belonging and sustenance of community demonstrate new and inclusive forms of "real citizenship" that deserve to be recognised' (2000: 59 & 70).

Such action can be transformative at the individual level also. It contributes to individual women's self-development as citizens, in a way that for many women can be more rewarding than engagement in formal politics, which can be experienced as more alienating than empowering. Involvement in informal community based politics can help to generate the confidence and sense of self-esteem, referred to earlier, needed to be an effective political citizen.

There are countless examples documented from a range of countries of the transformative impact on women of engagement in informal politics. To take one from England, Susan Hyatt has described how a group of women on a Bradford housing estate were transformed into confident national campaigners as a result of a campaign, started around the kitchen table, against the installation of water meters in their homes. She describes the process as 'accidental activism', through which 'women who previously did not see themselves as in any way political are becoming advocates for social change and are themselves changing in the process' (1992: 6).

The individual and collective impact of such practices underlines the importance of process as well as outcome. While it can be dispiriting if such political action does not achieve its objectives, the very process of working collectively for them can strengthen women's position as citizens.

Diversity and social divisions

A key issue in feminist citizenship theory is how to avoid replicating the false universalism of traditional citizenship theory. Whereas traditional citizenship theory ignored gender divisions in its construction of a male citizenship template, there is a danger of constructing a new female identikit citizen that ignores the differences between women that stem from social divisions such as 'race', class, disability and sexuality. Feminist citizenship theory has grappled with how to address such divisions and diversity of interests without falling into the traps created by divisive identity politics (Lister, forthcoming).

Feminist theorising around the politics of difference has attempted this through notions such as a 'politics of solidarity in difference'(Lister 2003) and a 'reflective solidarity' that requires both self-reflection and dialogue (Dean 1996). Nira Yuval Davis (1997, 1999) has developed the idea of a 'transversal politics', drawing on the work of a group of Italian feminists. She uses the image of "rooting" and "shifting" in which participants remain rooted in their own (multiple) identities and values but at the same time are willing to shift their views in dialogue with those subscribing to other identities and values.

This contrasts with a dominant strand in contemporary social capital theory which, in my reading of it, tends to equate strong social capital with what unites people in the interests of social cohesion. For instance, the report of the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey cites a definition of social capital as 'networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups' (Attwood et al. 2003: 5) and in more than one place brackets social capital with social cohesion.

It is, as Yuval-Davis herself concedes, easier to theorise than to practice transversal politics and there is a tendency to underestimate the obstacles faced by some groups, in particular those who are poor and economically marginalised, to even entering the dialogue. Nevertheless, there are examples that suggest it is possible, even if not easy. One is the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition which was established to contest the election to seats at the Northern Ireland peace talks. Through listening to and

respecting the voice of the other, women of different classes from Northern Ireland's two main communities have been able to work together. In a statement, which captures something of the essence of transversal politics, the Coalition observes that 'we have found that you learn more if you stand in other people's shoes. Our principles of inclusion, equality and human rights help us to do that'. Also, they claim to have created 'a comfortable space for those who have difficulty defining themselves in terms of the majority cultures' (NIWC undated: 12).

Elizabeth Porter writes that the Coalition has tried to find a middle ground between commonality and difference which she defines as a strong position that respects diversity, makes space for different forms of individuality, and seeks ground for commonality. The hard work that this has involved should not be underestimated:

Some women have had to make enormous personal journeys to shift their orientation in order to work as a coalition with women who are from disparate traditions. Sometimes, there has to be an agreement to differ and the emphasis then is on accommodation, flexibility, process, negotiation and workable solutions (Porter 1997: 87).

Resources

At neighbourhood level, women's informal politics is of particular significance in deprived areas. I want to pick up the theme of agency again in relation to the struggle of women, as the managers of poverty, to 'get by' and link that to the notion of 'resources' which is closely linked to but also broader than that of social capital.

In an influential *Journal of Social Policy* article, Michael Titterton 'emphasised 'the role of creative human agency' in coping with threats to personal welfare (1992: 1). He used the notion of unequally distributed coping resources – personal, social and material [to which we might add cultural] – as one factor in people's differential ability to cope with stressful circumstances such as poverty. The idea of people drawing on a range of resources to manage their lives can be found in both the psychological and sociological literature (Williams et al. 1999).

In the context of poverty, the international development literature has been particularly interesting in its use of the idea as part of the increasingly influential livelihoods approach. A livelihood is defined as 'the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living' (Chambers and Conway 1992: 7). The approach is seen as having opened up the space, including within households, for 'addressing in interdisciplinary and policy relevant terms, the multiple, fluid and often convoluted ways that people manage their lives' (Beall 2002: 83). People in poverty are characterized as 'managers of complex asset portfolios' (Moser 1998: 1). These portfolios comprise financial assets, personal assets (including skills, knowledge and health), social assets (including social networks of different kinds), natural assets (derived from the natural environment) and both collective and individual physical assets (including the infrastructure and household goods).

They are indeed frequently represented as different forms of 'capital'. However, more critical exponents of the livelihoods approach are wary of reducing social relations to the economic language of 'assets' and 'capital'. An alternative formulation proposes 'a wide conception of the resources that people need to access in the process of composing a livelihood' (Bebbington 1999, cited in Beall 2002: 72, Beall's emphasis). This returns us to the more neutral idea of 'resources', inserts the idea of 'composition' in place of 'management' and places emphasis on the issue of access. Access, in turn, opens up questions of economic, political and social structural context and the wider distribution of resources of various kinds. Attention to how people in poverty exercise agency to deploy the resources available to

them must not obscure the ways in which, over the life course, the more privileged are able to draw on their considerably greater resources to perpetuate their privilege.

Nevertheless, analysis of how women in poverty draw on different kinds of resources, including personal and social resources, to 'get by' on an inadequate income and also how they draw on such resources to attempt to 'get out' of poverty or to help their children get out of poverty helps to challenge the construction of them as passive victims without agency (Lister 2004). A process-oriented model such as that of livelihood composition also has the potential to make explicit the time resources used to transform other resources into livelihoods. As feminist poverty analysis has underlined, it is mainly women's time that is involved, with implications for their ability to be active political citizens.

Conclusion

Citizenship and social capital are not necessarily alternative concepts, as they are encapsulating different, if sometimes related, social phenomena. They can therefore complement each other, depending on how they are used – be it as an analytical or a political tool. Thus, for example, I have argued that women's informal politics as an expression of political citizenship can strengthen social capital. Conversely, women can draw on social resources or capital to strengthen their citizenship capacity.

Feminist citizenship theory more easily lends itself to an emphasis on diversity and difference and to more disruptive forms of action, challenging the status quo, for it is not linked to social cohesion in the same way that social capital frequently is. But both citizenship and social capital can be used in what Schuller, Baron and Field call, with reference to social capital, 'a blandly functionalist way' (2000: 35). Whichever concept we work with, it is to be hoped that a feminist analysis and politics will avoid such bland functionalism!

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Social Capital and Health: Children and Young People's Perspectives

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Background

Health promotion and public health specialists in the UK have recently been acknowledging that the ways in which individuals relate to wider communities have important effects on health and well-being. One way to explore this has been to develop the concept of 'social capital'. Social capital is seen as a community-level attribute, and consists of the existence of social and community networks; civic engagement; local identity and a sense of belonging and solidarity with other community members; and norms of trust and reciprocal help and support (Putnam 1993). The premise is that levels of 'social capital' in a community have an important effect on people's well-being. In the late 1990s, the Health Development Agency (formerly the Health Education Authority, the health promotion arm of the UK government Department of Health) commissioned a series of qualitative and quantitative research projects to explore and test this hypothesis. The concept of social capital has become a key element of many New Labour consultation documents and social policies emanating from different government departments, though this may not be explicitly stated, it is implicit in ideas about social exclusion and inclusion, social cohesion, and 'bottom up' community development.

My project examined how different components of 'social capital' might relate to the general well-being of children and young people. Health research with children and young people had tended to focus on individual risk behaviours, like drug abuse, cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption, while the social context of young people's everyday lives in relation to health and well-being has not been explored in detail. The research used qualitative methods to explore 12-15 year olds' subjective experiences of their neighbourhoods, their quality of life, the nature of their social networks, and their participation in their communities, and while I did not ask any direct health-related questions (eg how many cigarettes do you smoke?) the research explored the implications of children and young people's daily experiences for their general well-being and health.

The research was carried out in two schools in relatively deprived wards in a town in SE England, 'Springtown' (all names are pseudonyms chosen by research participants). The sample comprised 101 boys and girls in two age bands: 12-13 year olds and 14-15 year olds, with a significant proportion from minority ethnic groups. A variety of qualitative methods were used: (a) written accounts of out-of-school activities, who is important, definitions of 'friend', future aspirations and social networks; descriptions of where they 'feel they belong'; (b) visual methods including map drawing and photography by the participants of 'places that are important', and (c) group discussions exploring use of and perceptions of neighbourhoods, how they would improve their neighbourhoods, and their community and institutional participation. (For full details of the research methods used, ethical considerations, and final report please see Morrow 2001 a & b).

Findings

In relation to my 'social capital' questions, small-scale, interpersonal social networks based on friendship and family were crucial to a sense of belonging and well-being. In many cases, it was difficult to separate out the support provided by family members and friends: as Olanda, 14, described:

'Without my family I would have no-one to care for me and without my friends I would have nothing to do when I'm not at school. ... I can talk to my family about ... problems at school or with friends, and I can talk to my friends about things I can't tell my parents'.

Proximity to friends affected how children felt about where they lived: Maggie described how

'I love my house and my area, because there are three parks near me, the town is a five minute walk away, the school is close and I can visit my friends without having to take a bus or walk miles'.

Sense of belonging came from people and relationships: as Rock, 15, put it, 'I think I belong in a community where I am treated right and a place that is warm and friendly'. Membership of formal community networks and associations was limited, only six boys, three in each school, mentioned being members of a formal sports team, one boy was a member of the Air Training Corps, one girl mentioned Saturday dance classes. In terms of civic identity, young people were well aware of the reputation of their town; however, they did not appear to derive a sense of belonging from an identity with the town. One girl described how

'..the next time I move house with my parents, we will hopefully move out of Springtown. We hate it here, because there is so much trouble'.

They did have a sense of place in that they knew which parts of the town were safe or not for them: one girl said, 'It depends ... some parts, if you don't live there, you don't feel safe'. Young people's experiences of their neighbourhoods differed according to gender, in that girls did not feel safe in their neighbourhood. For example, Amy said:

'..someone was assaulted down in the park, that makes you scared to go down there.... If I was like, 20, and I had two little kids, I'd have nowhere to take them that is safe'.

Other children, especially boys, were fairly positive about their neighbourhoods, 'cos there's quite understanding people around', 'all the neighbourhood are like together, so they'll always look out for you'. Ethnic background was also important: unpleasant episodes of racial harassment were reported by boys and girls from minority ethnic groups. As one boy said, 'If I've got nothing to do, I play inside with my computer, outside usually people are quite racist to me, that's why I don't like my area much'. There were differences according to age: younger children reported a lack of suitable places to 'play'. Harry described how:

'There's a park where we live, we call it 'motorway field' because it's right by the motorway, and it's just covered in dogs much, you just don't like to go there'.

Children of both age groups mentioned that they weren't allowed to play ball games near their houses on patches of communal grass. Isabelle, 15, photographed a 'No Ball Games' sign and commented

'..this is a sign that is on a piece of greenery on my road. It stops children playing typical games, but little children need somewhere to play... they may not be allowed to go to the park'.

Older children reported a lack of satisfactory places to socialise:

'..during the night my friends and I go down to [the main road] and drink alcohol. Us teenagers don't go into any buildings, just walking on the street'.

The cost of activities was frequently mentioned as a barrier to participating fully in community life, and there appeared to be very few leisure opportunities for children and young people in the town that did not involve spending money. A new leisure complex had recently been opened in the town centre, but all age groups in both sites complained about the cost. As Casey said, 'it's hard, 'cos me mum don't get paid that much'. The town centre was a strong attraction, but when they did go into the town centre, they felt they were regarded with suspicion by security guards and shop keepers who gave them 'dirty looks' because they thought they would be shoplifting. Participation: All young people described having limited self-efficacy and participation in decision-making in their communities and schools. Only one boy said he felt able to go to his local residents association and make suggestions. Others pointed out that 'they send questionnaires to our parents but it's not our parents who want to go to the youth club, it's us. So they should ask us'. They were well aware that they had no formal channels through which they could communicate their views. Others felt they were 'played for fools' on school councils - 'you say it, and nothing happens'. 'It's a good way for people to voice their opinion, but it doesn't really happen'.

Discussion

I concluded that the advantages of using 'social capital' as a concept in health related research were two-fold: firstly, children and young people's views of their social contexts were highlighted, and these differ from adult-oriented preoccupations about this age group. Children and young people were reflective and resourceful commentators on their environments, and 'social capital' was useful as a tool with which to explore social processes and practices around young people's experiences of their environments. However, I also concluded that there are a number of conceptual, methodological and theoretical limitations to 'social capital'. In particular:

- Definitions of 'community' need to be broader than neighbourhood or ward. Some children and young people described having two homes due to parental separation and two sets of friends as a result.
- 'Children' and 'Young people' are not homogenous categories, and 'social capital' is likely to differ for different groups within the broad category 'child' or 'young person': gender, ethnic background, socio-economic status and age all need to be taken into account.
- The impact of material and environmental factors upon 'social capital' (whether upon social networks or people's capacity to participate) needs to be taken into account in health-related analysis of young people's social lives.

These findings have a number of broad implications. Take community-based initiatives: if social policy is to focus on quality of life and neighbourhoods, then community profiling (the process by which areas for community-based health promotion interventions are identified) needs to be more than a mapping exercise, and should be the product of community members alongside professionals. Community members are obviously an essential source of information, and a range of different methods can be used to elicit these views from a wide range of different age groups and interest groups. The activities of children and young people impact (often negatively) upon how adults experience suburban or urban environments. Conversely the activities of adults (particularly young adults) also impact negatively on how children and young people experience the same environments. However, young people and

children are rarely regarded as 'stakeholders' in their communities and their perspectives and views are not consistently elicited.

There may be problems of using ward-level analysis as the basis for developing area-based local policies in relation to specific subgroups, in this case, children and young people. Separating out ward level data by age bands might give a different picture. For example, at certain points, the two wards in my study appeared to be similar in terms of socio-economic status, but in terms of the child population, there were marked differences, even if some economically disadvantaged children and young people coming into School 2 from outside the ward are taken into account. School catchment areas are wider than ward boundaries and a particular school may take children and young people from outside the catchment area for various reasons. This is important because from children perspectives, schools are important 'communities', and each school has its own specific culture and environment. Locally-based initiatives need to be sensitive to these particular cultures, and health education needs to be relevant and meaningful to the population it is addressing. Schools probably need to be enabled to develop their own practices around health education that match the culture of the groups they serve, rather than trying to deliver some kind of 'national' curriculum. However, this needs to be undertaken with caution, because the danger might be that health inequalities would increase if elements of health education were neglected because other elements were over-emphasised.

Related to this, children and young people's cultures are dynamic, fashions come and go, rules, norms and values change rapidly about what kind of behaviour is valued within these cultures, and this has implications for the delivery of health education messages. In other words, the context in which children and young people are located (in terms of friendship network, school and locality) is likely to affect the way they experience, receive and interpret their health education messages. Some young people suggested that they saw the health education messages they received in school as nothing to do with them personally, not for them, but for the school itself.

Further, as well as encouraging individual children and young people to behave 'healthily' and 'safely', the effects of a wide range of environmental risk factors on the well-being of different age groups within communities could be explored. In the study, the behaviour of young adults, traffic pollution and accidents, noise from neighbours, cars and aircraft, and levels of crime, were all identified by participants as factors affecting their quality of life. An evaluation of the risks that children and young people's environments pose to them, as well as the risks they pose to themselves, might highlight structural limitations and constraints upon health promotion efforts directed at individuals in particular areas. For example, exhorting children and young people to take more exercise is fundamentally contradicted by signs telling them not to play ball games.

Other local social policies impact on children and young people's everyday lives and are felt at the ground level. In Springtown, these included housing policies, involving transfer of families in areas of high levels of social housing; the development of housing estates in parks and areas where children and young people previously played; local transport policies, that may inadvertently put freedom of traffic flow above the safety needs of children and young people.

National policies affecting young people's well-being included education policy (with the current emphasis on school achievement leading to an acute awareness among some children and young people that they were not necessarily valued in the hierarchy of attainment, pressure on schools, poor state of school buildings); transport policies (the expansion of the local airport), economic and employment policies (one major employer in the town, and a number of employers in related industries, face a constant threat of closure and redundancy, as a result of globalisation; subsequent to the research, the factory did close); and environmental and pollution policies,

Some elements of Putnam's 1993 definition of social capital, such as a sense of civic participation, was generally lacking for the young people in the study. On the other hand, social capital in the sense of informal social networks was present in abundance. The findings suggest that a broader approach to young people's health and well-being is needed. A clear dynamic existed between social life and environmental factors. An environmental justice perspective on health and well-being highlights the ethical and political questions of resource allocation, and 'social capital' research is in danger of missing this point by focusing too narrowly on the quality of relationships in a locality. Social and health promotion policies need to pay attention to children and young people's quality of life, in the broadest sense, in the here and now, rather than be driven by a perspective that prioritises children and young people as future citizens, in terms of human capital. A focus on the 'here-and-now' of young people's lives shows how they are excluded from the social life of the community by virtue of their age. However, they also exist in the future, and activities they undertake now for whatever reason have implications for their future well-being.

Most of national social policy relating to children and young people in the UK (and indeed most other neo-liberal democracies) is about seeing them as successful or unsuccessful outcomes, rather than as 'stakeholders', whether in their communities or wider society. Local government policies in some parts of the UK do attempt to incorporate children and young people, and these policies may aim to contribute to greater social inclusion, but this is not matched by an equivalent shift at national level. Implicit in many national social policy discourses is the idea that children and young people should conduct their lives in home and school under the watchful gaze of parents or teachers - clearly this is problematic from the points of view of children and young people themselves. There is also a danger that policies that over-emphasise (or shift) responsibility for children and young people onto families and schools and away from the state may inadvertently increase inequalities. In the UK, 'social capital' appears to be well-integrated into research and policy agendas. As a research tool, it does enable everyday processes, practices and social relationships to be highlighted and these are undoubtedly important to general well-being. However, it is arguably too simplistic to capture broader social processes that impact on everyday life - social and economic policies may inadvertently operate to inhibit social capital or even destroy it. Perhaps policy needs to be sensitive and, at the very least, explore the negative consequences on 'social capital' of different localities and different groups of people within those localities.

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