

Dealing With Disadvantage

Resilience and the Social Capital of Young People's Networks

Dorothy Bottrell

University of Sydney, Australia

This article analyzes how peer and extended networks provide young people with support and resources for dealing with disadvantage. Centering girls' accounts of growing up in the Glebe public housing estate, the difficulties they face, their critiques and aspirations are interpreted as resilience, supported by the social capital of their networks. However, the girls' accounts also explicate youth resistances to school and inevitable trouble through participation in the broader local youth network, raising questions for conceptualizations of social capital. Conflicting orientations of the networks are analyzed in terms of bonding and bridging forms of social capital. However, in specific contexts of school and community, the interrelations of social and cultural capital suggest the significance of recognition as a mechanism for differentiation of young people and for effecting marginalization and privilege.

Keywords: *social capital; resilience; youth networks*

This article aims to help shift the positioning of disadvantaged or marginalized young people as "problem youth." When understood as delinquents or youth at risk, young people are often characterized as unhealthy, antisocial, risky, or threatening within chains of causality linking individuals, poverty, social problems, and delinquency. Overattention to maladaptive behavior in policy and research is indicative of a "problem driven approach [that] treats urban youth as threats to civil society" (Ginwright, Cammorota, & Noguera, 2005, p. 25). Constructions of marginalized young people as dangerous or threatening (Kelly, 2000) may account for why "many adults maintain a quiet suspicion and ambivalence toward adolescent peer groups" (Stanton-Salazar

Author's Note: Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dorothy Bottrell, Faculty of Education and Social Work, Building A35, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia; e-mail: d.bottrell@edfac.usyd.edu.au.

& Spina, 2005, pp. 379-380). Theories of adolescence have recognized the important role of peer groups in providing a sense of belonging, socialization, contexts for identity work, and learning skills for life management. In contrast, in conditions of marginalization or disadvantage, peer groups have predominantly been associated with delinquency, antisocial behavior, educational resistance and failure, and various detrimental health and behavioral consequences for individual members (see for example, Newman, 1999; Wilson, 1987).

In contemporary discourses and governance systems of risk management (Haney, 2004), dominant individualization and responsabilization processes (Kelly, 2001) emphasize young people's own, their families', peers', or communities' deficits. They thereby omit any serious "analysis of the social and economic conditions that impede young people's healthy development" (Ginwright et al., 2005, p. 25). The problem-driven approach is largely founded in normative constructions of adolescent adjustment and deviation that are predefined by dominant theories of behavior, development, and life stages. The demarcation of risky and prosocial behaviors leaves little room for recognizing diverse forms of positive adaptation (Ungar, 2004) or any overlap between dichotomous youth categorizations. When policy, research, and social systems fail to take account of "structural and institutionalized patterns of oppression" (Ginwright et al., 2005, p. 28) and the different resources available to privileged and disadvantaged young people, the latter are most vulnerable to being constructed as falling short of the ideal subject positions established for youth and more vulnerable to marginalization (Hancock, 2000; Kelly, 2003; Morris, 2007).

Drawing on concepts of resilience and social capital for understanding young people's, particularly girls' perspectives constructed out of conditions of adversity and disadvantage, this article elaborates an alternative view of the particular dichotomy of prosocial and delinquent peer groups. In the research reported here, examination of girls' networks reveals prosocial and delinquent elements that challenge stereotypes of disadvantaged young people as threatening or deficient. Dealing with disadvantage is framed as resilience, evident in individual and collective practices, strengths, and aspirations. Similar to Stanton-Salazar and Spina's (2005) findings, the social capital of the girls' networks may be instrumental to their resilience. However, the girls also participate with local boys in a broader youth network and associate it with trouble, suggesting Putnam's (2000) distinction of bonding and bridging social capitals, associated with constraints and conduits, respectively, to advantages unavailable in or through more immediate circles. Contextualizing girls' participation in networks in their community

and at school indicates a dynamic relation of social capitals that recognizes the interrelations of different social groups and different forms of capital. Here the analysis draws on Bourdieu's (2004) theory of social and cultural capitals for explicating the girls' perspectives. How representations of young people conflict with their own sense of who they are and how they want to be seen by others is a central theme of the research discussed in this article. The centralizing of girls' perspectives throughout the article recognizes the importance of subjective understandings and how they infuse concepts of identity, agency, and social relations. Moreover, this recognition aims to elucidate the interaction of young people, their environment, and social processes to shift away from a narrow focus on problem youth and the consequences of such misrecognition.

Resilience and Social Capital

Resilience is defined as positive adaptation despite adversity (Masten, 2001; Redl, 1969). Resilience research is broadly concerned with enhancing young people's potential through seeking understandings that would facilitate resilience building, optimizing coping and adaptive mechanisms and minimizing detrimental impacts of external conditions. Contemporary theories of resilience primarily focus on protective factors that mitigate the risks of adverse conditions and circumstances, allowing for healthy development where risk conditions would have predicted otherwise (Rutter, 2001; Werner & Smith, 1992). Without an emphasis on the ongoing processes of adaptation (Schoon & Bynner, 2003), however, the emphasis on potential may be lost to more fixed notions of resilience and young people's reinscription within categories of resilient or deficit youth. Social constructivist approaches challenge normative definitions of resilience and the limitations of those personal trait theories that do not take account of subjective as well as objective understandings of social context (Ungar, 2004).

Social capital has been associated with resilience in varying ways. Although the literature on social capital includes a number of divergent theoretical positions, the concept typically refers to social networks, built around trust and shared norms, as both resources and conduits for resourcing members (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001). Social capital has been posited as a buffer to the adverse effects of disadvantage (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005; Terrion, 2006; Vinson, 2004); resilience may also be an indicator of social capital (Cox & Caldwell, 2000). Understood as resources for problem solving (Winter, 2000), social capital

may function in dialectical relationship with resilience. The aim here is not to argue for a causal link between social capital and resilience in either direction but to apply them as heuristic concepts (Shanahan, Erickson, & Bauer, 2005) for understanding girls' articulations of their experience of dealing with disadvantage.

Family and community effects on young people's developmental outcomes feature in the social capital literature. In Ferguson's (2006) meta-analysis of 22 studies, key themes are the association of strong social capital with children and young people's well-being and weak social capital or its absence with negative effects including "adolescent criminality, school dropout [and] teen pregnancy" (p. 8). Family structures, relationships, and the quality of parenting are principal indicators of social capital; community social capital indicators include neighborhood quality and supportive social networks, in particular, links into local organizations and institutions. Indicators are operationalized as a range of factors and measures across the studies with the complexity of findings complicated in part by diverse theoretical emphases. For example, Putnam's (2000) argument that disadvantaged communities lack social capital, giving rise to a vicious circle of low trust, weak cohesion, and high incidence of crime; further mistrust is contrasted with alternative propositions that disadvantaged communities do have social capital, but it is insufficient to counter structured socioeconomic effects or is fragmented and thus ineffectual in strengthening collective efficacy and well-being (Ferguson, 2006).

Outside families the analysis of young people's separate networks remains undeveloped (Bassani, 2007). Recent studies have identified the significance of young people's social capital to their pathways and transitions. In their study of the peer networks of Latino adolescents, Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2005) found that close friendships and broader peer networks are a primary focus of help-seeking and enhance the development of emotional intelligence through support, learning about relationships, and problem solving. Positive achievements and adaptation occur "in spite of the many stressors associated with acculturation stress and with segregated and economically marginalized schools and neighbourhood environments" (pp. 410-411). The "peer capital" (p. 393) of trust, reciprocity, confidence and mutual support in relationships is interpreted as fostering resilience.

Holland, Reynolds, and Weller (2007) analyzed findings from three U.K. research projects on young people's transitions—from primary to secondary school, to higher education, and in constructions of adult and ethnic identities. They argued that the social capital of networks based in and extended from friendship and peer groups, families, and local community

is significant to young people's sense of belonging and to negotiating their way. Networks are important sources of information and assistance for successfully settling into and gaining confidence in new educational or work environments and provide a base from which to build new networks. Similarly, Kemshall, Marsland, Boeck, and Dunkerton (2006) found that peer networks may help young people to navigate risks associated with circumstances of offending. However, the authors suggest that different characteristics of networks may influence young people's "situational agency" (p. 366) in different directions. Different types of social capital are evident in networks that are "restricted or diverse; closed or linking; and in the type of outlook and potential such networks afford young people" (p. 362). The implication is that social capital may have positive or negative effects and may support or curtail risk navigation and access to opportunities and social resources.

Distinctions of bonding, bridging, and linking social capitals are not clear-cut. Putnam's (2000) original distinction between bonding and bridging social capital contrasted networks that are inward or outward looking, homogeneous or heterogeneous and exclusive or inclusive. Bonding social capital is associated with the solidarity of localized groups, whereas bridging forms provide external linkages, particularly associated with obtaining advantages unavailable in or through more immediate circles. However, these "are not 'either-or' categories into which social networks can be neatly divided, but 'more or less' dimensions along which we can compare different forms of social capital" (Putnam, 2000, p. 23). For the Caribbean young people in Holland et al.'s (2007) study, participation in kinship, community, and transnational networks, events and cultural practices are central to ethnic identity and provide a sense of belonging within and beyond the local community. This evidence indicates the interaction of networks that are focused inwardly, strengthening reciprocity within localized networks or outwardly, facilitating connections into new groups and networks.

Woolcock (2001) refers to bridging social capital as that accrued in the extended networks of similar social groups, further distinguishing linking social capital as principally associated with access to institutional resources outside immediate networks and communities. Access to education, employment, and social services are thus significant outcomes of social capital. This conceptualization also has implications for situational agency. The mobilization of linking social capital by disadvantaged individuals or groups is dependent on the location, authority structures, and directions of institutional power of schools and job, welfare, and other agencies. With specific jurisdictions and policy and governance requirements, such institutions are

established and directed independently of clientele or communities and thus constitute a very different category of network. Although individual and local social capital networks may facilitate the negotiation of institutional resources (Raffo & Reeves, 2000; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005), the resources of economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2004) may be more significant in such contexts.

Bourdieu's (2004) theory of the interdependence of social and other forms of capital explicates the reproductive effects of capitals across contexts. The collective capital of a group constitutes credentials or resources in and through practical and institutional exchange relations and enactments. Because social capital is located in networks it is "relatively irreducible to the economic and cultural capital . . . [of] a given agent" (p. 21) but is interdependent with individual capital because it is constituted through exchanges and "because it exerts a multiplier effect" (p. 21) on individual capital. Such effects may be mediated by other forms of capital in particular contexts. Cultural capital has a central role in reproduction in the cultural field of education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977); however, as schools confer educational credentials, the reproductive effects of this institutionalized objectified form of cultural capital (including conversion to or providing supporting resources for economic capital) reach beyond the school. Social and cultural capital inheres in recognition of social and other capital exchange values, of prestige or status systems, and the interpersonal and network requirements of ongoing mutuality. "Exchange transforms the things exchanged into signs of recognition and, through the mutual recognition and the recognition of group membership which it implies, re-produces the group. By the same token, it reaffirms the limits of the group" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 22).

Situating social capital in its interrelations with other capital is arguably necessary given persistently differential outcomes associated with disadvantage and privilege. In terms of young people's trajectories, schools and other agencies have a central role in determining the efficacy of young people's social capital through their own institutional effects and the extent to which they constitute accessible social capital resources themselves. In this regard, Terrior (2006) has emphasized the importance of institutional commitment to directing power for the emancipation of disadvantaged groups.

The Glebe Study

Glebe is an inner city suburb of Sydney, socioeconomically divided with the housing estate and low-income families concentrated at the southern end

and affluent private households overlooking the bay at the north. Social indicators are significantly contrasted at each end in levels of education attained by residents, rates of employment and unemployment, and concentrations of home ownership (Families First, 2000). Contrasts are also environmental with the southern end marked by elements of degradation including aging housing stock, periodic vandalism to shopfronts and street furniture, litter strewn in lanes, graffiti, and broken glass from smashed car windows in side streets off the main road. Although the council is quick to attend to conspicuous street disorder, the estate environment closest to the commercial area is seen as a threat to businesses through customer deterrence. Here the main road of village shopping is dominated by cafes, bookshops, and alternative lifestyle centers and is a contentious site in terms of the variety of commercial, private, and public interests it serves.

The Glebe housing estate is owned by the state government and provides low cost, long-term rental accommodation to people on low incomes. Reflecting a shortage of affordable housing in Sydney and the state government Department of Housing's priority placement criteria, the estate contains "a concentration of families . . . who have a range of support needs" (Families First, 2000) including health, mental health, and disability support. Since its establishment in the 1980s, the estate has been a focus of identified social problems, including child protection notifications, youth truancy, drug use and involvement in street crime, disturbance complaints, vandalism, and car break-ins (Families First, 2000).

The article is based on doctoral research completed in 2002 that analyzed the experiences of young people from the Glebe housing estate. In 1999, I commenced as coordinator of the youth center. Truancy and offending among its clientele of around 300 12- to 24-year-olds, were persistent concerns for center and the community. The study aimed to understand young people's perspectives on schooling and truancy and how these related to experience outside school including the role of the local youth network that appeared to be pivotal in supporting truancy and was associated with young people getting into trouble through illicit recreations or the cycles of offending among a minority who were caught up in the juvenile justice system. Twelve months' participant observation in and around the local youth center, documented in field notes, and interviews with 12 girls (whose names here are pseudonyms) aged 13 to 24 (referred to as girls regardless of age as this is how the young women refer to themselves), mainly Aboriginal and Anglo-Australians, were primary sources for the study. The girls' perspectives are the principal focus of the article.

The 12 girls and their friends were regular participants at the youth center that has operated in the community since 1989, the result of successful lobbying of local and state governments by residents for a place for young people of the estate to gather and recreate, off the streets and with support and supervision. Since 1993, it has provided a range of services and recreational and educational programs. The core service of Support Work assists young people concerning their accommodation, income, education, employment, and court and personal support needs as well as referrals to other specialist services. In part because its services have always included assistance to young offenders, the youth center has been a focus for community and authorities' concerns about problem youth in the area and also acknowledged as an important community resource providing practical support and facilities to young people.

As the girls were vocal commentators on local issues in everyday conversation at the youth center, it was expected that their particular knowledge of the community, families, and youth activities would provide important insights into the research issues. Working with the girls provided an opportunity to invite them to take a key role in the research. However, this was not straightforward. Presenting information about the research to groups of girls attending center programs or at the end of Support Work sessions was met with responses ranging from no interest to polite tolerance. Whether this was an effect of perceived intrusion of a worker into girls' or youth social space, wariness because I was still new to the center and an outsider, or response to the actual project was unclear. What I quickly learned was that most of the young people were in the moment decision makers concerning any of the center's activities. Accessing support services was rarely by appointment, and program participation seemed to be on the basis that there's nothing better to do. Wearing the researcher hat and conscious of ethical and power issues arising from the dual role as researcher and coordinator, I waited, rather than press the issue. Four months after information sessions, the first interviewee raised the project with me and suggested we do the interview there and then. Most interviews occurred in this impromptu way. Among the 12 participants, two friends, Casey and Aisha, (the youngest participants) asked to be interviewed together; similarly another four, Jodi, Sarah, Linda, and Tatum wanted a group interview. The dialogic nature of the paired and group interviews enriched the data substantively and especially in points of identification as individuals and friends (speaking as "I" and "we") and in relation to others (referring to "they," "them," and categories of people). The age range enabled comparison of accounts. Five interviewees, Carol, Patsy, Rebecca, Nancy, and Rose

were older than 18, including three mothers; five girls, Tatum, Jodi, Linda, Sarah, and Nola were 15 to 17 years of age; and Casey and Aisha were aged 13. The older girls' retrospective accounts of earlier teenage years indicated strong continuities with the younger girls' present experience; both older and younger girls concurred on continuing traditions and changes in the community. Most important was the consistency of accounts of the nature of social relations, from personal relationships to critiques of the social divisions of the area.

As a researcher, I was also particularly interested in girls' perspectives that had traditionally been interpreted through notions of femininity and participation that positioned girls as invisible, passive, or "unfeminine." Dichotomies of "good" and "bad girls" had been challenged in particular by cultural studies throughout the 1990s, indicating a broadening of girls' gendered identities and agency for self-invention (see for example, Gilbert & Taylor, 1991; Leadbeater & Way, 1996; McRobbie, 1994). However, the persistent differentiation of gendered positioning by class and race has also been highlighted in studies on youth transitions (see for example, MacDonald & Marsh, 2005). Recent analysis of young people's experience as neoliberal subjects suggests that girls are offered not only the can-do ideal assuming free agency and opportunities for success but also within more comprehensive regulatory systems directed toward hegemonizing new norms of individual responsibility (see Harris, 2004). The shifting significance of social identities was a contextual premise of the research that assumed that the girls' positioning in terms of gender, race, and class may be significant to identifying links between local concerns and dominant social constructions of them.

The guide for single semistructured interviews was developed around key issues raised by boys and girls at the youth center, including schooling, recreation, being in trouble, achievements, and concepts of success and these themes were organizers for data analysis. Additional themes were identified from the interviews, including sense of place, reputation, drug use, and crime. Moreover, the data analysis identified the types of relationships (e.g., family, friends, neighbors, businesspeople, professionals) discussed by the girls and their significance within and across interviews. Talk of others is ubiquitous in the interview data. The analysis cross-referenced *Who?* connections with *What?* and *Why?* analysis of the content and explanations of substantive issues in the girls' accounts, to identify the contexts in which particular identifications and differences mattered to the girls. This analysis was central to theorizing from the girls' accounts and provided insight into their self-positioning in terms of social identities. This was shifting ground as a girl may emphasize "us girls" in some contexts

(see Bottrell, 2008 for a more detailed analysis) yet more often included boys in their "we" references. Throughout the article, references to young people are made on this basis. In part, girls' speaking for youth is taken as indicating class differences; for example, the girls principally critique schooling experience in terms of being stereotyped in coming from the estate, contrasted with students from better backgrounds. However, because local discourses refer to the youth problem, associated with the estate, the girls' emphasis on boys' and girls' shared experience on many issues reflects the loyalty that is underlined in resistance to their positioning as problem youth. Although girls' sorority and distinctive networks are central to this article, their close friendships with boys and their critiques of the behavior of some boys in the local youth network reveal complex and dynamic social identities. Based on participant observations, I had also expected that Aboriginal girls may refer specifically to their Aboriginality and raise issues of discrimination that were periodically raised in conversation at the youth center. Instead, race is largely an invisible relation in girls' accounts. However, at the center the popularity of RnB and hip-hop, indigenous newspapers, and programs involving Aboriginal adults and the dominance of Aboriginal art made by young people are indicators of the significance of Aboriginal identity. As 70% of the young people attending the center are Aboriginal, this identity may be seen as a premise of social experience, taken for granted so that to name what is embodied fact would be superfluous. There may have been some caution around discussing indigenous issues with me as a nonindigenous authority figure. However, by the time of the interviews I had formed positive relationships with many of the young people. In the context of the tradition of center staff being known as trustworthy and part of the young people's community, the girls may also have assumed it unnecessary to spell out to me what was taken for granted. The many "we/us" statements thus require data analysis informed by theoretical understandings of the historical significance and social construction of race relations and their intersection with class and gender. In the context of Glebe and the youth center, social identities of gender, class, race, and youth are never discrete although in specific contexts particular identities are foregrounded.

Friendship groups and families are of greatest importance in the girls' relationships. However, throughout the interviews there is an equally strong representation of others whose influence was often significant although sometimes not in direct relationship. The voices of authorities, other Glebe locals, peers, and teachers at the various schools attended by the girls, and outsiders are typically represented by the girls as critics who stereotype

Glebe and those who live in the estate, especially the girls themselves. Such voices were also to be found in documentary sources used for the study. These included local papers, minutes from community meetings, and government and nongovernment reports on youth issues about or pertinent to Glebe. Participant observation also included attendance at a range of community forums and interagency meetings that constituted important contextual and substantive research sources. Triangulation of the various data sources was a mechanism for reliability.

Growing Up in Glebe

In interviews with Glebe girls, their depictions of community distinguish neighborhoods, the suburb, and identifiable groups. In terms of neighborhoods, family, and friendships, community is described as small and close-knit. Nancy describes growing up in a neighborhood where "everyone knew each other . . . You'd go next door for a cup of milk, sugar . . . things like that." Linda and Jodi comment that young people round the area "all get along" because "everyone's grown up together." However, the 12 girls have little to say that is positive about Glebe beyond the qualities of their immediate relationships, with family, friends, and the local youth network, and the everyday practices and activities within them. They are unanimously very critical of Glebe as a bad place because of its reputation for crime and drugs that they attribute largely to cycles of heroin trade in recent years. In all the interviews, the stigma of place is a recurring theme. Although the girls feel enveloped by this stigma, they nonetheless differentiate themselves from others in their identification as Glebe girls, distancing themselves from those they see as responsible for the prevalence of drugs and crime; from those they describe as snobs, both locals and outsiders who look down on them. These differentiations are integral to their identification with their people, including friends, family, and the local youth network.

Dealing With Adversity

The girls identify adverse conditions in specific contexts of home, school, and community. With considerable overlap and reiteration across the interviews, hardships associated with families include conflict; violence and abuse; alcohol, other drug use, and addiction; mental illness; having a family member or friends in jail; loss and bereavement; and the intervention of authorities, including schools, police, housing, and community services.

Telling their stories of growing up, the girls recount significant events as well as persistent difficulties. For Nancy, her parents' divorce is a key event, preceded by and precipitating several years of moving back and forth between parents and other relatives.

There was people around but it was always choppin' and changing. I just sorta went into myself . . . When they broke up they only worried about themselves. 'Cause it must have been a big hurt . . . they didn't care about us for them whatever years.

As a consequence of "[a]lways choppin and changing and fighting," Nancy attended five different primary schools and in three-and-a-half years of high school she attended six schools, owing to the family split and moving around extended family, difficulties at school, and her entanglement in family drama—helping to sort out the day- to-day conflicts and practical family needs. Nancy contrasts the situation of disrupted schooling, conflict, and unpredictability with one of her stays with relatives.

Their kids go to work, went to school, stable environment, you know? They don't take drugs. I coulda been like that if I was just shown the right way. But fuckin, I went the other way and now I take shit every day, pot and stuff, not cause I want to, it was just the thing to do . . . Now, it's just bad habits. That's what killed my dreams—or put 'em on hold anyway.

Patsy experienced similar disruptions in a cycle of parental mental illness and alcoholism, removal into refuges and foster care, abuse in foster care, and moving around friends and family from age 16 until she secured her own place. From around age 10 to 16, her residence was back and forth between immediate family and out-of-home placement. Throughout this period and earlier during primary school days, she relied on the trusted support of some teachers, the youth center and friends' families.

Patsy: I was a real bad bully at primary school . . . I'd get to school and just bash someone . . . just . . . letting off steam . . . People knew there was something wrong . . . [Casey's family], like we all grew up together and they were always there for me and my brothers and sisters. I had a lot of people . . . Knew something was wrong . . . And they was always nice to us and kind . . . It was hard in the foster homes because, me taking care of the younger ones . . . You'd come home from school and one of them'd be gone to another foster home because the lady couldn't handle it or whatever . . . And when I was older, Dale's mum. He asked me to go to court with him and I met her. Then months later I got kicked out of one of

the girl's where I was staying. I rang her up . . . and next minute she was out the front in a car to pick me up. So I stayed with them then . . .

Patsy contrasts her experience with that of some upper class classmates who made her angry when they complained about parents imposing rules and limits or consequences for transgressing them.

Patsy: I'd say . . . why do you think [your mother] doesn't want you to go? You know, she cares or whatever. And they'd just go, oh who gives a shit . . . That really pissed me off . . . they didn't respect their parents and didn't see what their parents was trying to do where I had so-called parents that just, do what you want, didn't care about what you were doin' . . . I would like to have had . . . a parent saying no you can't go out, we're going to the movies . . . or doing more family things.

The girls' understanding of what happens in families, at school and in the community, is also generalized as an articulation of social problems associated with the estate. In discussions of truancy and illicit recreations, the girls identify individual and family factors in their understanding of youth crime in the area.

Jodi: Maybe they had a broken family . . . a lot of stress . . . If it's a boy, maybe they need a father figure, to sort of control them, something like that.

Sarah: Abuse in the family or something. Maybe a violent childhood.

Jodi: Maybe it's a bit easier when you've got a smaller family 'cause you get more attention. Maybe they haven't got much money . . . Maybe they've got very low self-esteem and they think, oh if we do this . . . we'll have more friends . . .

However, young people's practices are contextualized by the girls within conflicting social relations and the drugs, crime and reputation of the area with the summation that Glebe itself is bad. This perspective is based not only on personal experience but also strongly influenced by an awareness of others' perceptions of Glebe, and the estate in particular, as a place of social problems and associations with drugs and crime.

Jodi: People from my school come from all different areas . . . They're like, Glebe, isn't that near Redfern . . . isn't that where there's lots of drugs? An' rah, rah, rah . . . They stereotype you.

Patsy: . . . the way the community itself and the police look down on you, that was hard.

Aisha: They don't give kids a chance, just because it's Glebe . . . bad things happen here. Like, cause, you don't even know the person and you've already hated em. You don't get to even know them yet and so you've judged em wrong.

This context will be important for understanding how the girls place themselves within the complex relations and problems of the area and their approach to problem solving.

“Sticking Together”: The Girls’ Networks

Friendships dominate the girls’ narratives, typically referring to one or two closest girlfriends as well as close and broader friendship groups. There are close friendships among those who have grown up together whose relationships derive from family connections, neighborhood proximity, or association with the youth center. All of the girls have both all-girl and mixed friendship groups and also “hang out” with others in the youth network that is a fluid “who’s around on the day” (Jodi) constituency of young people, most of whom attend the youth center. Many peer groups are thus interconnected and an individual girl may readily participate in several groups over the course of an average week. Although the girls claim close and broader friendship groups as their primary social networks, these are never entirely separate from families. Their own families maintain a central place in the girls’ narratives, regardless of the mix of support or adversity associated with them. Friends’ families are also important as extended support networks and as places for learning that is incorporated into worldviews. Networks of friends and families provide a range of social, emotional, and material resources.

Casey says her friends are “the only reason why I really don’t want to move out of here.” Carol says that the best thing about school “was just being with my friends.” Recreations are all about being with friends: from “just hanging round at my friend’s house” (Carol), to playing sports (Aisha) and coming “to the youthy [i.e., youth center]” (Casey). From help with homework to lending or passing on clothes or household items, to providing a couch for the night or an extended stay when needed, the girls and their friends help each other. Pooling funds for nights out or a feed and providing babysitting are common practices.

As Nola says, “The ones that come around here like stick together” and this is about more than socializing together. Practical resources of friendship networks include emotional support. Talking about the stress of personal and

school problems, Sarah says, "I like to be with my friends, [they] make you feel better . . . takes your mind off it if you stay with your friends." Both Sarah and Jodi emphasize the importance of friends as trusted confidantes for sharing such problems and contrast this with experiences at school when a teacher or counselor has in their view broken confidentiality. At times, emotional support may be accompanied by hassling friends when they are in trouble. Nancy recounts her concern for her friend Dale because of his regular drug use:

I go and see him . . . and say are you all right and shit like that . . . I say to him all the time, look what you're doin' to yourself . . . he goes, oh yeah, 'cause he knows I'll give him a hard time.

Friends and peers also provide important practical support through sharing their knowledge of community resources and official systems. Obtaining information and access to services is often by way of an experienced girl accompanying another to the youth center or other service; for example for housing or job applications, sorting out government income support payments, or for obtaining emergency relief such as food vouchers or cash assistance for paying overdue or unaffordable phone or household accounts when unexpected expenses have left an individual or family short of funds until the next pay day. Problems at school, particularly suspensions (temporary exclusions) are also a common reason for accessing the youth center's support services. With links to schools and other support agencies, the youth center is a first point of access for many other services including referrals to legal, health, and counseling centers, and employment and training programs.

Recognizing the positive resources of the girls' networks is important in the context of their positioning within the broader relations of both school and community. Aware of local discourses of problem youth, the girls' own experience—particularly within networks—counters the dominant voice of others in the community and outside it. In Jodi's view, dominant representations never acknowledge the positive aspects and resources of the estate: "We don't really hear of the good things that happen in Glebe, we just hear about the bad things." Yet in their everyday problem-solving practices, the girls rely on their networks and are acutely aware of the positive resources they provide. These resources are central to problem solving for everyday practical needs, for understandings that provide some resolution of family and social problems and for thinking about the future.

Learning From Families and Networks: Resilience and Social Capital

Reflections on family experiences and the mutuality of network support overlap within the girls' accounts. Like Patsy, most have relied on friends and their friends' families when times have been hard at home or they have been homeless for a period. Staying with others and regular interaction with friends' families provide significant learning, particularly evident in the older girls' discussions of how they see their futures. Rebecca talks about what she will do differently and similarly to her parents and to her friend Tione's family from whom she has learned some different perspectives.

Rebecca: Having him's made me heaps better. Most parents can't control their kids so they just don't care about them any more. They give up. You can't give up. I wouldn't want to give up on [my child] if he was a little bastard . . . When he's older I want to do something that's good. Like, not a job just as work but a job like to help other people. I want to be able to get him what he wants . . . because sometimes parents just want to spend their money on wine and shit . . . You gotta, if you're gonna raise a kid properly, you're gonna teach them values. Like Tione. She was raised so well, she's confident, she just knows stuff. She's been taught respect and she's got manners. She's always been taught that you work for what you've got and she's just so unselfish and she's really been brought up great, to be responsible. It's good. With me, I fuckin did what I wanted when I wanted. I'd come home at six o'clock every morning and sleep till two, three and Mum'd say something then just forget about it . . . You've got to nag them. You had em, nag em!

Although aspects of what has happened to them are rejected in girls' parenting or other aspirations, commitment to family remains strong. Although critical of those times when her parents seem unconcerned for her well-being and of the disruptions that thwarted potentially better outcomes in education and work, Nancy is fiercely loyal and claims the importance of family to who she now is.

Nancy: I needed a stable environment. But if you turned it back, I wouldn't want it different 'cause I am who I am today . . . I had good parents, don't get me wrong and like, they might drink and that, but no drugs . . . We had a strict home . . . They taught me right from wrong, good from bad. They taught me respect, for myself and other people . . . You gotta have them rules . . . I got my own rules in my head and I stick by them. Like, you don't do wrong, what you call wrong in your book.

Similarly, Patsy maintains close contact with family. Her reflection on the past is similar to Nancy's: "I've been through it all. It makes you strong." Being an overprotective parent reflects the lack of protection she felt growing up but also her determination to "change the things that happened to me to make it better for my kids." Her emphasis on providing material and emotional security for her family and plans for the future are indicative of her desire, "What in life I have, they got the opposite . . . a better world."

Patsy: The home's got to motivate kids and guide them . . . I'd like when my kids are teenagers, for them to be able to come to me and say I need money for . . . whatever and be able to give it to them . . . That's why, you know, I wanna work . . . I like working. I like meeting people . . . But also to save for my kids so I can do things for them.

Resilience and Social Capital

The girls' responses to and negotiation of difficult and complex circumstances are indicative of resilience, of positive adaptation despite adversity. The perspectives and values articulated by Patsy, Nancy, and Rebecca are significantly shaped by their sense of place, family experiences, friendships, and other local influences. They are as much social commentaries and critiques as personal accounts. Their orientation is pragmatic, reflecting the problem-solving practices out of which they have been constructed. Confronting autobiographical adversity and social problems in their communities, the girls have developed strong ideas about what is right and wrong, what is just and unjust, and what is harmful and nurturing. Their toughness and stoicism in the face of adversity are also learned values and practices that meld the responsibilities to others and of oneself, to "just get on with it" because there are "no quick fixes" (Rose). Getting through adolescence in circumstances that are at times chaotic, both at home and in the community, and emerging as optimistic young adults, as many Glebe youth do, indicates their strengths, "the incredible feat of their egos holding up" (Redl, 1969, p. 98), despite adverse conditions.

To snapshot the young women in their earlier teens may have suggested a very different picture of their lives. As discussed further below, participating in illicit recreations and getting into trouble are just "what everybody does" (Jodi). As younger girls they could be readily labeled *troublesome* and although they still face hardships in their lives, the longer-term perspective enables the recognition of their resilience, as ongoing processes of positive adaptation. Most of the girls have experienced disrupted schooling

due to family issues or truancy, or both. Many young people in the area experience difficulty finding employment because they lack credentials. Although many do find work in the longer term, their initial experience in the job market is weighted toward unemployment. This has been the case for Nancy who has moved in and out of work and training programs. Although she would prefer a decent full-time job, she persists with the rounds of applications, manages periods of unemployment with the help of mates and does not give up. Patsy and Rebecca's plans are on hold till their children are older, but in the meantime part-time or casual jobs enable them to make ends meet and provide food, clothes, and occasional extras seen as essential for their families. Despite the difficulties within families and their troubled and troublesome behavior during teen years, the young women emerge as competent life and cultural managers. Sustained commitment to family, friends, work, and parenting is indicative of their strengths.

The social capital of the girls' networks may be seen as instrumental to their resilience as essential accessible resources within conditions of adversity. Important resources made available by friends and neighborhood networks have variously provided a buffer to adverse conditions and enabled the girls to cope and solve problems. As conduits to information and social benefits provided by local agencies, the networks facilitate girls' individual agency toward realizing aspirations. The norms within the girls' networks emphasize loyalty and care. Despite and perhaps because of adversities faced by individuals, families and friends, the social, practical and emotional supports reciprocally offered are seen as just what people do. Individuals have learned from experience that trusted friends and family can be relied on to help in difficult times and this becomes a guide to their own helping behavior.

The Problem of Sticking Together

Because the girls' networks overlap with and extend into the local youth network, the girls are implicated in the stereotyping of problem youth as they are or have been active participants in illicit recreations regarded as the done thing by young people of the area (Bottrell, 2008). The girls are critical of aspects of the youth network such as the older boys inducting younger ones into illicit practices and the repeat offending of the few and most notorious boys they see as responsible for most youth crime in the area. However, drinking, using other drugs, fighting, and getting into trouble are seen as ordinary recreations—part of a tradition.

Sarah: If you don't have alcohol, you just sit around . . . just like, oh it's real boring now, there's nothing to do.

Nancy: In Glebe, it's just the thing to do.

Norms of loyalty and care within the girls' networks similarly operate in the broader youth network. Even though the girls' commentaries often concur with the discourse of problem youth, they remain loyal to friends who are in trouble. For example, Jodi says,

I can't change my friends for, just because they do bad things . . . They might do things differently in their life . . . you can't sort of run them down because of that.

With their understanding of how things are for people in difficult circumstances, the girls differentiate necessity as a legitimate justification of some offending.

Jodi: Maybe sometimes they don't have a choice though, they don't have money so they go and steal. That's their only choice, the last resort.

Rose: There are some kids that aren't on drugs that haven't got enough money for clothes and stuff . . . so they need to do it.

Moreover, such rationalizations are further legitimated in the girls' understandings of how differential resources place some young people in criminal categories, whereas others participating in what are seen as common youth practices of drinking and using drugs can "get away with it." On marijuana use, Rose says,

There's a lot of people who have money who are on drugs and they can just get it whenever they want. If they don't have money, they're gonna have to go out and steal it.

The invisibility of "the good things in Glebe" (Jodi) refers not only to the reputation of place and outsiders' perceptions. The girls feel entrapped by stereotypes that are based on the reputation of the local youth network itself, but this positioning is understood as the merging of reputations and place.

Jodi: Just because you're 16, you must do what that 16-year-old did . . . you know, bashed someone. Oh, you live in Glebe, you're a thug.

Sarah: Or . . . you go round bashing people or you go round breaking into cars, or . . .

Jodi: 'Cause everyone's heard that's what Glebe is . . . [People] hear the stories like on the news and stuff like that, or things in the newspaper, oh, Glebe's

bad, Glebe's bad. And then they hear stories just through friends and stuff, rumours and things like that. 'Cause everyone's heard . . . You can tell by people's reactions . . . They stereotype you.

Conflicting orientations of the girls' network practices may be understood in terms of the normative function of social capital (Coleman, 1988). As their networks constitute resources and the means of access to other resources, social capital here may be interpreted as both positive and negative (Winter, 2000), providing social and emotional support and practical assistance but also associated with illicit recreations and trouble.

Bonding and Bridging Social Capital

Although the Glebe girls' networks arguably constitute bridging or linking social capital in their connections with community agencies and girls' mutual help in negotiating government services, their strong bonding social capital may be seen as also delimiting mainstream options, perhaps warranting Putnam's (2000) distinction of bonding and bridging social capital. Truancy is a case in point (for a detailed analysis of the data on schooling, see Bottrell, 2007). The difficulties encountered at school provide a rationale for staying away or leaving. All the girls refer to being in trouble at school, in part attributed to their own bad behavior but explained in terms of limited assistance with classwork and awareness of their not doing well and others' success.

Rose: They didn't care about us, just the talented ones in their subjects. And some subjects were higher status. If you weren't in them, you didn't count. It was all for the reputation of the school, that's all they cared about. We didn't fit the image.

The girls critique the value of the curriculum, academic pressures and those teachers who don't care but more vehemently reject being looked down on because they do not fit the image or meet the high standards required. Sarah sums up:

School is background . . . where you live . . . who you hang around . . . It's not just about work. Most of the time it's about social stuff . . . They treat me like I'm low . . . They're so stupid in the way they react to where you live . . . I hate it.

Such critique is voiced across all the interviews, specified as pejorative stereotyping by teachers and peers. The girls do distinguish good teachers but they are seen as a minority. Common complaints were that teachers "put

you down" (Rose) and "treat us like shit" (Casey). Resentment is expressed about being "not worth bothering about" (Carol), and not being treated as equal to peers who are academically successful, "the ones that have the money" (Jodi) and "the popular ones" (Sarah). Other students are specified as stereotyping them and where they come from.

Sarah: At my school, everyone's like . . . oh, how can you live there? And like, call me names and stuff . . . They're just stereotypical about it.

Jodi: . . . oh, you live in Glebe, you're a thug.

Linda: [Their suburb's] better because there's no criminals there.

The girls' understanding is that they are "not worth bothering about" (Carol) and that there is no point in their bothering about school. Despite acknowledgment of the importance of schooling particularly for employment credentials, the youth network is seen as a positive alternative because it offers belonging and status seen as unavailable at school (Bottrell, 2007).

Within the youth networks analyzed by Holland et al. (2007, p. 113), "bonding and bridging social capital are interwoven and interdependent." Similar characteristics are identifiable in the Glebe girls' networks in the capacity of bonding social capital to support bridging social capital. However, the Glebe girls' articulation of schooling experiences suggests that bridging or linking networks may also reinforce the significance and value of bonded networks because what they encounter at school stymies their aspirations and the capacity of their bridging social capital. The potential of bridging social capital through education is largely closed down when young people are alienated by experiences at school and seek other options.

The recontextualization of social capital within schools may reinforce and blur distinctions of bridging and bonding forms through the relations of identifiably different groups. Intersections of bonded and bridging groups in the heterogeneous social context of schools may amplify recognition of individual and collective capitals, particularly through academic differentiation (of successful, struggling or resistant students) and the conferring of credentials, the institutionalized form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2004), such that distinctions produce and reinforce homogeneous social groups. The deep effects of such distinction are evident in Rebecca's analysis of the problem of schooling:

Rebecca: The kids think . . . we're this or we're that, we're not going to amount to nothing because we've been told by our teachers all this time.

"This or that" identities are constructed out of the local and institutional knowledge of individuals' social positioning. In the differential accruals of

more or less valuable cultural and social capital, privilege and disadvantage are effected (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). It is not that the girls have no bridging social capital; rather, the relations of social and cultural capital in the schooling context effect marginalization of the girls, emphasizing, from their perspective, the limited value of their social capital, bonded or bridging, in that context.

Recognition: Relations of Social Capital, Disadvantage and Resilience

Bourdieu's (2004) conceptualization of interdependent forms of capital makes for better understanding of the present case study. Although social groups are identifiable in schools and communities based on known and assumed differential capitals—social, cultural, economic, and symbolic—perhaps the most significant Bourdieurian concept for understanding the social relations of different groups is that of recognition itself. Embodied cultural capital, and similarly I would suggest embodied social capital, is recognizable in and accrues further recognition through marks of distinction. In the Glebe context, the girls' and others' recognition of differences and distinction are evident in the girls' discussion of the stigma of place, stereotyping as problem youth and the social divisions of the area. Sarah depicts this social differentiation as

two different ends of Glebe. Like, there's the good half and then there's what everybody says is the bad half . . . I live down in the bad half.

The interactive relations of bridging and bonding social capitals posited here questions the assumption of the bridging or linking capacity of schools (Terrior, 2006). Schools do provide cultural and social capital, but their distribution is not necessarily equitable. As potential sources of social capital, schools may not only benefit those who experience a sense of belonging (Putnam & Goss, 2002) at school but may also be seen to set the conditions of belonging thus differentiating groups despite their social function as ostensibly bridging institutions. Distinctions of habitus as embodied cultural capital resonate more with the Glebe case study than distinctions of bonding or bridging networks. In the sense that "[d]ispositions that are given a negative value in the educational market may receive very high value in other [contexts]" (Bourdieu, 2004 n. 5, p. 27), the differentiation of students recognized by the girls, and culturally and institutionally recognized by their schools,

interconnects with symbolic and material resources across contexts (of school and community). The differentiation of the young people of the estate may thus be understood as positioning reinscribed in the social relations of their own and others' social and cultural capital. Recognition may thus function as a mechanism for privilege or social marginalization. Marginalization in specific contexts of school and community arguably constitute and compound adversities faced by disadvantaged young people.

Conclusion

In a community where the public housing estate has long been associated with social problems and problem youth have been associated with truancy, illicit recreations and juvenile crime, it is difficult for young people to avoid bad reputation. The Glebe girls' experience of stereotyping and the stigma of place may be understood as differentiated forms of social recognition. In such contexts it is challenging to distinguish individual, family, and social problems from the complex social relations of the area. It is also a challenge to recognize individual and collective strengths and achievements when they are often hidden behind more visible and publicly recognized social problems and assumptions about young people by virtue of their growing up in this milieu.

From outsider perspectives, the evidence of positive and negative social capital may seem obvious. Understood from the girls' perspectives, however, the distinction is blurred. It is clear that they do not lack social capital, but the directions taken and outcomes of network resources vary according to the type of network and specific contexts. Although orientations of the Glebe girls' networks may be seen as conflictual, the youth network constitutes an enhancement of resources, trust, reciprocity, and recognition. Despite elements of resistance to the problematic aspects of the youth network, the girls bonds with it are strengthened when articulated in relation to others' perception of them. They defend and rationalize their participation in the youth network as reaction to outsider critiques and their own recognition of social divisions. The youth network provides important social capital when mainstream domains of youth participation are seen as places of misrecognition, experienced as the denigration of their identity. In contrast, participation in their networks enhances capacity and opportunity for expression of personal and social identity.

The Glebe girls' accounts suggest the significance of network social capital to their resilience in dealing with adversity and disadvantage. However, the

arguments grounded in analysis of their accounts suggest that differentiation of types of networks and their capacities for facilitating accrual of social rewards and resources are subject to relations of recognition that close down opportunities and resources for some and open them up for others. Interpersonal and institutional entrenchment of pejorative stereotypes of identifiable groups is here understood as rooted in unequal social relations that facilitate or impede the working of social capital to advantage. The distinctions articulated by the Glebe girls in school and in the community are more than discursive. Different options and opportunities are constructed out of the unequal resources of multiple interdependent capitals. This formulation of the problems facing disadvantaged young people suggests the importance of resources to enhance both resilience and social capital. The girls' accounts point to a crucial role for schooling in this regard. When resources do not permit the kind of assistance needed by students who struggle with classwork, their engagement is put in jeopardy. Education is typically seen as a route toward improved material and social circumstances. However, the basic belonging and engagement required for educational success cannot be assumed. Relations at school may further entrench pejorative stereotypes of particular groups of young people, warranting further attention to consider how to open up rather than close off access to cultural and social capital provided by schools. Challenging stereotypes and providing positive recognition of affected groups may be crucial to enabling young people to access their schools' linking capacities.

Without analyzing the embeddedness of social capital in unequal social relations, demarcations of positive and negative social capital and bonding or bridging networks may serve to reinscribe disadvantaged young people within the discourse of problem youth. Shifting research and policy standpoints may be necessary for recognizing not only the value of social capital to resilience but also how relations of social capitals may be subtractive to resilience. Even though the girls thrive on recognition within their own networks, their pride can readily transform to shame and anger in the face of outsider denigration evident in Aisha's concern about being prejudged and all of the girls' resentment at being looked down on. In the girls' attempts to counter negative stereotypes, critiques of education, and problem-solving orientations their strengths despite adversity are evident. However, when these attempts involve resistance and when alternative centers involve illicit practices, the girls' legitimate social protest may go unrecognized.

When both adversity and resilience are conceptualized as social and relational constructions, the strengthening of disadvantaged communities may be as dependent on recognizing and shifting relations of privilege as it is on building on identifiable strengths of the marginalized.

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Dorothy Bottrell is senior research associate in child and youth studies, in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney. With a background in secondary teaching, juvenile justice and youth work, her research is primarily concerned with marginalized young people and centering their perspectives. Her current projects analyze resistance, resilience, and identity work in young people's relations to schooling, youth culture, and crime.