



IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD: BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN SAFE AND COHESIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD

(Bagai aur dengan tebing: membina modal social dalam kejiranan yang selamat dan berpadu)

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ABSTRACT

A vibrant and close-knit community is always associated with norms of trust and reciprocity with friendly neighbours in order to produce generalised social capital for the wider society. The researcher argues that the experience of long term interaction among neighbours, neighbourhood safety and cohesion and an active neighbourhood environment all contribute to social capital among neighbours. As a result, young people become more trusting in and reciprocative with people in general. Young Australians and permanent residents aged 16 to 25 (n=283) participated in this study through an online survey. The findings support previous literature, which found cohesive neighbours are more trusting than less cohesive neighbours. The results also indicate that the young people who perceived their neighbourhood as safe were relatively more trusting than those who perceived their neighbourhood as less safe. These suggest that creating neighbourhood 'togetherness' and preventions of crime promotes could promote more neighbourhood social capital. In turn, young people enjoy more generalised social capital in the wider society.

Keywords: Young people, social cohesion, neighbourhood social capital, community, trust and reciprocity, perceived neighbourhood safety.

ABSTRAK

Komuniti yang menyerlah dan bersatu-padu sentiasa dikaitkan dengan norma saling mempercayai dan bantu membantu antara jiran. Komuniti sebegini dijangka akan menghasilkan modal sosial yang dapat digeneralisasikan ke dalam masyarakat. Pengkaji mendapati bahawa pengalaman berinteraksi jangka panjang antara jiran, keselamatan dan kesepaduan kejiranan serta dalam suasana kejiranan yang aktif menyumbang kepada modal sosial dalam kalangan jiran. Dengan itu, generasi muda akan menjadi lebih percaya dan sanggup tolong-menolong orang ramai secara umumnya. Seramai 283 warga negara dan penghuni tetap Australia telah menyertai kajian ini berdasarkan soal selidik melalui talian internet. Keputusan kajian ini menyokong keputusan kajian lepas bahawa jiran yang mesra mempunyai tahap kepercayaan sesama mereka yang lebih tinggi daripada kejiranan yang kurang kemesraan/mesra. Keputusan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa mereka yang berasa tempat tinggal mereka selamat akan mempunyai tahap kepercayaan yang tinggi terhadap jiran-jirannya. Ini mencadangkan bahawa penting untuk mewujudkan kejiranan yang bersatu-padu dan mencegah jenayah dalam menghasilkan lebih banyak modal sosial di kawasan kejiranan. Dengan itu, generasi muda akan dapat menikmati lebih banyak modal sosial yang umum di dalam masyarakat.

Kata kunci: Pemuda, perpaduan sosial, modal sosial di tempat tinggal, komuniti, saling mempercayai dan saling menolong, anggapan keselamatan tempat tinggal.

INTRODUCTION

"Trust is the chicken soup of social life" (Uslaner 2001:1). When trust is spread to every corner of society, and when trust is reflected in action, which involves reciprocal cooperation among members, it becomes the holy grail of the society. I named this ultimate goal generalised social capital. This is a desirable goal in society because it is broadly associated

with public health, political stability, lower crime rates, economic development and social wellbeing (Rosenfeld et al. 2001; Hyyppa & Maki 2003; Helliwell & Putnam 2004; Iyer et al. 2005; Kim & Kawachi 2006; Salmi 2006). This article aims to investigate the overview of young people's neighbourhood social capital (NSC) and generalised social capital (GSC). I examine and discuss six factors influence NSC: number of close neighbours, residence period, location of neighbourhoods, social cohesion, participation in neighbourhood activities and perceived neighbourhood safety. I also test whether neighbourhood social capital has any influence on generalised social capital.

Social capital is the norms of trust and reciprocity held by a group of people. The analysis of social capital can use various approaches or levels, including individual, informal social group, formal organisation, community, ethnic group and nation. In this paper, I aim to argue that neighbourhood social capital is shared by all residents in the neighbourhood. Thus social capital is not the property of any one person but rather is characteristic of a group of people. One group is the set of neighbours in a neighbourhood. People who belong to a neighbourhood characterised by high social capital have better social outcomes, such as better education levels, lower urban poverty and lower unemployment than those who belong to neighbourhoods characterised by low social capital (Putnam 1995).

According to Putnam (2000:19), whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals, that is social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. He then measured social capital by community organisational life, engagement in public affairs, community volunteerism, informal sociability and social trust. Putnam (2000:277-284) found evidence that the decline of civic engagement was caused by the generational change in America, the long-term effects of television, structural change in the family due to work and suburban sprawl. He defines social capital as "the features of social organisation, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam 1993: 36).

I define neighbourhood social capital as the norms of trust in and reciprocity with neighbours: the expectation that the trusted neighbours would act in the best interest of the truster (young person) and that the truster and the trusted exchange favours asynchronously. In this paper, trust in and reciprocity with neighbours was operationalised as the 'three-part relation' which is one of the elements in Hardin's idea of encapsulated-interest (2002): A trusts B to do X. The subject "A" refers to respondents in this survey, while "B" refers to their neighbours. "To act in one's best interest" covers the action domain that B will take A's interest into account (e.g. B is aware of and cares about A's well-being and would not do anything detrimental to A).

In this article, I will examine and discuss six factors influencing levels of NSC: number of close neighbours, residence period, location of neighbourhood, participation in neighbourhood activities, perceived neighbourhood safety and social cohesion. Social cohesion refers to dense social connections between neighbours which provide a sense of identity. Forrest and Kearns (2001:2130) argued that "residentially based networks [are]...arguably the basic building blocks of social cohesion – through them we learn tolerance, co-operation and acquire a sense of social order and belonging". Through relationships with their neighbours, young people are able to build trust and understanding. Ongoing interactions with neighbours provide chances for young people to develop broader social networks. Neighbours learn to know one another through dealing with daily life matters. Small business centres, schools, the community library, sport and recreation centres, parks and community centres are examples of the meeting points where neighbouring takes

place and neighbours develop their neighbourhood networks. Moreover, neighbours might build more than one connection with others at the same time in some social settings. For example, Robert is the bookshop owner in the neighbourhood business centre and Rose is his customer, and, at the same time, Rose is also music teacher of Robert's son.

The literature debates the importance of social cohesion in determining neighbourhood social capital. Forrest and Kearns (2001:2137) presented evidence to show social cohesion can be viewed as either as "a bottom-up process founded upon local social capital" or "the downside of social capital". The former view of social cohesion, led by Putnam's work, argued that "engaged communities produced cohesive societies of active citizens" (Forrest & Kearns 2001: 2137). Neighbours come together to contribute to the democracy of society just like the title of this paper, they raise neighbours' children besides their own. They cooperate with one another to overcome neighbourhood issues. In other words, self-help and mutual aid increase the ability of a neighbourhood to overcome poverty, crime and low standards of health (Putnam 1995). The latter argument on social cohesion, as the downside of social capital, drew on Fukuyama's evidence showing the "apparent paradox between increased associational activity and declining levels of trust and civic engagement" (Forrest & Kearns 2001: 2137). Neighbours form groups and cliques based on their common interests. Contrasting interests in different groups and cliques can destroy the norms of trust and reciprocity. Further, social exclusion might occur when the group's interests solely and exclusively benefit only group members. I agree with Putnam that social capital enables neighbours to work together among themselves, but at the same time the strong trust among neighbours can cause distrust towards those from other neighbourhoods.

The second factor which might influence the NSC is feelings of safety. Having a sense of security in one's neighbourhood encourages young people to interact freely and openly beyond their own walls. Onyx et al. (2005) found that young people are not keen to participate in community activities partly because they do not feel safe. Ziersch et al. (2005) argued that perceptions of safety increase with the level of neighbourhood trust. They also found that there are gender differences in perceived safety; women reported lower levels of perceived safety than men. Morrow's (2000) research also found that young girls showed more concern than boys regarding neighbourhood safety. In addition, Kanan and Pruitt (2002:543) revealed that gender is related to the perceived personal risk of being alone in the neighbourhood at night. Kanan and Pruitt (2002:545) also investigated the length of residence and found that it is not a significant factor in the perception of neighbourhood safety. Neighbourhood connectedness and period of time living there were associated with neighbours' feelings of safety in neighbourhood (Ziersch et al. 2005). On the other hand, fear and insecure feelings about crimes destroy trust amongst neighbours (Ross & Yang 2000).

METHODOLOGY AND STUDY AREA

An online survey was used as the research method in this quantitative study. A total of 283 young people aged 16 to 26 participated in this survey. Snow balling design was used as the research method. To publicise the survey, website, flyers, posters, invitation emails and letters were sent to university students, city councils youth centres, churches, city councils sports and recreation centres in Melbourne.

a. Participants

Two hundred and eighty three young people (N=283: 86 male, 194 female) completed the survey between January 2006 and May 2006. Most participants (N=206) were university

students. The majority of respondents lived in Victoria (N=267), with the remainder living in other parts of Australia. Slightly over half of the respondents lived in inner metropolitan area and about 30 percent of them lived in the outer metropolitan area. Only about 10 percent of respondents lived in a large town or rural area. The majority of the participants (87.6%) were born in Australia and their ages ranged from 16 to 25 years, with a mean age of 21. Most respondents (N=232) claimed that they only speak English at home, but only 65.7% reported that their ancestors were from English speaking countries.

b. The Questionnaire

Participants in this study were ensured that their identities could not be traced at any point. They were also told, when they first entered the website about the goals of the study and that they could skip questions or stop at any time. Respondents were estimated to take approximately 30 minutes to complete this online survey.

Neighbourhood social capital was measured using three variables: a) level of trust in neighbours, b) tendency to help a neighbour who is in need, c) tendency to receive help from neighbours. The measurements of neighbourhood social capital were then treated as continuous data. Similarly, generalised social capital was measured with three variables: a) level of trust in most people whom they might meet in an average day ('including people whom you know and strangers'), b) tendency to help a stranger who is in need (e.g. giving directions or returning a dropped bag), c) tendency to receive help from a stranger. Appendix I lists all the questions asked in this study.

I studied the effect that the independent variables (number of close neighbours, length of time lived in neighbourhood, location of neighbourhood, participation in neighbourhood activities, perceived neighbourhood and safety social cohesion) have on the main dependent variable ---neighbourhood social capital.

In this questionnaire, young people were asked to choose the number of neighbours whom they felt at ease with, could talk to about private matters, or call on for help, on a multiple choice answers: "none", "one to five", "six to 10", "11 to 15" and "16 and above". The majority of participants (84 percent) reported having between zero and five close neighbours. Due to the small numbers of participants in the last three groups, I collapsed the "six to 10", "11 to 15" and "16 and above" into "six and above" for statistical purposes.

In this research, social cohesion of neighbourhoods refers to the degree of group togetherness, sense of belonging and cooperation in the neighbourhood. Accordingly, I am interested in investigating levels of social cohesion among neighbours in young people's neighbourhoods from the perspective of the young people. I am not measuring social cohesion in the sense of the degree of identification that young people themselves feel with their neighbours, rather I am focussing on their perception of these feelings among others.

Three variables were identified: a) the extent to which neighbours knows one another b) whether neighbours share an identity as part of the neighbourhood, c) cooperation between neighbours to solve neighbourhood problems. All three variables were measured on an eleven point scale (1= No, not at all to 11= Yes, completely). A respondent's scores on these three variables were averaged to measure the overall social cohesion variable. Then social cohesion was classified into two categories: High and Low levels of social cohesion.

The frequency of participation in neighbourhood activities was measured on a four point scale (0=Never, 1=At least once a month, 2=A few times in 6 months, 3=A few times in a year). There was a very small number of young people who participated in their

neighbourhoods “at least once a month” (N=22) or who had participated “a few times over six months” (N=36). Thus, for my analysis, I collapsed this variable into a 3-point scale (0=Never, 1=Not frequent, 2=Frequent).

There are three variables which measured perceived safety in the neighbourhood after dark (up to midnight), where respondents feel safe to: a) walk alone in neighbourhood, b) stay at home after dark, c) ride on public transport. These three questions were asked on the same 11-point scale. Once again, these three variables were averaged and then classified into High and Low level of perceived neighbourhood safety.

c. Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Young people who have six and more close neighbourhoods have significantly the highest NSC than their counterparts who report none or less than five close neighbours.

Hypothesis 2: Young people who have lived in their neighbourhoods for 11 years and above have significantly the highest NSC than their counterparts who report their residence period in between one year to ten years and those who have resided for less than one year.

Hypothesis 3: Young people who live in large towns or rural areas have significantly the highest NSC than their counterparts who live in outer-metropolitan areas and inner-metropolitan areas.

Hypothesis 4: Young people who participate in neighbourhood activities frequently have significantly the highest NSC than their counterparts who are not frequent participants and those who never participate in neighbourhood activities.

Hypothesis 5: Young people who perceive their neighbourhoods as safe have significantly higher NSC than those who do not perceive their neighbourhoods as safe.

Hypothesis 6: Young people who perceive their neighbourhoods as cohesive have significantly higher NSC than young people who do not perceive their neighbourhoods as cohesive.

Hypothesis 7: Young people who have high levels of NSC have significantly higher GSC than young people who have low levels of NSC.

RESULTS

a. Number of close neighbours

In this study, I was interested in how many neighbours a young person had in their neighbourhood. Neighbours could be part of a young people’s support system, providing both emotional and practical resources. In terms of emotional resources, a young person might need a neighbour whom they can talk with about private matters. When a young person needs help, his or her neighbours might provide the practical resources which he or she needs. I categorised respondents into three groups according to how many close neighbours they had in their neighbourhoods (Group 1: none; Group 2: 1-5; Group 3: 6 and above). There was a significant difference at the $p > .05$ level in NSC for the three groups of young people [$F(2, 277) = 39.33, p = .00$]. It appears that the NSC mean score for Group 1 ($M = 5.55, SD = 2.07$) was significantly different from Group 2 ($M = 7.58, SD = 2.02$) and Group 3 ($M = 8.58, SD = 2.28$). So my first hypothesis is accepted.

b. Residence period

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of residence period on NSC. Subjects were divided into three groups according to the extent of how long they have resided in their neighbourhoods (Group 1: less than a year; Group 2: one year to ten years; Group 3: 11 years and above). There was a significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in NSC for the three groups of young people [$F(2, 277) = 10.80, p = .00$]. Next, post-hoc comparison using Tukey HSD test indicated the mean score for Group 3 ($M = 7.13, SD = 2.27$) was significantly different from Group 1 ($M = 6.35, SD = 2.27$) and Group 2 ($M = 6.77, SD = 2.26$). This shows that young people who have resided in their neighbourhoods for more than 11 years achieved higher levels of NSC than young people who were new residents and those whose residence period was between one to 10 years. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported as long residence period increase levels of NSC.

c. Location of neighbourhoods

My third hypothesis is that young people who live in large towns or rural areas have significantly the highest NSC than their counterparts who live in outer-metropolitan areas and inner-metropolitan areas. Most of the young people in this study lived in inner-metropolitan areas ($N = 158$). The next largest group was people who lived in outer-metropolitan areas ($N = 94$), followed by those who lived in large towns or rural areas ($N = 28$).

To test Hypothesis 3, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance is used to determine the location of neighbourhood on NSC. I categorise respondents into three groups according to the extent of how long they have resided in their neighbourhoods (Group 1: large towns or rural areas; Group 2: outer-metropolitan; Group 3: inner-metropolitan). There was no significant difference at the $p > .05$ level in NSC for the three groups of young people [$F(2, 277) = .07, p = .93$]. It appears that the NSC mean score for Group 1 ($M = 7.13, SD = 2.83$) was not significantly different from Group 2 ($M = 7.20, SD = 2.39$) and Group 3 ($M = 7.08, SD = 2.23$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is not supported: young people who live outside metropolitan areas and in metropolitan areas are similarly likely to report high NSC.

d. Participation in neighbourhood activities

My fourth hypothesis is that young people who participate in neighbourhood activities frequently have significantly the highest NSC than their counterparts who are not frequent participants and those who never participate in neighbourhood activities. A one-way between-groups analysis of variance is used to test this hypothesis. I compared the mean score in NSC for three groups of subjects. The first group consists of those who never participated in any neighbourhood activities (Group 1: never). The second group were those who had participated in neighbourhood activities but they were not the frequent participants (Group 2: not frequent). Third group of young people participated in activities on a frequent basis (Group 3: frequent). There was a significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in NSC for the three groups of young people [$F(2, 216) = 37.95, p = .00$]. Next, the post-hoc comparison using Tukey HSD test indicated the mean score for Group 1 ($M = 5.85, SD = 2.20$) was significantly different from Group 2 ($M = 8.21, SD = 2.04$) and Group 3 ($M = 8.38, SD = 1.85$). It appears that young people who never participated in any neighbourhood activities enjoy less NSC than both occasional participants and frequent participants. In other words, young people who at least participated (either occasionally or frequently) in neighbourhood activities have significantly higher NSC than those who never participated in any. It appears that there is no significant difference in NSC between frequent participation and not frequent

participation. Thus, Hypothesis 4 is not supported in the form in which it was stated, but the significant differences in NSC between young people who participated in neighbourhood activities at least once and those who never participated in any neighbourhood activities show that participation in neighbourhood activities does make a difference to NSC.

e. Perceived neighbourhood safety

My fifth hypothesis is that young people who perceive their neighbourhoods as safe have significantly higher NSC than those who do not perceive their neighbourhoods as safe. The results of an independent-sample t-test reveal that there is a significant difference in NSC between young people who report low levels of perceived neighbourhood safety ($M = 6.30$, $SD = 2.22$) and those who report high levels [$M = 7.41$, $SD = 2.32$; $t(275) = -3.48$, $p = .00$]. This result reveals that perceived neighbourhood safety has a significant impact on NSC: high NSC is influenced by high levels of perceived neighbourhood safety. Thus, Hypothesis 5 is supported: people who perceive their neighbourhoods as safe are more likely to report high NSC than are those who do not perceive their neighbourhoods as safe.

f. Social cohesion

My sixth hypothesis is that young people who perceive their neighbourhoods as cohesive have significantly higher NSC than those who do not perceive their neighbourhoods as cohesive. I compare the mean score of NSC for these two groups of young people with different levels of perceived neighbourhood cohesion by using an independent-sample t-test. The result shows that there is a significant difference between young people who report low levels of cohesive ($M = 5.76$, $SD = 2.03$) and young people who report high levels of cohesive [$M = 8.94$, $SD = 1.34$; $t(265) = -14.46$, $p = .00$]. This result reveals that having cohesive relationships with neighbours increases young people's NSC. Thus, Hypothesis 6 is supported: high cohesiveness in neighbourhoods has a significant effect on NSC.

g. Generalised social capital

My seventh hypothesis is that young people who have high levels of NSC have significantly higher GSC than young people who have low levels of NSC. To test this hypothesis, I compare the mean score of GSC for these two groups of young people with different levels of NSC by using an independent-sample t-test. The results reveal that there is a significant difference in GSC found between young people who report low levels of NSC ($M = 5.98$, $SD = 1.76$) and young people who report high levels of NSC [$M = 6.76$, $SD = 1.68$; $t(277) = -3.82$, $p = .00$]. This result reveals that NSC has a significant impact on GSC: high GSC is influenced by high levels of NSC. Hypothesis 7 is supported: young people who have high NSC have higher generalised social capital than young people who have low NSC.

DISCUSSION

This article reveals five neighbourhood factors that are related to high NSC and in turn high NSC is associated with high generalised social capital (see Figure 1). It seems that high NSC is the end result of interaction between young people and their neighbours in their neighbourhoods, which are characterised as close (I know who my neighbours are), old (in terms of period of residence), active, safe and cohesive neighbourhoods. These five factors help in cultivating the norms of trust and reciprocity among neighbours.

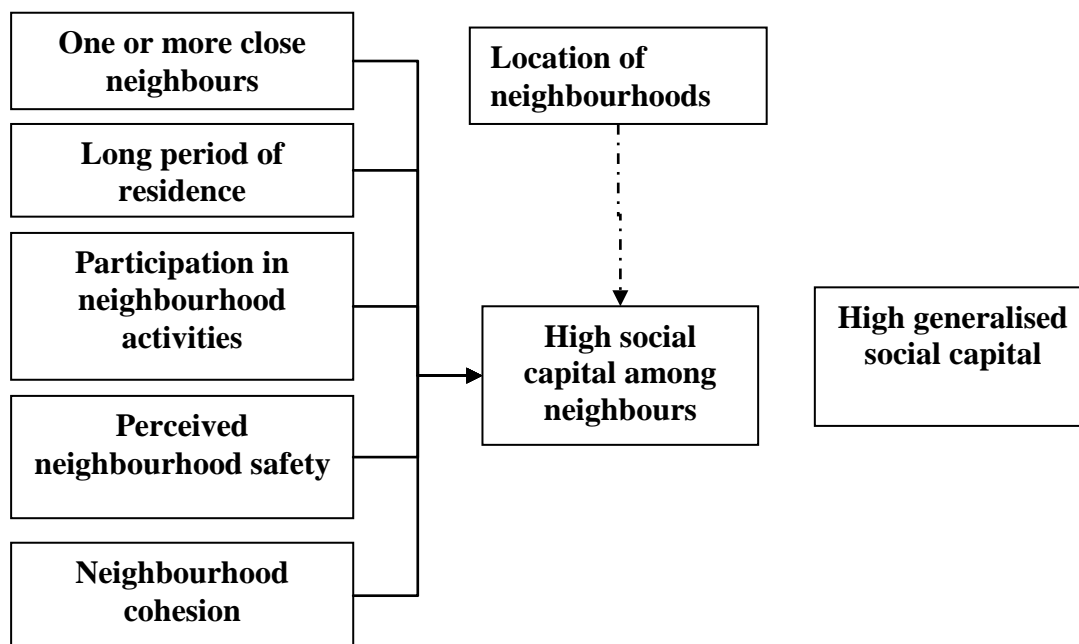


Figure 1: High social capital among neighbours is generated by five neighbourhood factors.

Hypothesis 1 is supported, as young people who have six and more neighbours enjoy high NSC than their counterparts. Having close neighbours in the neighbourhoods strengthen their social support in terms of practical support like looking after plants and flowers while neighbours are on holidays or emotional support like visiting sick neighbours at hospitals. This result is not surprising because the bigger the social networks in neighbourhoods, the more chances for young people to interact with their neighbours and build social capital with them. Young people who know their neighbours are more likely to trust their neighbours, even if they have only one close neighbour. Again, this result is expected because it makes sense that if you know more of your neighbours you are more likely to trust your neighbours. Furthermore, young people only need to have one neighbour who they could call upon, to make the difference. In other words, young people only have to be close to their neighbours next door in order to boost neighbourhood social capital as a whole.

Hypothesis 2 is supported, as young people who have lived in their neighbourhoods for a long period are more likely to report high NSC than young people who have short period of residence in their neighbourhoods. This suggests that young people who have high NSC are more likely to have lived in their neighbourhoods for a long time rather than being newcomers. A clear pattern is established in that the percentage of those who report high NSC increases according to their period of residence in their neighbourhoods. More than two thirds of the young people who had lived more than 11 years in their neighbourhood reported high NSC. Looking at the age range of young people in this research (16 to 26 years old, mean age 21 years), those young people who had lived more than 11 years in the neighbourhood had probably lived there for most of their lives. This suggests that growing up in the one neighbourhood is important in building NSC. The sense of familiarity with the

neighbourhood may provide a greater chance for young people, over time, to build NSC via daily social interaction. My findings show that the longer the period of residence, the greater the tendency for young people to report high NSC.

Hypothesis 3 is not supported: young people who live in large towns (non-metropolitan regional centres) or rural areas do not seem to have greater tendency to report high NSC than those who live in inner or outer metropolitan areas. There is slight difference in the direction predicted by the hypothesis but it is too small to count. This result does not support Onyx and Bullen's (2000) findings that residents in rural areas generate higher social capital compared with urban areas. Due to the slight difference and the small numbers of young people in my sample who lived in large towns and rural areas ($n = 28$), further research into this is needed.

Hypothesis 4 is not supported in the form in which it was stated. However, young people who participate in neighbourhood activities (either occasionally or frequently) are more likely to report high NSC than those who do not participate in such activities. This result is not surprising because participation in neighbourhood activities provides more opportunities for young people to interact and so to build NSC. This suggests that informal social interaction among neighbours is associated with high NSC. In other words, young people who are more accustomed to social interaction in neighbourhood settings have a greater tendency to build high NSC.

Hypothesis 5 is supported: young people who perceive their neighbourhoods as safe are more likely to report high NSC than young people who do not perceive their neighbourhoods as safe. My findings lend support to previous research which shows that perceived neighbourhood safety is related to NSC (Ross & Yang 2000; Ziersch et al. 2005). Safe neighbourhoods provide conducive environments for cultivating trust in and reciprocity with neighbours because neighbours do not have to be wary of each other in terms of security. In other words, socialising among neighbours takes place more easily in neighbourhoods which are perceived as safe than in neighbourhoods which are not perceived as safe.

Hypothesis 6 is supported: young people who perceive their neighbourhoods as cohesive are more likely to report high NSC than those who do not perceive their neighbourhoods as cohesive. Almost all young people who perceived their neighbourhoods as cohesive also reported high NSC. Feelings of belongingness and togetherness in neighbourhoods appear to encourage young people to build high NSC. This is not surprising because the concepts of social cohesion and social capital overlap. Both concepts emphasise cooperation and reciprocity among neighbours.

Hypothesis 7 is supported as social capital among neighbours has a strong impact on generalised social capital. It seems that maintaining high social capital with neighbours helps in spreading trust and reciprocity with people in general. It is not surprising that young people would extend their trust in and reciprocity with neighbours whom they might not know very well to people in general including strangers. In other words, building more social capital with loose ties helps young people to build generalised social capital.

CONCLUSION

This study supports the macro theory of community by arguing that social cohesion relates significantly to neighbourhood social capital. Moreover, young people who feel safe in the neighbourhood are more trusting. For community cohesion, more community development should focus on how to create a sense of togetherness in the neighbourhood like promoting

more neighbourhood activities which involve more young people. In addition, neighbourhood safety is not merely a security issue but it affects also the social wellbeing of all the community members. With high levels of social capital in the neighbourhoods, or high trust in and reciprocity with neighbours, better social connectedness could be formed, which will promote better health (Baum 1999, Cooper 1999). Further, local councils in every neighbourhood area can organise anti-crime campaigns in order to increase awareness of crime intolerance with hopes to reduce crime rates. More importantly, local councils should provide better facilities such as bright street lights and activate neighbourhood watch programs. Detailed statistic about crime rate and classifications should also be provided in enabling residents of neighbourhoods to make a fair judgment of perceived neighbourhood safety. Nonetheless, more empirical works on the nature of neighbourhood (i.e. diversity and homogeneity of groups) should be carried out to provide a clearer picture of what group features contribute to neighbourhood social capital.

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Appendix

Neighbourhood social capital (Questions A to C)

Question A. "To what extent do you trust your neighbours to act in your best interest?" (11-point scale, 1=, No, not at all, 11= Yes, completely)

Question B "To what extent would your neighbours be willing to help you? (e.g. by lending toolbox, collecting post for neighbours who are on long holidays)"

Question C "To what extent would you yourself be willing to help your neighbours? (e.g. by lending toolbox, collecting post for neighbours who are on long holidays)".

Generalised social capital (Questions D to F)

Question D. "To what extent do you trust most people whom they might meet in an average day ('including people whom you know and strangers') to act in your best interest?" (11-point scale, 1=, No, not at all, 11= Yes, completely)

Question E "To what extent do you think a stranger would be willing to help if you need it (e.g. giving directions or returning a dropped bag)?"

Question F "To what extent would you yourself be willing to help if he or she needs it? (e.g. giving directions or returning a dropped bag)".

Number of close neighbours

Question G “To what extent do the residents in your neighbourhood know one another?”

Residence period

Question H “How long have you been living in your neighbourhood?”

Social cohesion (Questions E to G)

Question I “Thinking now about your neighbourhood, do you think there is a community spirit in this area?”

Question J “If there was a problem in this neighbourhood (e.g. people dumping garbage in the park), to what extent would you and other neighbourhood residents cooperate to try to work on the problem?”

Participation in neighbourhood activities

Question K “In last 12 months, how often have you or anyone living with you in your household participated in any neighbourhood activity? e.g. parties at neighbours houses, community festival.”

Level of perceived neighbourhood safety and gender

Question L “Do you feel safe to walk alone in your neighbourhood after dark (say up to midnight)?”

Question M “Do you feel safe at home after dark (say up to midnight)?”

Question N “Is it safe to use the public transport at night (say up to midnight)?”

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