

The impact of Sure Start Childrens Centres on developing social capital: the influence of Pierre Bourdieu

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...to understand how Sure Start Childrens Centres could influence the development of social capital and inclusion.....

Key findings:

- New knowledge about the barriers and issues to engaging with services for families with complex needs;
- New ways of working with parents previously unwilling or unable to engage;
- How centres work as complex, responsive 'fields' of social practice;
- Generating the potential for social change.

The research questions:

- What services are developing to engage with and build reciprocal relationships with parents?
- How are they working together to develop social capital and inclusion?
- In what ways are they able to engage, and exchange with parents with complex needs?



- Early Excellence Centres;
- Sure Start Local Programmes;
- Neighbourhood Nurseries;
- Free Early Education;
- Family Working Tax Credit;
- Sure Start Childrens centres;



- Economic, educational or social policy?
- Evidence base?

What was happening between parents and staff to give them confidence to use and benefit from services:

- The structure;
- The relationships;
- The motivation.

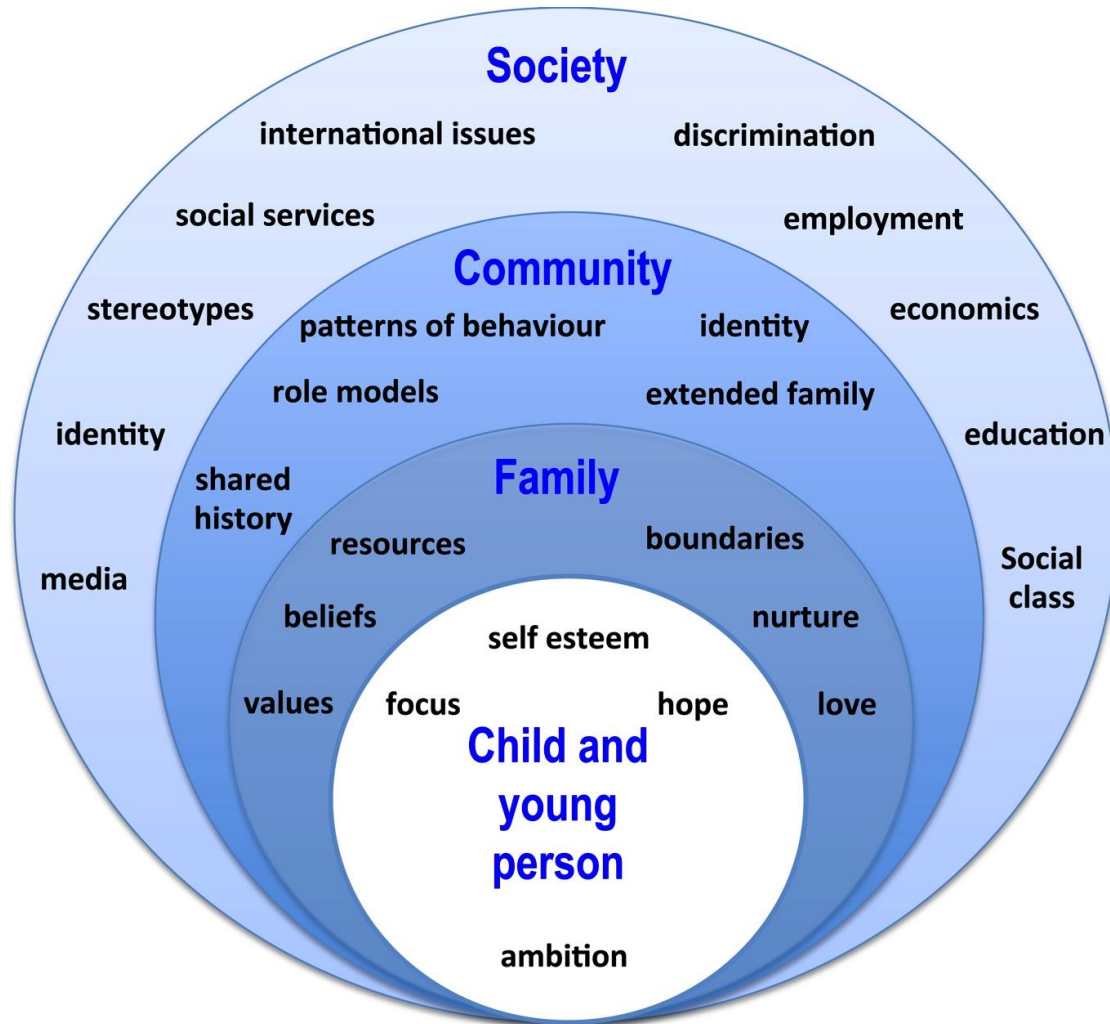
Methodology:

- In depth study of four Sure Start Children's Centres over six years;
- Interviews, shadowing, focus groups;
- Analysis of perceptions of parents with complex needs;
- CAQDAS for storing, coding, analysis.

Useful concepts

Socio-ecological model

Structure



Useful concepts

- A group and community resource for collective action and integration (Coleman 1988, Putnam 2000),
- Explaining the contradictions of social inequality and stratification (Bourdieu 1977).

Social capital

Relationships

Useful concepts

- Socio-economic integration of economic and political thinking (Granovetter 1973, Woolcock and Narayan 2000, Woolcock 2001)
- Business management, and organisational advantage (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998, Abou-Zeid 2007)

Social capital

Relationships



Useful
concepts

**Bonding
Capital**



Useful
concepts

**Bridging
Capital**



Useful
concepts

**Linking
Capital**

Useful
concepts

Social capital

Relationships



Motivation

Pierre
Bourdieu
1984



Bourdieu's work is concerned with:

‘the question of how stratified social systems of hierarchy and domination persist and reproduce from one generation to the next without powerful resistance and without the conscious recognition of their members’
Swartz (1997: 6)



Bourdieu didn't present his concepts as an integrated theory (which is what the economists do!). He presented them as 'thinking tools'.

[(Habitus) (capital)] + field = practice

Pierre Bourdieu 1984



Pierre Bourdieu

1984

**[(Habitus) (capital)] + field =
practice**

[(Habitus) (capital)] + field = practice Pierre Bourdieu 1984

‘Habitus’ describes
the individual
history, culture and
context driving
behaviour and
relationships- the
life story



[(Habitus) (**capital**)] + field = practice
Pierre Bourdieu 1984

‘Capital’ includes
resources and the
social relationships
existing within the
‘field’



[(Habitus) (capital)] + **field** = practice
Pierre Bourdieu 1984

The 'field' is
the social space
where things
happen



Research findings: habitus



- Parents and staff engage in child focussed activities **together**, learning and exchanging skills and knowledge;
- Shifting power dynamic
- Staff work in and are part of the community;
- Relationships develop over years.

Research findings: field



- A place to come to and feel welcome;
- A place to feel safe;
- Parents and staff learning together
- A place to belong.

Research findings: capital



- Centres offer valued services, activities, information, counselling, health visitor, job information etc. etc.;
- Build friendships and networks;

Findings: parents with complex needs

- Having a sense of belonging;
- Supported/facilitated access to therapeutic services;
- Support to utilise the services;
- Capacity for trust;

Findings: parents with complex needs

- Clear boundaries ;
- Opportunity for making *bridging* relationships with staff and *linking* to new resources eg counselling;
- To reduce isolation be developing *bonding* relationships with other parents, but also look at the limiting nature of some relationships.

Anne, fled serious domestic violence, after having her baby and eventually was moved to a new city a long way from family and friends She was re-located because of the significant risk to her and her son's safety from a violent partner and concerns around their safety.

“Living at the bottom of the road we heard about the centre. The refuge did that, it made it easier, they phoned and got him in straight away. I used the counselling and the play and stay, they also got me on a course with the NSPCC and on a volunteering course as well. I’ve only just done that, but then I can do volunteering here. It’s helped to meet other parents and make networks.” Anne

Mat has been a single parent since Ryan's years mother died from drug use. He has been using services for around three years. He had a long history of drug and alcohol use, he stopped using heroin when his partner died. His son Ryan went to school six months ago..

"I used to drink Jan and Helen sat me down and it was like informal, having a laugh had I any problems, so I felt like I want to tell them, I wanted to.

When he was three we got talking, I said I wanted to do a college course and they said they could help. The childcare was paid for because I was unemployed, I had me 16 hours, but if they can help you out for longer then they will.

I felt my goals was there. It's got to the point now where we're always talking, one to one, not like tell them what they want to hear then get rid of me, like, it's a good thing. They invite me in for a cup of tea, its good." Mat

Aisha came to England 4 years ago with her two children, fleeing from a physically violent marriage. She stayed with relatives who dominated and abused her. She was quite dependent on the Children's Centre for a while, but now has established herself and her family.

“Elise was well cared for, she was with Sara (key worker). She had people she liked. You know when you get into a room and you just have a good feel about it. I felt the aura, I felt very at ease here.

I came here and sat and was made to feel very welcome and I ended up getting a place here, and they knew the history of what happened. I felt so welcome, so they gave me a place here.” Aisha

Conclusions:



Sure Start Children's Centres promote social inclusion, generate the potential for new capital and can interrupt the reproduction of social advantage. Whilst they do not achieve the original aspiration of reducing social inequality in outcomes or bringing an end to poverty they present a relatively low cost evidence based early intervention for all programme.



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