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Playing Out: A Movement for Movement?

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In 2009, the "Playing Out" project was set up in Bristol in the United Kingdom by a parent-led community group who were seeking to address concerns about the lack of freedom for young people to play outside. Playing Out has, as its primary purpose, supporting children to "play out" where they live through providing the space within which children might engage in informal play and physical activity, while also improving relations between neighbors and developing a sense of community. This paper examines the potential of Playing Out for fostering community cohesion by undertaking interviews with participants, officials and policy-makers, alongside some observation of Playing Out events, between 2013 and 2016. In particular, we evaluate the significance of social capital for the development, and success, of a community-led initiative to influence policy outcomes and increase physical activity levels in the local population, giving consideration to the ways in which social movement concepts build on, and strengthen, social capital. In many societies, such activities take place within a context of neoliberalism, where social order is viewed as being dependent on individual responsibility: governments are deregulated, social programs are cut and/or privatized, and social problems have to be solved by individual, private solutions. Our findings draw on the work of Putnam (1993, 1996, 2000) to demonstrate that social capital is both cause and effect in the success of initiatives such as Playing Out, and that when social capital is combined with elements of a social movement, there can be more fundamental and sustained outcomes.

Keywords: community cohesion, Playing Out, policy, social capital, social movements

INTRODUCTION

This paper evaluates the significance of social capital for the development, and success, of a community-led initiative to increase outdoor play and promote increased physical activity for young people in their local neighborhood. Specifically, the paper evalutes the potential of a community-led initiative known as "Playing Out" for addressing social exclusion, inequalities, and barriers between people by fostering community cohesion. The paper also takes into account criticisms of the concept of social capital, giving consideration to whether Playing Out demonstrates elements of a social movement. In many societies, such activities take place within a context of neoliberalism, where social order is viewed as being dependent on individual responsibility: governments are often deregulated, social programs are cut and/or privatized, and social problems have to be solved by individual, private solutions (Baum, 2007; Coakley and Pike, 2014; Marmot and Allen, 2014). These contexts have the capacity to produce, and reproduce, social inequalities. "Playing Out" is a community-leda project where residents close their streets to traffic

for designated periods of time to allow children to play outside freely and safely close to their homes. The project illustrates physical activity based initiatives often reveal, but can also challenge, social inequalities. We will argue that social capital is both cause and effect in the success of such initiatives, and that when social capital is combined with elements of a social movement, there can be more fundamental and sustained outcomes.

PLAYING OUT

The "Playing Out" project started in Bristol in 2009 by a parent-led community group seeking to offer their children opportunities to play outside in their local neighborhood. In 2011, the Playing Out Community Interest Company was set up as a non-profit organization promoting the playing out model and informing a wider movement to challenge public attitudes including in the planning of streets and cities.

As scholars such as Beunderman et al. (2007) and Wheeler et al. (2010) have identified, most children living in urban areas spend the majority of their outdoor time, including after-school physical activity, in outdoor "non-greenspace" such as streets, but that children generally play outside less than they would wish). It is argued that "street play" allows for semi-supervised play including moderate physical activity. The Playing Out events are short after-school road closures for ~2–3 h, where volunteer stewards are located at the road closure points, ensuring that vehicle access is facilitated while children play safely on the streets. Residents apply to close their street to enable Playing Out through a temporary street play order (TPSO). At the time of writing this paper, 160 different streets in Bristol have regular street play closures in place, 54 other local authorities had instigated similar practices to promote street play, and ~20,000 children and 10,000 adults have been involved in 3,500 street play sessions on 661 streets across the UK. The project aspires to normalizing street play, rather than this only being a regulated event within a designated time and space (see www.playingout.net). Playing Out has, as its primary purpose, supporting children to play out where they live, enabling informal physical activity, while also improving relations between neighbors and developing a sense of community.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In order to examine the potential of Playing Out for combating social exclusion and inequalities, and overcoming barriers between people by fostering community cohesion, we draw on the concept of social capital as the theoretical framework that emerged during the analysis of the findings. Community cohesion is generally understood as the sharing of common values and goals which facilitate social order, and inclusive social networks that enable individuals and communities to establish their social well-being by facilitating access to symbolic and material resources (see Zetter et al., 2006).

These resources can be understood in terms of the sociological concept of capital. This is generally attributed to Pierre Bourdieu, for whom capital was a form of power which determined the capacity that individuals or groups might have to influence or control specific situations (Bourdieu, 1986). The concept of social capital is complex and contested, but there is some consensus that it emphasizes the role of networks and civic norms. Bourdieu (1986, p. 251) defines social capital as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition." The concept has been developed by, among others, Coleman (1988, 1990) and Putnam (1993, 1996, 2000), and it is Putnam's work in particular that informs this paper.

Robert Putnam is an American political scientist who popularized the concept of social capital, which he identified as the crucial element in social organization. Putnam's (1993) focus was on the operationalization of social capital within communities, and specifically how social capital can contribute to the prosperity of the community as a whole, rather than the accumulation of profit for individuals. Putnam defined social capital as the "features of social life–networks, norms and trust– that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam, 1996, p. 56). *Networks* refer to the social contact people have with family and friends; *norms* are shared attitudes toward acceptable behavior; and *trust* in communities is dependent on perceived levels of support among community members.

Putnam (2000) also developed a typology of organizational processes by which social groups invest in and share social capital within and between themselves. He termed these: *bonding social capital* which is the reinforcement of existing relationships (or intra-community), *bridging social capital* which is the formation of new and enduring social connections with previously unconnected people (or inter-community), and *linking social capital* which indicates connections with people in positions of power generally for accessing formal support (community–public agency).

Despite challenges in defining what is meant by social capital, there is widespread acceptance among many social scientists and policy-makers that higher levels of social capital are associated with "a multiplicity of desirable policy outcomes" such as better health, higher educational achievement, better employment outcomes, and lower crime rates (Office for National Statistics, 2001). Putnam (2000) argued that despite the positive social outcomes associated with joining groups, active membership in community groups (in his research based in the USA) is decreasing. For Putnam (2000), the main culprit is the time spent watching television instead of socializing, along with the changing roles of women, geographical mobility reducing local ties, the diminished ability of people with busy lives to come together and generation changes in values and behavior related to civic engagement.

While social capital analyses primarily focus on social outcomes (for example, in the case of Playing Out, this might be improved community cohesion), social movements are understood as seeking more fundamental structural change

which generally requires policy outputs. A comparison of social capital and social movements is provided in **Table 1**, and this informs an understanding of the ways in which social movement concepts might develop, and strengthen, social capital. (Diani, 1992, p. 13) argues that social movements are "Networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individual groups, or associations, engaged in a political conflict, on a basis of shared identity." According to Touraine (1977), there are three interconnected dimensions of social movements: (1) they have a collective identity; (2) they have a clear social adversary; and (3) they are the bearers of a new social model for which they strive.

Our examination of the Playing Out project explores the key features of social capital, organizational processes within which social capital is shared, and the challenges to community cohesion outlined by Putnam, taking into consideration the criticisms of the concept itself. In so doing, we also consider whether combining social movement concepts with social capital enabled Playing Out to achieve more fundamental and sustainable outcomes than if the project had solely been dependent on social capital. The paper is particularly informed by the conceptualization of Putnam that neighborhood events, including those that enable play and physical activity such as Playing Out, offer the potential to bring together social groups with diverse demographic make-up, enhance social capital and address social inequalities (Wilks, 2011).

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite some ambiguity, social capital is generally understood as the property of the group rather than the property of the individual. Hence the most common measures of social capital examine group participation data to find out what is being done and who is doing it. Additional categories used to measure social capital usually include personal, family, and community dimensions such as: demographic and socio-economic status; relationships with family, friends and neighbors; sense of identity and belonging; values and ideologies; and views about the local area.

For the purpose of this study, data were collected via structured interviews with adults ($N = 23$) and children aged between 1.5 and 13 years of age ($N = 37$) carried out during Playing Out events, focusing on the effect of Playing Out on children, relations with neighbors, and views about their neighborhood. This maximized participant recall and enabled perceptions of a relatively large number of participants to be collected in a relatively short period of time. Some of the adult interviews took place within one focus group, which helped to address criticisms that much research has focused on individual responses and then aggregated to assume a community response, rather than considering the collective views of the group (Office for National Statistics, 2001). In addition, interviews were undertaken with local government officials and policy-makers who were involved with Playing Out through their work ($N = 6$). Interviews varied in length from short *in-situ* interviews during the Playing Out events of ∼10 min to longer interviews in the workplaces of officials lasting up to 2 h. The interview

questions were guided by our understanding of the key elements of social capital, including inter-personal relationships, local identity, shared values regarding street play, and the influence of Playing Out on the local area. Given the focus of this particular paper, the data presented is from the interviews with the parents, officials and policy-makers; data from the interviews with the children is published elsewhere (see Play England, 2016).

Alongside our interview data, we observed some Playing Out sessions to experience first-hand some of the issues raised in the interviews. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVivo to assist with the coding of transcriptions. Codes were developed by cross-referencing the analysis of interview transcripts against field notes from the observation and secondary data. Our analysis of the emergent themes was then informed by our reading of the work of Putnam (1993, 1996, 2000) and the theorisations of social movements. We have anonymized all of the children's data, referring only to gender and the age of children by way of context to the narrative. We also anonymize the interview data, referring only to which type of organization each interviewee represents. These are labeled as PO for Playing Out ($N = 1$), PH for public health ($N = 3$), and T for transport officials ($N = 2$), with a number coding to differentiate between interviewees. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Bristol, all participants provided written informed consent, and parents provided informed consent for children to take part in the study.

In what follows, we present the emergent themes from our data collection within the key concepts of social capital identified by Putnam (1996): networks (of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital), norms, and trust. We will then consider the extent to which Playing Out combines dimensions of a social movement to develop and strengthen social capital.

BONDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

The Playing Out scheme appeared to offer the opportunity to reinforce existing relationships within the neighborhood. Some talked of this in terms of "community spirit," enhancing positive feelings about the neighborhood: "Yeah it's definitely created more of a community spirit I would say" (mother of 3 year old): "I think everyone would say hello to each other in this street now, I think it's really improved it as a community, it built a good feeling" (mother of 4 and 9 year olds).

For many, this was simply a result of parents attending events with their children and meeting other parents. A member of the local council who worked in public health and transport described Playing Out as "a great connectivity opportunity for parents … if you're not very sociable, but you've got young children, your children will introduce you to other children's parents … if you don't know children in your street, then if you have children, you will know people in your street" (PH1).

Putnam's concept of bonding social capital refers to communities which are already cohesive but relationships can be enhanced and reinforced through particular events. Many referred to their street as already being "a close community" (mother of 6 and 8 year olds) and "a good community" (mother

TABLE 1 | Comparing social capital and social movement analytical approaches (Hero and Orr, 2015, p. 306).

Dimension	Social capital	Social movements
Social arena focus	Civic (apolitical); "society centered"	Politics/government
"Policy" focus	Varied, diffuse outcomes	Justice/equality/environmental Government decisions/outputs
Concern for equality	Ambiguous, limited	Central
Style	Cooperative, "service," "assistive" (civil)	More contentious
Attainment of democracy defined in terms of …	Participatory; "good government"	Substantive policy outputs; grass-roots inclusion
View of status quo	Implicit affirmation	Need for change, (fundamental) reform
Type of change called for	Relatively specific (not socio-economic "structural")	Broader, social structural; emphatically substantive
Impact on politics	Indirect (spillover of civic into political)	Direct
Social class orientation	Middle (upper) class; (not disadvantaged)	Working/lowerclass (the "marginalized" or often "excluded")
Racial/ethnic conditions and recognition	Homogeneity; similarity	Heterogeneity; difference
Civic participation	End in itself	Means and end

of 8 year old). However, they went on to describe the ways in which Playing Out was "building a community" (mother of 10 month, 4 and 7 olds) and contributing to community cohesion: "I think it's another thing that is bringing it together" (mother of 6 and 8 year olds). One mother described how Playing Out "got everybody chatting, there was a guy who came out at one point who didn't know what was happening, and didn't quite understand but he immediately got nostalgic about how he had lived there all his life and it had been exactly like this when he was a kid and he happened to bump into someone he hadn't seen for 20 years who only lived round the corner" (mother of 8 year old).

The participants indicated that there were a number of positive consequences of this intra-community development. For example, one father explained that Playing Out had decreased some of the social anxiety in his neighborhood which, in turn, had enhanced community relations:

> "It's been really good for neighbors socially as they all come out and chat, there was some opposition at the beginning, but I think that stemmed from social anxiety really, there were lots of reasons given like why can't the children play in the park, if a car gets damaged. But I think the social anxiety element has broken down over time which is good … I think it's helped people feel more at ease about the idea of children. And the fact that people can come out and chat. I know neighbors and you have a repertoire of about one word, 'hi', with for about a year or two, you are now having regular conservations with" (father of 4 and 5 year olds).

The data collected in this study confirmed that, for those engaged with the Playing Out scheme, there were opportunities to reinforce existing relationships within the neighborhood.

BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL

In addition to the evidence of bonding social capital, some participants indicated that Playing Out enabled the formation of new and enduring social connections with previously unconnected people, or what Putnam (1996) refers to as bridging social capital: "I did know a few people, but I know a lot more

now" (mother of 3 year old). One described this in terms of a change in the traditional culture:

> "People are speaking to each other more, and have just a bit more interaction really … people stopping to talk to each other in the street, more friendly waves and hellos and just the general acknowledgement instead of, as you know I am American, sometimes English people can keep themselves to themselves, this has definitely brought people out of their shells a bit more" (mother of 3 year old).

Even people who did not live on the street where Playing Out was taking place indicated that they felt better connected to people in the wider neighborhood, as illustrated in the following statements: "I have got to know more people who live around here, we kind of texted one another to say it's on, it has widened the communication." (non-resident mother of 1 and 4 year olds); "People are seeing people they have never seen, and getting to know people they wouldn't normally interact with, so it's getting people on the street to communicate more as you know" (non-resident mother of 2, 5, 6, and 9 year olds).

This increased bridging social capital was experienced not only for the parents but also for the children:

> "We have got to know a lot more people. I have been on the street for like 5 years now, I didn't know people, and it's the same with him he has got to know the kids, and I've got to know the adults and before this I hardly spoke to anyone, it's nice for the community and for the street" (mother and guardian to two 5 year olds).

Some of the respondents described experiences which challenge one of the criticisms of social capital that voluntary activities often only involve people who are already "integrated" into the community but are less likely to enhance social capital for diverse communities. One mother talked in terms of having the opportunity to: "chat to neighbors that you wouldn't normally get to chat to, and everybody comes out and it's nice to just have a catch up" (mother of 2 and 5 year olds). Others were more explicit about the opportunities to form social connections with people from different socio-economic backgrounds, which tends to be a focus of social movement rather than social capital analyses (see

Table 1) and demonstrates the potential of projects like Playing Out to address social inequalities by combining elements of social movement with social capital:

> "So for the parents and the kids socially I think it's brilliant. Especially where we are placed, we are placed between AG school and AB school, so we have a complete mix because of where we are, we have different schools. So, for the kids to mix in that, and for parents to mix in that, makes a big difference" (mother of 10 month, 4 and 7 olds).

This social diversity included opportunities for children to form connections across gender and age divides:

> "Yeah, actually yes he was definitely socializing with some of the girls he wouldn't normally who are in his class and some boys he's never been in play dates with, and he was fascinated with some of the children from the other school who were on the big bikes as well slightly older children and chatting to them too" (mother of 8 year old).

Here we also see a shift from social capital which is largely understood in terms of homogenous conditions, to the attention given by social movements to heterogeneous and diverse social conditions (see **Table 1**).

Finally, one mother described the ways in which Playing Out had facilitated connections with members of the community who were socially isolated by virtue of age, disability, and/or not having children of their own:

> "two neighbors who don't have children have come out and been a part of it which is lovely and they like that whole thing this feels like a road where people have fun. And there is a quite a bit of an older couple who live there who really like it as well, they wouldn't come out but they like the idea of there is a community in the road … the other thing which is really nice is one of the ladies has a wheel chair and this is really accessible for her son and her, and in terms of she can whizz up and down and they can all be on their roller skates holding on to her as she goes up and down the road; but actually she can't get into my house and it's awful how it can affect relationships, access is a real problem for her but this means she's part of our little community (mother of 4 and 9 year olds).

In summary, Playing Out appears to offer opportunities to cement existing relationships and develop new relationships within the immediate neighborhood, which supports research evidence from outside the UK that street closures for play increases social contact between neighbors (D'Haese et al., 2015). In order to achieve the more fundamental outcomes of a social movement, such initiatives also need to develop broader relationships, in this case away from the streets themselves into influential networks by combining elements of social capital with social movement concepts.

LINKING SOCIAL CAPITAL

The final way that Playing Out might contribute to enhanced networks is through linking social capital, or the connections of people in the community with those in positions of power,

generally for accessing formal support. One of the organizers of Playing Out identified the importance of working with members of the local council: "very supportive of what we were doing … they helped to lobby within the council … we worked quite closely with them and helped put together the wording for this new pilot policy" (PO3) which enabled streets to apply for regular Playing Out events. Council members also identified the benefits of "support from the Cabinet of the Council, so the Elected Members where they've sort of championed Playing Out at the highest level" (PH2). In part, this was due to the project being led by like-minded individuals with mutual concerns, within the local community and at government level. The interviewee from Playing Out explained that the local city council:

> "I think they just thought it was a great idea for lots of reasons, so we had support from the people that were involved in children's services and play, because it was good for children's well-being, it was an opportunity for play, and that has intrinsic benefits. And then public health, obviously, supported it, because it was about physical activity, and getting children more physically active… It fitted where the council wanted to go in terms of highways policy because they're looking at trying to encourage walking and cycling, and more sustainable forms of transport, and discourage car use, so it fits with that message and the idea that streets are for people, not just for cars… And also it fitted with the neighbors and community building and community empowerment agenda. So I think it was just like… they loved it because it fitted all those different policy areas" (PO1).

In order to facilitate this, a steering group was established which meets every quarter. The steering group has representatives from Playing Out, public health, transport and highway officials, and the police. In establishing this steering group, the members were mindful of being inclusive and attempting to address social inequalities in ways that resonate with social movement analyses:

> "We know from in the city that well-educated people don't have a fear of the city council, they engage with the city council, and engage in communications and consultation. Whereas, some of the more deprived areas, which aren't from the same background, are more hesitant and fearful of engaging with the city council" (T2).

Parents of those participating in Playing Out sessions identified that Playing Out not only presented the opportunity to meet more people, but also created opportunities for other community events. In some cases, this was simply a matter of being included in informal social events: "When people on the street have functions on, have a little do, we get invited now, and it's nice" (mother and guardian of 5 year old son and 5 year old girl). However, in one street, the participants explained that Playing Out had led to the development of a residents' association.

> "There is talk of getting more trees, along the houses, there is a grant application being looked at, to bring a greener feeling to the street. There is also a resident association. B Road Facebook page that was good, I think that was a direct consequence of Playing Out, it kind of all came really, really good, it's a really good space to air your views and ideas, it's kind of weird to Facebook the people

who live on your street but it makes a lot of sense I think" (father of 4 and 5 year olds).

A perceived consequence of Playing Out was the enhancement of social capital such that communities could work together more effectively to leverage power and achieve shared values and objectives. As the transport official explained: "It's bringing communities together" (T1). One mother (of a 10 year old) stated that while she "knew quite a few people, this is a really neighborly street," since Playing Out the local community were now more united in sharing attitudes toward acceptable behavior:

> "if any issues come up, for example we had a big demonstration as there was a threat to the allotments behind our houses, and people feel that they know one another and they are able to talk about their concerns. For example we have a lot of travelers who come and park up all around and people like to moan about that, or if there is a problem or keys are lost and someone's found them we will talk about it, and say 'I found those keys do they belong to so and so'. It's very easy to talk to people."

There was also evidence of residents working together on community issues, as one mother explained: "If issues come up people are willing to engage in whatever issue it may be, they are willing to listen" (mother of 10 year old). There were examples of specific issues such as: "we have this eyesore nearby and we have tried to rally together, to get the council on removing rubbish and things like that" (mother of 3 year old), and "there was an issue with graffiti in the road, and everyone all sort of pulled together as we were all in contact anyway, it was quite funny" (mother of 3, 4, 9, and 10 year olds). In these examples, there is further evidence that Playing Out provided the foundations for combining social capital with elements of a wider social movement working toward broader social reform beyond the provision of the street play sessions.

This sense of enhanced community is also related to a feeling of safety and trusting neighbors.

A public health specialist on the local council, in talking about Playing Out, described the "wider benefits like community cohesion, so people knowing each other and then that's important for things like community safety, so people knowing their neighbors, knowing their street … they have got an ethos of connecting different generations so making sure that older people on the street feel as involved in activity" (PH2). This supports evidence from other studies that increasing the perceived safety of streets increased social cohesion (Gill, 2007).

Many parents related this to the *bridging social capital* discussed earlier. One mother (of a 10-year-old) explained that getting to know the local community better meant that "there aren't any strangers on the street not really" as a result of which she now allowed her son out to play on the street even when Playing Out was not running because she trusted the local community to be a supportive and a safe environment.

As a result of increased trust, there were also examples of parents cooperatively looking after each other's children: "If I was here then maybe they would be in the garden at the back. Or if I mean 2 doors down is another mother and we would say 'I'll

watch them scoot up and down whilst you get a few jobs done or make tea or whatever and then we'll swap'. So we kind of did that anyway, a bit of a you know a bike up and down or a bit of scoot up and down the road" (mother of 2 and 5 year olds).

So far, we have described the positive social benefits of Playing Out with regards to community cohesion and enhanced social capital. We will now address some of the criticisms of the concept and potential limitations of the project, before giving attention to the ways in which the project combined social capital with elements of social movements.

CRITICISMS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

The concept of social capital has been challenged on a number of levels (see Zetter et al., 2006; Tzanakis, 2013). In general terms, Putnam's conceptualization is grounded in the USA, and it is important to be aware of the cultural context when applying the concept to British-based events. Additionally, Putman's work has been criticized for failing to consider the concept of social capital within wider power relations (Kitchin and Howe, 2013), which we have addressed in this paper by indicating the ways in which a combination of social capital with elements of social movements can help address power relations, which we will explain further in the next section.

There are several criticisms of the concept of social capital and here we attend to a concern that a focus on voluntary associations that incorporate residents and citizens who are already "integrated" into a wider society should not be generalized to assume that community activities might enhance social capital for a wider more diverse community (Clopton, 2011).As one mother stated: "That is my only downside to Playing Out, is that I want it to be more inclusive" (mother of 10 month, 4 and 7 olds). This is a particular criticism of bonding social capital, which has the potential to create such closed-knit groups that they can be exclusive and even prevent engagement with wider civic society, such that Clopton (2011) and Whittaker and Holland-Smith (2014) refer to this as "the dark side" of social capital.

Some participants indicated that Playing Out could be seen as a middle class phenomenon: "the social dynamics here are such that people are professional and middle class, they are massively interested in their children's wellbeing and education" (mother of 1, 4, and 7 year olds). One of the public health officials considered this in the context of health inequalities:

> "one of the issues around Playing Out is … it is disproportionately taken up by more affluent families and streets, whose children are probably already doing more physical activity than children in poorer communities … the inverse care law is that poorer communities are less able to articulate their needs, and they are less able to take up some of these things than the more middle-class families are; and they may have less time as parents to become involved, as well. They might be doing three jobs just to bring in enough money to keep their family going" (PH1).

This also supports the contention by Putnam (1993) that individuals who are more likely to become involved with social

projects and policies are those who are already closely connected with the community network and have considerable social capital. However, arguably these are the very people whose work may also benefit the wider community and contribute more to a stable democratic society (Tzanakis, 2013).

The evidence from a national survey of Playing Out street closures found that these took place in neighborhoods with a wide range of deprivation Play England (2016). Here we critique the work of Hero and Orr (2015) presented in **Table 1**, as our evidence challenges the perception that Playing Out is dependent on levels of social capital that are often attributed to upper/middle social classes (Hero and Orr, 2015), and lends support to the argument that Playing Out draws on aspects of social movements which enables socio-economic change. There was an awareness among the public health officials that Playing Out offers this potential, but that this needs to be located in a wider cultural context to maximize the benefits:

"there is a big inequity about access to green space; but the inequity, I'm told, is actually largely that poorer communities often do have access to green space but they don't use it, which is an interesting cultural issue, rather than a physical issue … there is a tendency for them not to be culturally shaped to look for opportunities for activity in parks and green space; to stay very close to the area where they live". (PH1)

Furthermore, there was recognition that Playing Out was primarily focused upon those people with children:

"There hasn't been a lot of people coming who don't have children, I think there's been quite a big bias towards the people with children" (mother of 4 and 3 year old).

"I mean the people that use it are mothers with children, and mothers with older children all know each other already because of the school run and stuff" (mother of 16 month old).

However, as we have outlined, the concerns about "the dark side" of bonding social capital were countered by the experiences of bridging social capital which enables a more supportive, trusting and inclusive community (Kay and Bradbury, 2009; Clopton, 2011; Whittaker and Holland-Smith, 2014). Our study found significant evidence that Playing Out did facilitate the formation of new and enduring social connections with previously unconnected people, perhaps in part because those involved had an awareness of social inequalities: "Well one guy stewarding, he doesn't have children, he's just happy to get involved, in the kind of community thing, which I thought was nice" (parent of 5 and 8 year olds). In what follows, we will consider the ways in which Playing Out combined elements of social movements to build on, and strengthen, social capital.

PLAYING OUT: A MOVEMENT FOR MOVEMENT?

Touraine (1977) identified three dimensions of a social movement. First, social movements are argued to have a

collective identity, which does not necessarily distinguish them from the loose organizational entity that also constitutes social capital (Diani, 1992). A representative of Playing Out explained the relationship between members of the community and the council officials, who formed part of the sort of collaborative network that may constitute social capital and/or a social movement:

"in a way the council's role is quite crucial but it's quite small. Like all they have to do really is process an application and give permission. Whereas somebody on their own street who wants to do this, they have to talk to all their neighbors, they have to get support for it, they have to deal with people that are opposed, they have to think through the practicalities and the safety of it, and organize people to volunteer, and get the right equipment in place" (PO1).

Here we see an example of civil society in action, whereby networks of associations and informal activities can largely exist apart from the state and provide the basis of a collective identity, and cooperative action can begin to influence policy (Rathberg Smith and Grønbjerg, 2006).

One of the public health officials suggested that the success of Playing Out was largely due to the social context within which it was developed which provided a greater sense of collective identity akin to a social movement. He described Bristol City in terms of the:

"underlying civic mentality that we do green things in Bristol. That then gives a kind of permission … to be able to do things which perhaps in … other comparable cities … you wouldn't necessarily feel the right climate to do those things. These are hard to be able to pin down; they're intangibles, but they are nonetheless a feeling within civic society … which says: yes, this is the sort of thing we do in Bristol" (PH1).

He went on to explain the importance of the supportive collaborative network:

"if you have a local transport plan and the local Sustainable Transport Fund, which are all doing pro-walking, pro-cycling, pro-environment initiatives in the transport sector, then it means Playing Out isn't so easily targeted. It's in a supportive structure. It's with a group of other things and each one of them makes the sum of the total, the synergetic properties, stronger than each one on its own" (PH1).

While this suggests the more cooperative style associated with social capital, there was also evidence of a more contentious approach which defines social movements (see **Table 1**). The second dimension by which social movements enable a development of social capital is that they have a clear social adversary whereas social capital emphasizes collaborative social networks. The primary social adversary was perceived to be the attitude of some members of the local council. One public health official described the influence of the dominant political ideology in terms of a social adversary:

"the Conservative government nationally isn't really interested in reducing health inequalities at heart. They're more interested in economic growth … the Conservatives would be opposed but they're generally opposed, as free marketers, to the idea of restricting the ability of people to drive cars anywhere they like at whatever time of day … We have a major, major program of £20 billion now going to road construction and widening schemes. In a period of austerity, if you wanted to help the population you wouldn't put your money into that. That helps the rich, of course." (PH1).

These limitations were reinforced by some council officials in a small number of areas, as the interviewee from Playing Out explains:

"And we also found that some of the streets that had been involved in the pilot project were saying "We really want to do this now on a regular basis. We want to be able to do it every week or every month." But when we went back to the council to say "Is that possible? Can people apply to do a whole year's worth of dates?," they said "No, the policy is you can have three street parties a year, three events. You can close your street three times a year and that's the maximum." And when we questioned it, they said "No, our primary responsibility is to keep the traffic flowing around the city, and that's the priority. And we feel that three times a year, for a street, is a reasonable balance."" (PO1)

The Playing Out representative explains how they came to realize that:

"it was going to be a very difficult process, that it was going to take time. We had opposition even to doing very small changes to the street. So we put in some big planters at one end just to slow the cars coming into the street. And even that, people were complaining, they were saying they felt it made the street more dangerous. But basically, they were thinking from the point of view of car drivers" (PO1).

This situation meant that there was a need to convince council officials to change the legislative process, which demonstrated an impact on politics that was both indirect (illustrative of social capital) and direct (suggesting a combination of social capital with elements of a social movement) (see **Table 1**). As one transport representative explained to us, initially "you had to have, basically, complete buy-in from the whole street before I signed it off" (T1). Eventually, the Council interpreted an old piece of legislation, the Town Police Clauses Act of 1847, for the purposes of delivering Playing Out events, and reviewed the criteria on which someone could lodge an objection to a temporary street play order (TPSO). As another transport representative explained: "we would not consider any objections to TPSOs that were based on the principle that, 'Children shouldn't be playing in the street. There's a park round the corner. They should be playing in the park.' So, the view was that if they were objecting to the principle of street play, we would set those objections aside because they're not valid, because the view of Bristol City Council was about promoting street play, so they weren't valid objections in that respect. Whereas, previously, applications to do play events in streets had actually been turned down based on the principle objection that kids shouldn't be playing in the street" (T2). The result of the council's decision to adopt street play meant "it became a diktat that it's a council thing and we will support this... So, because of that change in mind-set for the authority, I then removed the objection clause" (T1).

This supports Putnam's (2000) argument that society now has to rely on formal institutions to accomplish what used to be achieved through informal networks and social capital. Playing Out ultimately succeeded through a combination of social capital with some of the principles of a social movement. This involved developing cooperative networks with local government and shifting the focus from exclusively social and civic attention to more political and governmental issues including policy reform.

The third dimension of a social movement is that they are the bearers of a new social model that they strive for. Our interviewee from Playing Out explained that: "We wanted to find a way to make our street somewhere that children can safely play … what we wanted from the beginning was a culture change" (PO1). In order to achieve this new social model, social movements generally progress through a number of phases (Blumer, 1971): formation and problem identification, activism in search of solutions, and dealing with the aftermath of emergent policies and practices.

The representative from Playing Out described how they first identified what they regarded as the problem:

"I just believe it's a right for children to be able to play freely outside their own home. You know, just for their own enjoyment and sense of freedom and independence, just in itself. I think that's enough of a reason to be doing what we're doing. I don't think it should need to be justified by children needing more physical activity, or you know, whatever, or neighbors needing to get to know each other. That's all nice, as in like an extra benefit, but for me, it comes down to... it's a fundamental human right that children should be able to have access to that space and feel safe there." (PO1)

This is consistent with theorization from the perspective of social capital that there is a search for change that is specific (playing safely outside the house) rather than the fundamental structural and socio-economic change called for when combining social capital with elements of social movements (see Hero and Orr, 2015; **Table 1**). Playing Out did draw on dimensions of social movements by proceeding toward activism in search of solutions:

"the Cabinet members for Health, Transport and Children were very supportive of what we were doing, and they had both been and seeing Playing Out happening on streets. And they both helped to lobby within the council to get the Cabinet decision that actually there should be a trial, a one-year trial, of a new policy that would let streets close on a regular basis for play … And it was named The Temporary Play Street Order or TPSO and that was launched in September 2011, and by the end of the year, so by September 2012, there were I think 16 or 17 streets had applied, using that policy … it was very led by residents, it was led by people who had heard about our project, and they said "We want to do this on our street". And they had gone to the council, and pushed for that policy change to happen." (PO1)

This is illustrative of the ways in which social capital can evolve into a social movement. (Tarrow, 1994 p. 3–4) argues that social movements often start loosely structured and informal, but become "collective challenges to people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities." In this example, we see evidence of ways in which civic engagement and robust relationships among neighbors can drive policy change when government officials support public involvement in decision-making through democratic participatory principles (see Fung, 2004; Fagotto and Fung, 2006). This was the case even against the backdrop of a government that some perceived to be a social adversary because there had been the adoption of a more emphatic approach requesting fundamental reform.

The final phase of a social movement is dealing with the aftermath of new policies and practices that emerge as a result. While social capital tends to be cooperative and affirmative of the status quo, social movements are often more contentious (Hero and Orr, 2015). The Playing Out representative described the ways in which the residents' actions not only influenced government policy in the way described by council officials above, but that this has led to a new approach to policy and practice:

> "we met with the Department for Health civil servants to just raise the issue that it wasn't easy for councils to put these supportive policies in place. There was no obvious legislation that allows them to do that. So what Bristol had done was actually a bit risky. It was a bit unclear whether they actually had the legal basis to do that. And on a practical level, that means they've been a bit cautious about the way they've promoted it and pushed it … So where there's been opposition, they've tended to just refuse permission even if most of the people on the street want it … But that's kind of changed in the last year or so … So now, they've actually changed their policy with objections. So unless somebody has an objection that's on a really practical basis, they don't tend to give it that much weight. So if somebody's just saying "We don't think this is a good idea," "I don't like it," I don't want the noise of children playing outside" or "My car might get scratched" or anything like that, then the council tend to say "Well, I'm sorry but most people want this, it's going to happen, you just have to deal with it." So that's been a real change." (PO1)

The process and progress of the Playing Out project has demonstrated the significance of social capital, and the implications of combining social capital with elements of a social movement, for sustained outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

Playing Out presents an example of a community-led project that largely succeeded due to the social capital of the individuals who led the project, working collaboratively with local government officials to influence policy outcomes on an area of mutual interest. This supports the social capital agenda proposed by Putnam (2000) among others, but suggests that the success of the project was also due to adopting some approaches more akin to a social movement for more contentious actions and outcomes.

While Playing Out has achieved the status of a social movement, there is still capacity for wider structural and socio-economic change. As the interviewee from Playing Out explains:

> "So what's been a bit of an adjustment for us is accepting that, for the time being, things aren't going to change as much as we would like, and that this serves a purpose as an interim measure. It does not completely substitute… It's not the same as the long-term vision of children having complete freedom and to play outside independently. It's very different from that, it's very organized, it's very adult-led, it's supervised, it's still a contained space and a contained time. So there's lots of problems with it, you know, ideologically it's not the end result of what we want. But I think we've accepted that it does a job and it does give children a little taste, of an experience that they wouldn't have otherwise." (PO1)

She is also cautious in linking Playing Out with other policy outputs, for example a movement toward a 20 mile per hour speed limit in residential areas: "the council makes links with that and the 20 mile an hour policy. But I think they complement each other, they're just both supportive of the idea of streets being more liveable shared spaces, so… but I don't think… you couldn't say that the Temporary Play Street Order has directly influenced that policy, I don't think" (PO1).

We identified at the outset of this paper that, while social capital analyses primarily focus on social outcomes, social movements are understood as seeking more fundamental structural change which generally requires policy outputs. Specifically, while both are related to the attainment of democracy, social capital is generally associated with participatory democracy while social movements require more substantive policy outputs. Playing Out is now described as a "national movement" which moved beyond the local ambitions of some like-minded parents, to influencing policy and even working with housing associations and architects to review urban planning and enable play-friendly estates. In this way, while Playing Out started as a project led by those with social capital, as it increasingly adopted elements of a social movement so it provided the foundations for broader, more fundamental reform, which also has the potential to address social inequalities.

We will conclude in the words of one of the public health officials interviewed, who suggested that the attainment of democracy can be illustrated in terms of "democratic streets":

> "I use the phrase 'democratic streets'; a street should be multi-purpose, and what we've lost is the multi-purpose with the rise of the mass ownership of cars. So democratic streets is what we need, where streets are available to the young and the old, on foot, on two wheels, without motor, as well as allowing people into the streets as guests if they drive a motor vehicle. And that's the only way we can make democratic streets truly open to all, which will improve population health." (PH1)

The democratic street is symbolic of a way to achieve a more democratic society: when social change projects such as Playing Out combine social capital with elements of a social movement to inform policy and practice, they offer the potential to resist social inequality, produce change (in this case enabling sporting and

other vigorous physical activity), and foster social relationships which provide the basis for a more humane social world.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the ethics committee of the University of Bristol with written informed consent from all subjects. All

subjects gave written informed consent in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The protocol was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Bristol.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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