

Article

Outcomes beyond Evaluation: The Impetus and Measure of Relationships within Alternative Provisions

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Abstract: In the context of rising interest in Alternative Provisions (APs) amongst policymakers and researchers in England, this article examines social capital and accountability in this ‘new’ field of enquiry. APs stress the value of supportive relationships for the generation of trust, belonging, reciprocities, and a broadening of these aspects of social capital through close networks, but how are these to be portrayed through emerging accountability measures? We focus on the potential and limitations of social capital for encompassing more than measurable outcomes. The article will revisit social capital by analysing the original sites of the production of this theory and its significance to emerging policy processes and relationship-based practices in APs. We argue that as a metaphor for the positive consequences of relationships, social capital has a place in the knowledge and processes that underpin APs, but its significance rests in its ability to overcome the issues related to social segregation, power, and (school) exclusion.

Keywords: alternative provision; evaluation; social capital; youth; school exclusion



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1. Introduction and Context

How should the trust, reciprocities, and belonging flowing from relationships formed within Alternative Provisions (APs) be portrayed through accountability measures? This question has often been ignored in policy, but the significance of these social capitals is widely implied by policymakers, researchers, and staff as important to the relational labour undertaken in APs [1]. APs provide support for children who are unable to access ‘regular’ schools for reasons such as school exclusion, behavioural issues, or illness. These settings can vary between state, private, and voluntary enterprises, including medical provisions, or vocation-based learning, which are mainly set offsite or away from regular schools. APs are often innovative but tend to be similar with respect to their emphasis on non-standard curriculums [2] and on close relationships that foster trust, belonging, and reciprocity to engage children [3]. These relationships can aid a child’s short-term outcomes, which may represent a significant achievement given the complex factors that lead to their enrolment into an AP (Department for Education (DfE) [4]. However, if the long-term outcomes of those who enrol in APs continue to be poor, such as prolonged unemployment, inadequate qualifications, and an increased risk of criminal activity [5], then it is crucial to review the social capital embedded within these relationships in terms of the nature of the capital it contains, gives access to, and the actions it facilitates. This is because social capital can be non-inclusive, and networks can also be resource poor [6]. This article aims to examine the significance of APs’ capability to create social capital that may enhance (or disrupt) a child’s educational outcomes. This discussion is set against an inchoate-English-policy landscape that progressively requires APs to prove ‘impact’ through standardised, measurable, and predefined outcomes [4]. Indeed, many APs now form part of a continuum of targeted practice interventions, which has emerged in child and public-health-related policy and are concerned with classifying recalcitrant children (4–16 years) of age. These practices

are underpinned by ‘prevention science’ [7], which coalesces with predefined outcomes, to privilege individual interventions and endorse specific resources and knowledge for a child into claims of ‘value for money’. Such mechanisms of accountability and value, risk providing a simplified lens over how relational resources contribute to or challenge a child’s experiences in the context of growing social inequalities and educational disadvantages. This is due, in part, to a high rate of school exclusions in English schools [5]. Our article is rooted within ongoing debates over how these emergent inequalities and disadvantages might be evident in the struggles of access, closure, and advantage gained from the types and forms of social capital(s) either available or inaccessible to children in APs.

Although the number of children who are permanently excluded from school comprises a relatively small proportion of the school-aged population, children as young as four receive fixed-period suspensions, occasionally leading to permanent exclusion. Removal from school due to exclusion has also been found to undermine a child’s development of self-regulation and lead to perceived poor self-regulation [8] and is a risk factor of longer-term social exclusion [9]. A total of 80% of excluded older children enrolled in APs (14–16 years) also fail to return to regular school [10]. Furthermore, 82.7% of the children who populate APs are identified as having special educational needs (SEND); the majority (72.2%) are boys from ‘poor’ or working-class backgrounds [10], and 46% are cautioned or sentenced for criminal offences [11]. Therefore, APs cater to children who are regarded as unruly, are disengaged from learning, and have learning difficulties and/or SEND [12]. Research on this part of the school population has long emphasised the ‘positive’ aspects of relationships to reverse a lack of trust and engagement in these children’s educational lives [13]. AP advocates also place much emphasis on relationships as welcome recognition that market-driven paradigms—emphasising disciplinary accountabilities in regular schools—are too narrow for some children, undermining the value of trust and belonging formed between a child and staff in alternative educational settings. How a child’s life is differentially affected by social capital, defined as “the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks” [14] (p. 4), is still subject to debate. While this theory remains crucial to the relational labour of APs, it may come into conflict with impact-measurement methods that are based upon predefined outcomes, ‘checkbox’ or numerical data. While policymakers and researchers might have an awareness of such tensions, this article is apprehensive about how the impetus towards measuring objective impacts may include outcomes beyond evaluation.

2. Accountability in Alternative Provisions

In policy terms, APs have often been viewed by the English government as a forgotten service, with a lack of status and resources. Whilst working ‘under the radar’ has historically enabled a lack of monitoring by schools [15], and allowed APs to escape scrutiny, it renders these settings vulnerable to underfunding, the latest policy and practice trends, and public criticisms. For example, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results are key indicators of successful schooling for a child at the age of 16 in England. Only four per cent of children enrolled in AP settings pass English and Maths compared with sixty-four per cent in regular schools, and only one per cent will go on to get the five good GCSEs they need to succeed [16]. Many APs in England also rely on various sources of funding, including from local authorities, charities, school trusts, and philanthropy. This means that the practice of evaluation in APs is shaped by three interlinking policies and advocate agendas. The most visible is a lack of appropriate funding for settings to tackle fuel and inflation costs and negating the impact of the systematic dismantling of universal children’s services, especially youth-work provision. In England, these impacts are stark for working-class and/or minoritised communities. There is also currently no discernible relationship between how the local AP sector operates in terms of supply (number of providers) or demand (level of usage). The lack of funding and the requirements of multiple resource holders may act discursively as an impetus for evaluation, pressuring organisations to prioritise and creatively justify their impact to survive. Threats to budgets can be an

impediment to professional training, investment in appropriate educational facilities, and job security. This is in contradiction to the evaluation for learning, the facilitation of an honest discussion of the impact of APs, and their constraints on the children they educate.

Another policy agenda moulding evaluation is set against suggestions that the AP field, in its current form, is inefficient, with policymakers calling for better standards of accountability and effectiveness within the sector. This is highlighted in the SEND/AP paper [4], which states that providers must be more accountable for their impact on the children they cater for, with preferences for quantitative systems and tacit and open psychological tools of evaluation. The adherents of such tools are to imply an intuitive professional perception of what may constitute 'positive' change for a child, increasingly in terms of epidemiological knowledge [17]. From these perspectives, there is a need for a range of targeted practices and policies which promote 'trauma-informed' care and in developing evidence of *what works* to repair an individual's supposed deficits or needs [18]. These approaches are reflected widely in APs through the use of individual educational plans, portfolios, and other targeted activities [19]. As these practices increase in usage, however, they are more open to criticism. For example, should AP staff support a child to articulate their own concerns or to negate the supposed identifiable reasons for a child's exclusion? Researchers have also criticised such work as it assigns no truth to the structural deficits that exclude children [20], or in offering limited recognition that children are agents in providing their own forms of mutuality and solidarity [21]. Interventions based on needs are heavily disputed [18]. The prominence of such practices in APs can go unchallenged, partly, as they are understood through a discourse of 'benevolent humanitarianism' [22], or as a positive in the life of an otherwise *unruly* child. This can obscure practices which affect that weigh differently upon disadvantaged children. Inevitably, at the heart of this discussion are questions relating to issues of expert power. These interventions are further incentivised by the last policy agenda shaping evaluation: decisions that are based upon socio-economic value. In England, the interaction of quasi-market mechanisms and evaluation practices of comparison are viewed as 'social investment machines' which create experimental ways of estimating the monetary impact of individual outcomes [23]. The results are often seen in the various techniques, language, and the logic of financial evaluation, as well as in policy statements. That is, the social benefits of APs are increasingly assigned a financial value that indicates their relative value compared to the cost of school exclusions, criminal acts, and prolonged unemployment.

These three policies, practice, and impact agendas produce tensions and enable contestations. Technologies that measure, compare, and seek to control create cultures of performativity that restricts what organisations do, whilst rewarding engagements in these processes [24]. Such emerging and established approaches to impact measurements also incentivise inter-school competition and individual progress narratives. All of these can undermine the AP staff and children's understanding of the value of social capital formed within APs, as we discuss below.

3. Social Capital: Conceptualising Evaluation beyond Individual Outcomes

Many researchers have long criticised outcomes-based measurement for relying upon outside impositions over what can count as a 'successful outcome', or for narrowing the complexity of human experiences to a series of scientific truths [25]. The social benefits that flow from networks in APs are discernibly wider and far more nuanced than what can be measured. The benefits anchored in APs can perhaps be distilled from existing and emerging research. This includes the value of affective relationships [26], with a focus on staff's affective labour with children and the importance of the care inherent in this relational work [27]. These relationships often seek to improve, for example, belonging [28], engagement in learning [29], pro-social behaviours [30], reintegration [31], and basic qualifications [32]. The cachet imputed to such social-network benefits in APs suggests a relational form of inclusion as social justice. Emerging AP policy is, therefore, committed to promoting improved opportunities and social justice for all children and

relies—perhaps, more heavily than other areas of education—on social capital as the key to achieving these. In rethinking the boundaries of social justice, the benefits associated with social capital have long held currency in relation to achieving ‘successful’ social and educational outcomes for children in school [33]. Social capital has also been stretched by policymakers and researchers to ameliorate various social ills and problems and has appeared in many forms; most notably, in the rediscovery of trust and (and a sense of) belonging as ‘good’ for bettering a tangle of perceived pathologies that are often associated with children now accessing APs [34]. However, trust and belonging—as key aspects of social capital—are also context specific and highly complex [35]. APs are also, arguably, situated at the bottom of an unequal English education system, where the uneven distribution of different capitals or the key ‘profits of membership’ gained from diverse networks [36] are often downplayed [37]. To investigate such issues, it is crucial to look closely at three founding social-capital theorists.

There are many useful published works that spell out the vagaries and slippages built into the concept and its associated aspects by its progenitors [38]. However, we do not wish to discuss these issues here. For brevity, this concept has three origins. All three theorists broadly accept the general definition of social capital as referring to networks based on norms, which enable actors to trust one another and from which an actor can also obtain certain types of advantage. However, there are differences between theorists that relate to their assumptions about the nature of society, power, and purpose of social capital. Such diverse interpretations are often ignored in the descriptions of social capital found in APs. Coleman [39,40], for example, was concerned with the value of social closure or social bonds; notably, it is the close or intrusive surveillance of ‘poor’ children and families which affects their behaviour in and attitude towards schooling. These bonding forms of social capital are widely reflected in policy. This is best evidenced in the Behaviour in Schools guidance or ‘strong behavioral cultures’ [41] (p. 59) and the SAFE (Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed) taskforce teams that aim to support dysfunctional children via the use of close relationships. In current policy documents [4], close relationships are useful assets to enforce sanctions and resources, realised by nurturing a shared expectation among AP staff and children. APs are, therefore, viewed as useful to nurture types of bounded or closed systems, which may not solve social disadvantages, but they seemingly provides a relational form of inclusion that make it possible for such disadvantages not to exist.

Putman’s [42,43] analysis of social capital, particularly when focusing upon ‘poor’ areas, highlighted an awareness that ‘good’ communities are characterised by three factors: strong social norms, networks, and civic infrastructure. Putman draws particular attention to the value of the possibilities from secondary activities such as Physical Education (PE) and sports, which hold a certain status and structure in many societies. For Putman, ‘*sports provide good venues for social creation*’ [44] or as enabling connections that foster pro-social behaviours and generalised trust that are outward looking. Indeed, Nicholson and Hoye [45] argue that the presence of sports in youth culture creates a vehicle through which to reach the disaffected youth. Unsurprisingly, these activities have grown in significance in AP settings [46]. They are deemed to assist the pro-associational life of children and support the morals attributed to the totality of civilised society [47]. All things being equal then, bonding, and bridging capital (Table 1) offers measurable levels of social interaction between actors that instils productive habits, reciprocity, and social obligations, which are the supposed keys to a civilised society.

Table 1. Types of social capital (partially adapted from [48]).

Type of Capital	Social Capital in AP Settings	Effects on Children
Bonding capital: High trust, belonging and reciprocity.	The support, guidance, and information a child receives from peers and AP staff: teacher/peer expectation. An example may be the existence of internal (and small) study groups or individual activities.	Free exchange of information and skills; strong influence on identity formation; poor access to new knowledge but high trust placed in information received from peers/staff.
Bridging capital: Open networks, exemplified by shared norms, goals and diverse memberships, but more limited reciprocity.	Inter (peer and professional) group support. Membership of internal (sports) clubs and engagements with a range of AP-related services (youth or peer mentoring services, individual or group-based counselling, careers adviser).	Free exchange of a variety of ideas, in group skills/between groups; potential resources for identity renewal; generalised trust in group knowledge; and relationships with those within the education system is context dependent.

The rather linear way in which bonding forms of social capital are applied to a child as desirable to, or what a child should, encounter in APs—for the norms and abilities they seemingly encourage—can risk ignoring how inequalities for children in APs are experienced [49]. Bourdieu’s critical schema is thus crucial here, as it acknowledges that trust and belonging can also limit the choices and agency of learners. That is, capital-based theory is “*a theory of privilege rather than a theory of inadequacy*” [50] (p. 760). This has significant relevance to new understandings of disadvantaged children’s experiences within AP, as it can resist framing a child or young person through deficit discourse. Rather, it acknowledges that social capital is unequally distributed within segregated settings, creating structures of advantage and disadvantage. A child’s restricted access to certain networks, and the capitals they nurture, underpins a range of inequalities within and beyond AP. For example, access to capitals in individual lives influence a child’s capacity for adopting a work-related disposition, attributes, or a valued identity and, therefore, affects educational status and labour trajectories over time. Bourdieu, therefore, rightly emphasises the importance of ‘the social’ as the basis to an expansive sense of agency and identity, and views aspects of social capital as malign forces to be disassembled and redistributed to achieve social justice. His ideas of social capital for forming a power ‘to’ or to liberate individuals are, therefore, crucial to illuminate the various tensions and challenges inherent in the spaces and places children are being increasingly located in, as discussed below.

4. The Social Benefits of APs: Tensions and Challenges

Much of the recent interest in developing trust and belonging in the AP literature has been attributed to these social capitals of either a mechanical and/or mythical quality. If AP policymakers and practitioners intend to use social capital to improve social outcomes, it seems appropriate to acknowledge the divisive features of relationships and the associated resources of trust and belonging that seemingly flow from these networks. First, while there is general agreement in the literature that relationships, belonging, and trust are fundamental to a child flourishing in a school environment [51], there is little or no agreement on how these constructs should be understood, measured, and assessed [52]. These issues arise in part because the literature is broad, with authors approaching these topics from differing perspectives and with little attempt to integrate understanding across different contexts. This complexity is obscured by the diverse nature of AP settings, which fail to situate similar arenas for the application of these social capitals with the difficulties that have beset would-be users. For example, the youth-work and sport-development literature has long identified the value of trust and belonging as the ‘positive effects of sociability’ [14] (p. 22). Yet, an over-reliance on bounded relationships of similarity and familiarity can be non-inclusive and exclusive. For example, many disabled children find a closed environment is conducive to segregation rather than engagement [53], and some sports staff can inadvertently create a climate where they naturalise heterosexuality, and

perpetuate forms of discrimination [54]. The point is not to debunk the impact of sport that is emerging around APs, but to suggest that the points we make must act as a reminder that sports-based activities in and of themselves are not enough to negate existing issues of social justice [55].

Some writers claim that it might not be possible to change a child's aspirations, attitude, and other's perception of unruly children through an involvement in segregated and/or short-term activities alone. Misztal [56] (p. 11) agrees. She notes that in forming trust at a micro level there is often a focus on cultivating a 'trusting (cognitive) personality', which has an overreliance upon localised ties and resources. In the case of a child who is offered limited resources to develop trust at macro levels, then there will be limited generalised trust in the systems, processes, and people who represent these structures. Thus, as Khodyakov [57] (p. 12) argues, decisions to trust or be trusted will be influenced by imaginations, habits, and the judgments of others that are situated within the past, present-day, and future. The slow processes that lead to trust and to 'becoming' trusted have many functions in relation to future outcomes. For example, it allows for freedom of recognition, including being heard [58], and to practice applying choices in ways which minimise the effects of school exclusion. For example, APs are often situated away from regular schools, and may lack the same physical and social resources. This has costs: the loss of social contacts and peer networks, where trust, norms and confidence are developed. This type of self-efficacy and those more subtle aspects of social learning, such as demeanours and modes of interaction, are significant. The ability to be at ease and to project an acceptable kind of social (employable) subject and, in return, gain recognition is crucial for negotiating present and future settings. While bonding capital is to be welcomed, it is the value or usability of trust and belonging beyond APs that are perhaps most crucial. For example, re/integration into mainstream settings, job interviews, and other post-16 destinations are key moments of social closure, in which network memberships are marked out. As Bourdieu [36] (p. 482) rightly puts it, '*social subjects comprehend the social world which comprehends them*'.

The relationship that some children have in APs can be strong, but it is crucial to acknowledge when evaluating that the success of trust and belonging will be tied up with specific resources, which consists of limited reciprocal actions or acts. Dependence on developing social capital(s) with familiarity alone is problematic, because this may make children sacrifice "in lieu of other trust-developing processes, the chance for reciprocity" [48] (p. 12) with and recognition from a range of—potentially—more valuable social networks. The acquisition of bonding capitals can, therefore, represent mechanisms through which inequality and disadvantage may be produced. However, much of the existing literature fails to obfuscate between social capital and a child's ability to obtain and use it widely. What appears crucial is the extent that exposure to other network influences promotes a child's readiness to risk forming new bridges at various levels.

5. Avoiding the Discriminate Value of Social Capital in APs—Practical Considerations

In our discussion of tensions and challenges, the article does not argue against evaluation and accountability; most educators recognise that purposeful evaluations contribute to continuous professional development and the centring of children's voices and life experience. It is also important to recognise that any funder would want to know that organisations are accountable for the funds they utilise. However, impact measurements and any accountability mechanism should have its roots in the reality of practice and in the emerging concerns of children, some of whom may find it difficult to internalise new habits of conduct and establish positive relationships with others. To be supportive of more democratic approaches, the article raises several areas for consideration for the design, implementation, and managing of evaluations.

With respect to their transitions from schools to APs, children face a range of barriers in gaining access to social capital, which can affect any relationship between the point of exclusion and becoming a 'successful' adult. The bridging of these barriers and experiences

relates to all aspects of a child's experiences in and beyond APs. That is, it is crucial to understand the nature of the 'social connections,' the unintended effect and consequence of these close relations, and how a child's life is variously affected by bonding capital. For example, words such as love and care are used frequently by practitioners to describe what a child accessing APs needs, but what does a 'pedagogy of love' [59] really offer? Mills et al. [27] (p. 12), for example, note the significance of "affective and contributive aspects of justice" in an AP setting. It is also crucial not to overstate the difference that 'caring' staff alone can make to a child's life; they do increasingly occupy the position of being judged through accountability measures and trying to deal with the many challenges that children's services may be unwilling or unable to support.

Another feature of APs is the extent to which a child's perceived 'needs' or 'deficits' dominate the nature of the (semi-therapeutic and vocational) intervention seen by adult or expert others as required to mould the life of the learner to the demands of external conformity. A lack of choice and knowledge in a child's life risks projecting '*an inferior or demeaning image that distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized*' [60] (p. 36). Of course, AP staff may not see the value in or may not have the freedom to develop or co-create knowledge with children, especially with those who have already rejected what a school has to offer. However, the wider literature provides compelling examples of how this can be achieved in relation to those children now accessing AP. For example, social work research has identified the value of continuity of support when a child is removed from their own community [61]. There is much to be learned in this research of the trusting relationships of social workers to reduce what separates children from the 'profits of membership' [36] in other networks. That is, sustained and trusted support can bridge or continuously connect a child with new networks. Similar efforts within APs must not become narrowly envisioned and must seek to evaluate agency building as a form of resistance, which also values collective interactions, dialogues, and critiques of the power inherent in institutional and the short term's relationships. The point being is that a child must not be a passive recipient of assessed knowledge but should be an active 'knower' [62]. Different types and forms of social capital could thus be acknowledged as part of the evaluation work conducted by AP staff. Of course, accountability mechanisms are legally required and must facilitate a child's knowledge in decision making to safeguard their interests.

The value of a critical social-capital discussion within APs is that it seeks to illuminate the lack of resources in the networks in which children exist, and which may inhibit access to future networks. Such discourse would emphasise the extent to which a child should (at micro-and macro-levels) gain the same access to social goods, skills, and knowledge which are already sited in many regular schools. For example, at the micro-level, the existing education literature has long highlighted that children are able to benefit positively if a sense of trust and belonging exists. There is nothing new in this seemingly new idea; further evidence also exists in the youth-work literature [63], which endorses the potential of positive social relationships and their impact on the lives of disadvantaged children. However, the literature also notes that this is only of value when a child becomes embedded in social networks from whom they acquire new knowledge and understanding. This can allow them to operate within cultural fields with a certain social fluency [64]. Bourdieu and Putman both noted that actors acquire the most valuable aptitudes and knowledge through a consistent access to a broad array of fields of social association, such as a range of experiences and networks. Sport may provide a compelling arena for such social movements. These do not need to be exclusive experiences. For example, Holt [65] identified that it is not sport per se but rather the interactions between peers and coaches that offers currency. That is, it is not the nature of sport that is significant but the learning process inherent in it. It seems essential that careful thought and consultation must, therefore, be given to the design of AP programs; not only in relation to the short-term behaviour-improvement strategies and outcomes, but also the skills that will be engendered through them, and which will act as a resource for children in other contexts. Social capitals

may, therefore, promote forms of learning [6], but the currency of that learning might be limited if the chances to learn from one another (both staff and children) are reduced or not valued in evaluation methods. Making a transition to this, in and beyond APs, will require access to a range of child and social provisions which promote learning, and on a child's 'deeply ingrained systems of perspectives and pre-dispositions' [35] (p. 528). In the context of APs then, segregation remains linked to the control and distribution of 'social goods', beyond an overemphasis on localised trust and belonging. Evaluations must shape the struggle for the valuable social capitals that influences how, why, and with who children forge (new) social relations, not only within but beyond APs.

6. Conclusions

Frequent, if questionable, claims are made about the ability of APs to form the types and forms of social capital that can enable resource mobilisation not only for and through but also beyond such settings. Here, the policies and much of the research are characterised by communality, combined with romanticised generalisations about the power of APs to generate *valuable* social capital. Some studies have indicated that APs contribute to improved sociability and (short-term) outcomes. However, there are key issues that still need to be addressed. APs often differ from other statutory educational services that aim to intervene in children's lives. These differences are informality, its relationship-based nature, and that the cultures of individual settings vary. We endorse existing arguments that staff must be allowed a level of freedom with a child to appropriately evaluate their labour. While such an approach limits standardisation or comparison, there is a need for emphasising the importance of the 'everyday' social capital that is created 'in the moment,' often in adverse and distinct circumstances, and enables children themselves, and/or a child with a staff member to reflect, develop, and own the space. Such spaces are vital because they offer moments of ordinariness and exclusivity. For example, rather than proposing standard monitoring approaches, funders, policymakers, and managers must engage with those closest to practice to enable them to use various tools and approaches, such as a participative and reflective processes that can be used flexibly across APs. This will require a political will that must accept that we cannot entirely capture a scientific picture of the relationships, trust, and belonging that occur in APs, and that formalised attempts to do so may be fundamentally damaging. For example, professional monitoring, or gazes, has the potential to reinforce power structures of domination. Many children who are enrolled in APs and many of those enrolled in alternative settings are already labelled as being 'risky' for their behaviours or are heavily 'stigmatised' [66]. As such, they have experienced an increased level of surveillance within schools and may be rightly suspicious of processes that reinforce a lack of freedom. Where evaluations may claim to be about 'learning,' or 'student voice,' there must be time to reflect upon how it is first experienced by children both within and beyond APs.

There is also a question of whether the relationships formed in an AP can be considered to be bridging capital in either a bridging or child developmental sense. This is a crucial area for future research. Current research presents trust and belonging as unadulterated goods, while overlooking social differences that are so often the cause of a power struggle and individual conflicts in the English education system. Bourdieu's work and emphasis on social capitals to form a power 'to' can help illuminate the tensions inherent to closed 'social spaces' where some children are increasingly located. More critically, Bourdieu also emphasised that the benefits gained from closed networks may not easily overcome any localised mode, mechanism, and embeddedness of segregated spaces. Thus, it is crucial to 'map out' evaluation methods that critically evaluate social capitals as sets of goods that have the potential to be transformative beyond local settings [67]. Currently, AP settings are diverse and may vary in their ability to nurture capital-like goods that are both transformative and offer reliable capacities. By ignoring the stratified nature and differential values inherent in aspects of social capital, current policy processes duck the crux of the matter, which is to foster capital-like outcomes beyond AP. Social capital can

thus be used as a tool or set of tools to perhaps challenge the inadequacies of segregate practices, policies, and places. Of course, social capital is only a ‘partial’ element in a broader analysis of how power works both in English educational systems and in English society. Therefore, any evaluation of social capital should be meaningful and participatory and should enable staff and children to co-create knowledge. These are dialogic processes that must not be based solely on assumptions that APs always make positive contributions to a child’s life. Evaluation must start from a viewpoint that it is about listening and learning rather than managerialist processes, categorisation, and individual progress narratives. It should hail growth and offer new challenges and change. This can mould policies by centring the perspectives of children, and mould practices by creating spaces for mutual listening and learning. If evaluation of APs is to be practise-informed, child-centred, and anti-oppressive, those involved must focus on evaluation processes that work for their social contexts—those are the conditions that are the enablers of good evaluation practices.

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