LONGITUDINAL SURVEYS OF AUSTRALIAN YOUTH

BRIEFING PAPER 26

Social capital and young people

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Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth

OVERVIEW

Social capital refers to the attributes and qualities of family, social and community networks that facilitate cooperation between individuals and communities. The quality of these networks and the extent to which individuals are engaged with them are believed to have an impact on the educational and social development of children and young people. Some evidence suggests that the influence of community networks can even help to offset some of the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Its intangible nature makes measuring social capital difficult. Measuring the social capital of young people is even more difficult because we tend to focus on the social capital of their parents and pay less attention to that of young people.

This briefing paper discusses how we can examine young people's social capital using the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY). The paper is divided into four sections. In the first, we look at two social capital frameworks to clarify the various themes and complexities associated with social capital. In the second section we draw on these frameworks to assess the suitability of using data from LSAY to investigate social capital and its relationship to youth transitions. The next section summarises other social capital-related research that has used LSAY data. Finally, we draw some conclusions and make some recommendations for future directions for LSAY in this area.

HIGHLIGHTS

- LSAY provides a strong platform for exploring the role of social capital in young people's transitions to adulthood and can be used to investigate relationships between their social capital and their educational and employment outcomes. Ideally, questions about social capital should be incorporated into the LSAY data collection in early waves to ensure that the impact of social capital on education and employment outcomes is adequately measured.
- High levels of social capital in young people are found to enhance engagement, achievement and participation in education *over and above* the influences of family background, school type and geographical location, demonstrating that social capital has the potential to counteract the effects of disadvantage to some extent.
- Existing LSAY research shows that the social capital gained through school networks translates into higher aspirations, better academic performance and raised school retention, as well as an increased likelihood of future participation in education and training. Young people can accumulate social capital through their school networks—including with their peers and their teachers and through the opportunities the school provides.

INTRODUCTION

Social capital refers to the attributes and qualities of family, social and community networks that facilitate cooperation between individuals and groups. It is underpinned by the interactions between family members, friends, neighbours, communities and institutions such as schools, clubs and workplaces. These interactions help to develop and support values such as trust and reciprocity. The development of social capital is further encouraged by access to educational, cultural and information resources and to emotional and financial support, from both formal and informal networks. Possessing high levels of social capital has been linked to better health, improved educational outcomes, lower rates of child abuse, lower crime rates, increased productivity, and civic participation.

Social capital develops and occurs in several different types of networks, including:

- informal, such as family, friends or neighbours
- general, such as people within the general community
- institutional, such as government or the media.

The quality of the relationships in these various networks is determined by their 'behavioural norms'—the rules and standards of behaviour (often implicit) characterising the network. For example, an informal network might be characterised by trust and reciprocity. Also important to the social capital accumulated through the network is the network's size, density and diversity. Each of these aspects promotes various degrees and types of social capital. For example, wide-ranging or 'diverse' networks can promote social capital by enabling access to a range of other networks and resources (Stone & Hughes 2002).

Many studies have found that the size and quality of a child's immediate social networks impact significantly on his/her educational attainment. For example, higher levels of parental involvement in their education support better educational outcomes, promote positive attitudes and encourage aspirations (Halpern 2005).

Parents' education levels are also important. Research using LSAY data shows that young people whose parents have higher educational levels and occupational status are more likely to participate in education (Marks et al. 2000; Fullarton 2002; Dockery 2005, Curtis & McMillan 2008). A child's education is also influenced by his/her parents' aspirations for him/her, in addition to the impact of background factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, region, school sector and gender (Marks, McMillan & Hillman 2001).

These influences are not limited to family. Friendships and participation in community activities can help to reduce the influence of parental social capital and encourage the accumulation of social capital specific to the individual (Halpern 2005). Building networks through community participation, including social and leisure activities, is important in achieving wellbeing and educational outcomes (Edwards 2004). Student networks can also influence the choices young people make and provide them with opportunities (Bexley 2007).

'Positive' community networks encourage the acquisition of social capital and explain why some people from disadvantaged groups achieve educational success, while others who lack these support networks are more likely to fail (Holland 2009). And the strong community networks that link parents, students and schools are found to increase retention rates and attainment levels, even when controlling for other background factors such as parental education and income (Winter 2000; Productivity Commission 2003; Halpern 2005; Bexley 2007). At school, teachers influence student engagement by acting as role models, raising aspirations and influencing career goals and choices (Banks 2010).

But social capital can also have negative effects. High levels of certain types of 'bonding' social capital can pose a constraint, particularly among disadvantaged communities. People may be tied to family and community, making it difficult to move away from their current situation (Holland 2009), while some social networks can also create obstacles for young people. For example, young people can be connected to deviant social networks, or 'gangs', where they share knowledge and skills about street crime. In such socially debilitating networks, criminal behaviour might be considered acceptable or even expected.

Mobility—moving from one area to another—has an interesting relationship to social capital. While high levels of mobility can sever network ties and disrupt family connections and reduce a family's stock of social capital (Halpern 2005), being mobile can also facilitate the formation of new ties and relationships (Edwards 2004).

An important criticism of the concept of social capital is that children and young people have not been fully considered in social capital theory. The importance of parents' social capital to their children is over-emphasised—children are largely seen as recipients of their parents' social capital, rather than determiners of their own (Morrow 1999; Holland 2009). It is therefore difficult to know at which point 'inherited' social capital wanes and when young people begin to produce their own.

This discussion highlights the potential for using the concept of social capital to examine the dynamics of youth transitions. Although this is not easy, given the range of dimensions, relationships, and qualities that inform social capital, it is crucial that the central elements of social capital are captured and analysed and that their relationships and importance understood. Here an analysis of longitudinal data can be fruitful, for these data allow us to assess the relative significance of different influences on outcomes (Banks 2010).

MEASURING SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL FRAMEWORKS

The complexity and diversity of the various networks of social relations means that social capital can be viewed as a multidimensional concept (Stone 2001). Social capital theory itself suggests that different types of relationships and norms operate across different network types (Stone & Hughes 2002), so a range of measures are required to capture the different elements of social capital.

A complex concept such as social capital requires that we draw on a theoretically informed framework with the capacity to define and identify the important components of social capital and the relationships that exist between them as well as organise them into a logical structure (Trewin 2001).

It is also important to consider how social capital can vary across diverse groups of people—with differences in age, gender, health, family circumstances, education, employment and location (Stone & Hughes 2002; Productivity Commission 2003). For example, it might be expected that those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds have greater access to economic and cultural resources, which might translate into higher levels of social capital. However, this relationship is not entirely clear and we find that the correlation between socioeconomic status and social capital is not always strong (White & Kaufman 1997). The presence of educational, cultural and information resources does not automatically equate to better stocks of social capital. Importantly, social capital is concerned with how students, parents, teachers and the community interact to make use of these resources (OECD 2001). Further work needs to be undertaken to test the validity of social capital measures and to explore the various relationships in more detail (Biddle et al. 2009).

Two prominent social capital frameworks are described: one developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics ([ABS], Edwards 2004), the other by the Australian Institute for Family Studies (Stone & Hughes 2002). We look at these two frameworks because they are comprehensive and have been developed for use in the Australian context; they also offer a possible suite of indicators for measuring social capital.

THE AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS FRAMEWORK

The ABS framework for measuring social capital (see figure 1) is centred on networks composed of family (both within and outside the household), friends and acquaintances, neighbours, colleagues, organisations and groups (including government, not-for-profit and commercial), people in general or acquaintances. This framework views social capital as a resource that draws on and feeds back into other types of resources. It distinguishes between four network attributes: qualities; structure; transactions; and broad network types.

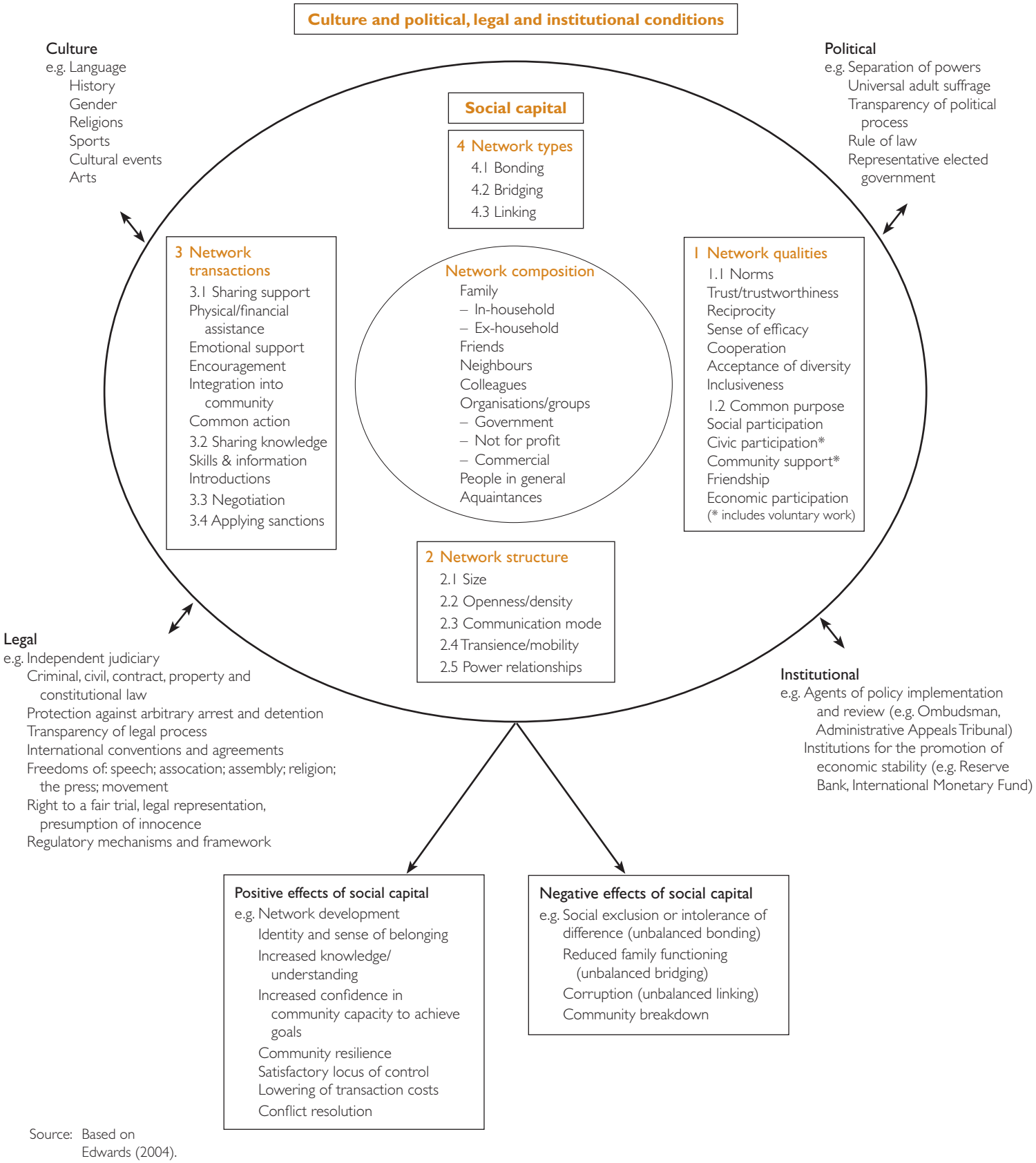
Network qualities: these identify the types of behaviour and values that improve the functioning of networks, such as trust, reciprocity, efficacy, cooperation and acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness. Social, civic and economic participation and community support and friendships are also identified as network qualities.

Network structure: this includes information about the size of the network; the frequency and mode of communication within the network; the openness or denseness of the network; network transience and mobility; and the relationships that exist with people in positions of power.

Network transactions: these are the interactions that occur within networks and between organisations and include: the provision of financial or emotional support; the sharing of knowledge, information and introductions; negotiation; and dealing with conflict. Also included in network transactions are the sanctions applied when accepted social behaviours have been ignored.

Network types: this is a higher classification, one which overlaps other framework attributes and encompasses bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the relationships between similar groups of people; bridging social capital indicates ties between groups of people who have less in common. Linking social capital is described as the 'vertical' relationships with those in authority whose aim is accessing financial resources or power.

Figure 1 ABS social capital framework



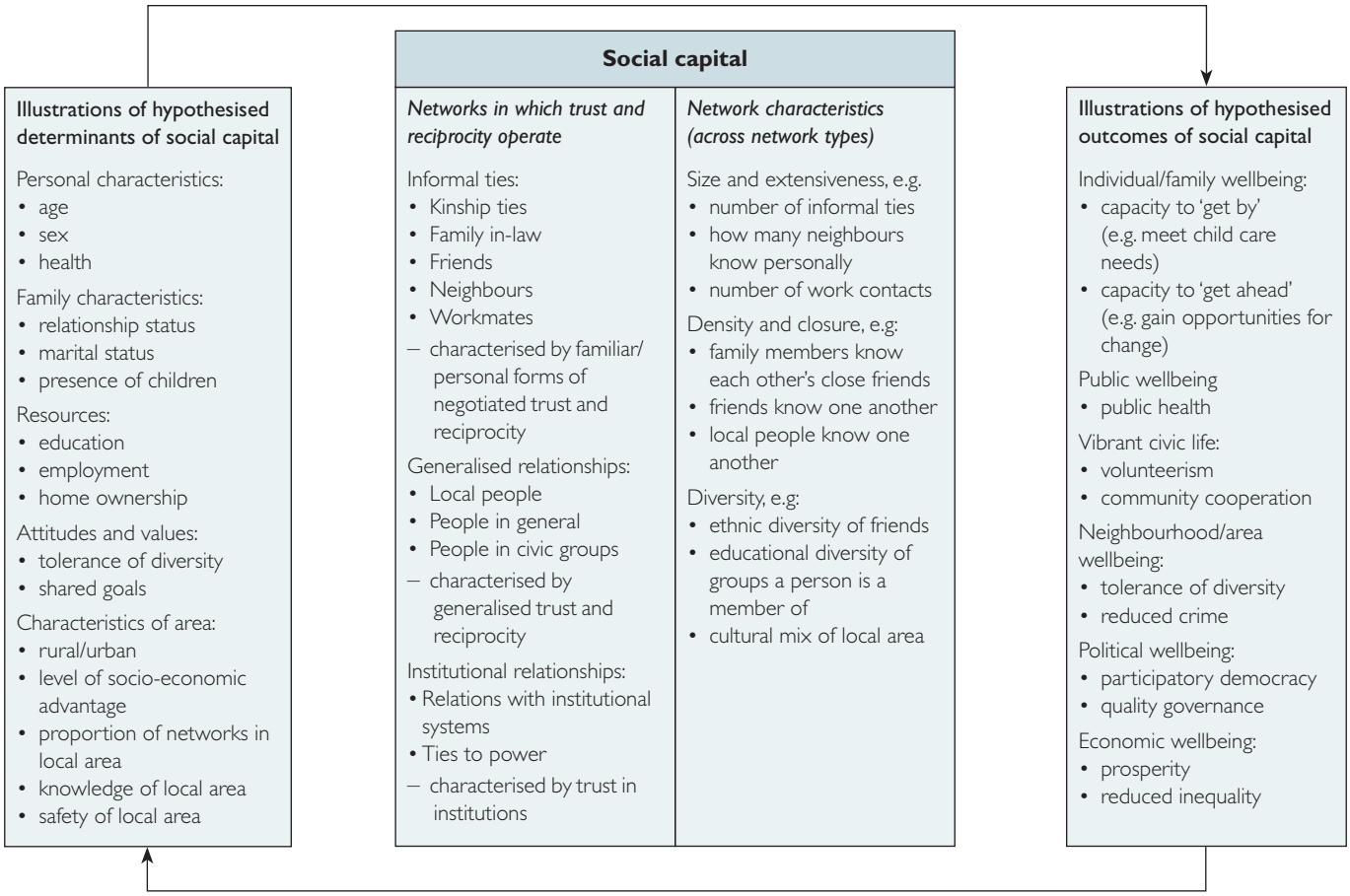
Source: Based on Edwards (2004).

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF FAMILY STUDIES

The Australian Institute of Family Studies identifies network characteristics and network qualities (for example, trust and reciprocity) as the key measurable dimensions of social capital (see figure 2). These key characteristics and qualities are seen to mediate the relationship between the *determinants* and the *outcomes* of social capital (Stone & Hughes 2003).

Three discrete network types are identified in much the same way as the ABS framework describes network composition. These network types are: informal (friends, family, neighbours); general (strangers, civic groups); and institutional (legal system, the church, police, media, government). Informal, general and institutional networks are broadly characterised as 'bonding', 'bridging', and 'linking' ties respectively. Each network type displays a series of structural characteristics that include the network's size and its density (that is, how network/s may overlap) and diversity.

Figure 2 Australian Institute of Family Studies summary of core measures of social capital and illustrative examples of its determinants and outcomes



Source: Cited in Stone and Hughes (2002).

Despite measuring similar constructs, the two frameworks are structured quite differently. The Australian Institute for Family Studies distinguishes between three network types, and then measures the network attributes for each type separately. In contrast, the ABS framework is structured around network attributes and examines network types within these attributes.

The Australian Institute for Family Studies framework also differentiates between measures of social capital and its determinants (for example, geographic location) and outcomes (for example, community cooperation). The ABS does not make this distinction between its measures of social capital but provides a more comprehensive suite of measures.

We can use these frameworks to look at existing LSAY research on social capital and youth transitions and at the same time explore the suitability of LSAY data items for measuring social capital.

MEASURING SOCIAL CAPITAL USING LSAY

In response to a growing interest in the impact of social capital on youth transitions, a series of social capital questions was designed and developed for the LSAY 2003 cohort. These questions were included in the 2004 phone interviews of approximately one-quarter of the LSAY 2003 cohort (approximately 2500 respondents). In 2005 and 2006, social capital questions were asked of the entire cohort. These social capital questions are listed in appendix A.

Table 1, which draws on the frameworks and measures developed by the ABS and the Australian Institute for Family Studies, identifies questions from the LSAY 2003 cohort which could be useful in measuring elements of social capital. This includes the questions specifically designed to measure social capital as well as other standard LSAY questions with a clear connection to social capital issues. These include items such as the influence of family and friends and whether the respondent accessed careers advice or did work experience. Appendix B outlines these questions, indicates their broad relationship to measures of social capital and identifies the waves in which they appear.[1] Questions introduced specifically to measure social capital are highlighted.

Table 1 Social capital and social capital-related themes, LSAY 2003 cohort, waves 1–6

Informal networks	Generalised networks	Institutionalised networks
Network qualities (trust and reciprocity)		
• Connectedness with school[4] • Student teacher relations[4] • Connectedness with employment networks[4]	• Neighbourhood trust, generalised trust and conflict[1]	• Trust in police[1] • Connectedness with tertiary community[4]
Network characteristics (participation[2], size, density, diversity, transactions)		
• School friendships[1] • Friends and friendship groups[1] • Participation in school-based activities[4] • Frequency of interacting with friends and family[1] • Importance of family and friends[1] • Influence of family and friends in thinking about the future[3] • Job seeking and the use/availability of family, friend and school networks[4] • Friendships and employment networks[1]	• Participation in activities (including extracurricular activities, sport, community-based activities, volunteer work)[4] • Outcomes of volunteer work[3] • Accessed careers advice[3] • Participated in work experience[3] • Participated in workplace learning[3]	• Frequency of going to church/place of worship[4] • Frequency of going to the library[4] • Frequency of access to the media[3] • Influence of the media in thinking about the future[3] • Friendships and the tertiary community[4]

Notes: 1 Includes questions specifically designed to measure social capital.
2 The ABS framework recognises participation as a network quality, while the AIFS framework categorises participation as an 'outcome' of social capital. This briefing paper categorises participation as an attribute of network structure, on the premise that higher levels of participation would increase the size of an individual's networks.
3 Includes standard LSAY questions which are clearly related to social capital.
4 Encompasses both questions designed to measure social capital and social capital-related questions.

1 Social capital questions designed for inclusion in the 2004 interviews but dropped in 2005 have not been included as these questions were only asked of one-quarter of the respondents. The identification of questions in this appendix is subjective, and provides a guide to the social capital-related items contained in LSAY. It may not cover ALL questions relating to social capital, as identification of these questions is subject to social capital theories and/or frameworks referenced.

In 2006, Curtis reviewed the LSAY data items designed specifically to measure social capital (Curtis 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d), as denoted by note 1 in table 1. Curtis found that some core elements of social capital were well represented by these data items, although, like other research that attempts to measure social capital, Curtis also found a range of problems.

First, not all social capital constructs were well captured by the data items. Almost all of the questions relating to network structure focused on informal networks, while questions relating to generalised and institutionalised network structures were limited. In addition, there were no apparent measures of network diversity. Questions relating to network qualities were also unbalanced: most measures of network quality were related to levels of trust, but measures of reciprocity overlooked.

The measurement properties of the social capital items were also problematic, partly because there were too many different response options. For example, questions about the importance of friends and family members used an 11-point scale from 0 to 10, where 0 was 'not important' and 10 was 'very important'. Questions about relationships with other people used a seven-point scale to determine the number of occasions that respondents spent with their friends or family, ranging from '1 Every day' to '7 Never'. And questions about the likelihood a respondent would be treated fairly by police took values from '1 Very likely' to '4 Not at all likely'.

In addition, the response options for the social capital questions were not very well defined and were not always able to differentiate between the categories. For example, the question about being treated fairly in class by teachers could not differentiate well between response options '1 Strongly agree' and '2 Agree'.

Curtis also found that, while only a few of the data items fit well with the social capital constructs, these items did highlight some useful dimensions of social capital. Curtis concluded that further work could be done to strengthen the suite of data items, and could include additional items that would provide more precise measures to ensure that all dimensions of social capital are represented. He also suggested revising the response options and undertaking further analysis to examine age-related differences in stocks of social capital.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of the data items specific to social capital, a range of other related items collected in the LSAY questionnaires—such as participation in voluntary work—represent elements of the concept of social capital. These data items have been used quite successfully to demonstrate how the possession of social capital assists youth transitions. Ideally, these questions should be included in the early waves to ensure that the impact of social capital on later education and employment outcomes is properly measured.

SOCIAL CAPITAL-RELATED STUDIES USING LSAY

There has been no single LSAY research report with a focus on social capital and youth transitions, but LSAY and other studies do capture elements of social capital and their impact on aspects of youth transitions. This section summarises the research related to social capital that has made use of LSAY data.

SCHOOL NETWORKS

Several studies consider school networks using LSAY data—either the relationship between student and teacher, or student engagement with the school—and the effects they have on student outcomes (Fullarton 2001, 2002; Khoo & Ainley 2005; Thomson & Hillman 2010; Semo & Karmel 2011). Fullarton (2002) found that a good school environment (as measured by a positive school climate, high-quality teachers and effective discipline) affects levels of student engagement. Semo and Karmel (2011) identified that males and females with strong bonds with their school teachers at age 15 are more likely to participate in education and training at age 17 than their peers with weak student–teacher bonds. Students with positive attitudes towards their school (measured by their general satisfaction with school, motivation, attitudes to their teachers, views on school provision of opportunities, and sense of achievement) are shown by Khoo and Ainley (2005) to have higher educational intentions and aspirations and a corresponding increase in education and training participation.

High levels of engagement were also found to reduce the negative effects of socioeconomic and Indigenous status (Fullarton 2002). Semo and Karmel (2011) also demonstrated that, even when controlling for standard socioeconomic characteristics such as parental education and occupation, high levels of social capital in the form of student–teacher relations had a positive effect on future participation in education and training.

International studies further support the proposition that school networks influence educational outcomes above and beyond the effects of a student's background. Schools where there are greater levels of trust between teachers and students have been shown to have better academic outcomes, even when controlling for background characteristics (Bryk, Lee & Holland 1993, p. 314, cited in OECD 2001). Other studies show that within disadvantaged communities school effects on achievement were greater than family background influences (Fuller & Heyneman 1993, cited in OECD 2001). Putnam also found a strong and significant correlation between measures of social capital and quality of learning, even when controlling for family and school background, including race, income, education level, family structure and school sector (Putnam 2000, cited in OECD 2001). These studies suggest that school networks can help to moderate the aspects of social background that might impact negatively on a young person's outcomes.

Using LSAY data, Fullarton (2002) showed that students who participate in extracurricular activities have higher levels of school engagement, with subsequent effects on academic achievement, while, according to Khoo and Ainley (2005), participation in such activities is likely to raise educational aspirations and participation in education. Semo and Karmel's 2011 research highlighted that high levels of participation in school-based activities at age 15 increase the likelihood of being involved in education and training at age 17—in addition to the influences of family background, school type and geographical location.

These findings underscore the importance of school networks and a positive school experience. As Thomson and Hillman stress, schools 'foster the social and emotional development of young people, as well as their academic development', and the influence of these networks is long lasting (2010).

INFORMAL NETWORKS

Family networks play a crucial role in the educational and social development of children and youth. The norms and values of young people are shaped by those of the home, and parental involvement and expectations can help to raise the educational outcomes of their children. International studies indicate that parental involvement (as measured by support, values in the home, and parents' expectations) can act as a buffer against the negative effects of low socioeconomic status (White & Kaufman 1997). Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) found that measures of parental involvement had an effect on achievement that was independent of a child's family background. This finding does little to confirm the view that parents with low socioeconomic status are less involved in their children's schooling.

Friends and relatives are also influential in helping young people to find employment, and when thinking about how to help young people find work. Using LSAY data, Dockery and Strathdee (2003) found that informal networks are important for young job seekers, particularly males, and asking friends or relatives about employment was the most common job-search method used by young people—although these jobs do not necessarily lead to desirable career paths, training and promotional opportunities.

COMMUNITY NETWORKS

It is widely recognised that community activities such as volunteering are significant aspects of social capital (Edwards 2004), with their importance recognised through high school certificates such as the International Baccalaureate and the South Australian Certificate of Education. When undertaking these qualifications, students gain life skills and work opportunities. They also gain recognition in their certificate for participation in community-developed programs or through self-directed community learning, such as taking care of a family member, supporting a refugee family, or volunteering for a community project.

Using LSAY data, Brown, Lipsog-Mumme and Zajdow (2003) found relatively low levels of volunteering among 15 and 16-year-olds, with six per cent of girls and four per cent of boys volunteering. This may relate to the high proportion of young people who have a part-time job while at school (Anlezark & Lim 2011), leaving limited time for volunteering. Brown, Lipsog-Mumme and Zajdow's (2003) research also identified that young people from non-metropolitan areas were more likely to volunteer than their metropolitan counterparts, which may be a reflection of the stronger community bonds found in rural and remote communities. Respondents from Catholic and independent schools were also more likely to volunteer. Brown, Lipsog-Mumme and Zajdow (2003) assert that volunteering is an essential element of active citizenship and is therefore important in building social capital for both individuals and communities. These findings illustrate how determinants of social capital—for example, location or school type—can affect social capital outcomes such as volunteering.

Community networks can be extended to encompass partnerships between governments and communities. One such example is the Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network (ICAN), which works with government, corporate and community sectors to provide consumer education, advocacy and financial counselling services to Indigenous people across Australia. Another example is the local learning and employment networks (LLENs), jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian governments to address the problem of school retention and school failure in Victoria (Seddon & Billett 2004). Local learning and employment networks connect schools, employers, education and training providers and individuals to assist in young people's transitions—and simultaneously address the needs of local businesses and the community.

COMMUNITY EFFECTS

The communities in which young people live can affect subject choices and also subsequent education and labour market outcomes. Fullarton and Ainley (2000) highlight the importance of the subjects that senior secondary students undertake in 'provid[ing] them with the knowledge and skills on which to base fulfilling personal lives, successful labour market outcomes and the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of the society in which they live'. LSAY data show that location and school type influence subject choices, with students from non-metropolitan areas more likely to undertake health, home science and agriculture subjects. Catholic school students, on the other hand, take on more subjects due to additional studies in religion (Fullarton & Ainley 2000).

Communities and neighbourhoods may also affect employment outcomes. Using LSAY data, Andrews, Green and Mangan (2003) found that, after controlling for family characteristics and student achievement, living in high-income neighbourhoods had a positive effect on employment. This persisted only until about age 21, which may indicate the threshold at which a young person's, rather than their parents' social capital, comes into play. In contrast, they found that living in low-income neighbourhoods had lasting negative effects on employment. These findings indicate the poorer employment and information networks that can reside in low-income areas and emphasise the importance of finding ways to overcome the potential intergenerational transfer of disadvantage prevailing in poor communities (Andrews, Green & Mangan 2002).

LOCATION, MOBILITY AND FAMILY

Hillman and Rothman (2007) reported that young people living in non-metropolitan areas with limited services (including educational facilities) were more likely to relocate to major cities to pursue post-school study, thus severing important relationship bonds. Students from non-metropolitan areas also reported higher levels of financial difficulty and had poorer levels of educational attainment than other students (Hillman 2005). These effects and outcomes are likely to reflect the additional costs incurred in living away from home, as well as the difficulties encountered in leaving behind support networks and in creating new networks.

Further research by Hillman and Rothman (2007) suggests that the longer-term effects of originating from non-metropolitan areas may not be so bleak for these students. They found that levels of employment at about age 23 were similar for non-metropolitan students who: moved away from non-metropolitan areas; remained in non-metropolitan areas; and moved away but later returned. This suggests that the loss of bonds from informal networks can be exchanged, to an unknown extent, by the more diverse networks that exist in metropolitan areas, potentially enhancing the bridging capabilities of these non-metropolitan students.

Some studies show that attachment to family can hinder youth transitions. While strong bonds with family and community are generally positive, aspects of these relationships can have repercussions. For example, Hillman (2005) found that some students from tightly bonded communities struggled in the first year of post-school study due to difficulties in juggling study and caring for children or other family members.

CONCLUSIONS

To date, social capital frameworks have not fully considered the complexities of measuring the social capital of children and young people as entities separate from their parents. A review of the data items contained in LSAY highlights an opportunity to use longitudinal data to investigate young people's accumulation of social capital and to identify key transition points that distinguish between the social capital inherited from parents and that which they accumulate through other networks.

LSAY research suggests that young people's networks have an impact on school transitions. School networks are shown to influence students' levels of engagement, which in turn are strongly influenced by their connectedness to their schools, the relationships they have with their teachers, and the opportunities the school provides. This translates into elevated aspirations, better academic performance and increased school retention.

Community networks also affect subject choices and employment prospects. Students from different schools and locations are offered different subject choices. And employment prospects are found to be different for youth from low- and high-income communities. Young people can experience a loss of social capital and support networks when moving from non-metropolitan to metropolitan areas to undertake post-school study, and may also experience difficulties due to the extra cost of living away from home.

LSAY research emphasises the importance of school and community networks, given their potential to reduce the negative effects of disadvantage. Good student–teacher relations and school experiences, participation in extracurricular activities and strong community networks are all found to have generally positive effects on youth transitions. Moreover, LSAY research indicates that elements of social capital increase educational engagement, achievement and participation above and beyond the influences of family background, school type and geographical location, demonstrating that social capital has the potential to offset the effects of disadvantage.

These findings recognise the more static nature of family background such as parental education or country of birth. However, the findings hint at a positive outlook for young people, because they also show us how non-family networks such as schools provide opportunities for change, enabling individuals to exceed expectations founded on family background and socioeconomic status. It is therefore desirable that these resources and networks are identified so that positive change, particularly for disadvantaged youth, can be realised.

This briefing paper has demonstrated how LSAY has the potential to provide a platform for testing social capital theories that relate to young people and youth transitions and, by doing so, contributes to the debate on the importance of social capital and successful youth transitions. LSAY's potential role rests on its having a consistent and reliable set of questions asked from early waves of each cohort.

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APPENDIX A: SOCIAL CAPITAL QUESTIONS, 2004–05

In 2006, Curtis undertook analyses of the social capital items developed and used in LSAY and assigned them to classifications based on social capital literature, as outlined in the table below.

Table 2 Social capital questions, LSAY 2003 cohort, 2004–05

Item		Response		Concept[1] structure		Question[2]	
Stem	*Text[3]*	*Format[4]*	*Sense[5]*	*Domain[6]*	*Element[7]*	*2004*	*2005*
Importance of	close friends	0–10	N	F	N	Q1a	J3a
	family members you live with	0–10	N	F	N	Q1b	J3b
	relatives you don't live with	0–10	N	F	N	Q1c	J3c
	neighbours	0–10	N	F	N	Q1d	J3d
	friends' parents	0–10	N	F	N	Q1e	J3e
	parents' friends or workmates	0–10	N	F	N	Q1f	J3f
Problems for young people	low self-esteem	0–10				Q2a	J4a
	unfairly treated by police	0–10	R	I	T&R	Q2b	J4b
	unfairly treated by teachers	0–10	R	I	T&R	Q2c	J4c
	unfairly treated at work	0–10	R	I	T&R		J4d
	peer pressure	0–10	R	G	T&R	Q2d	J4e
	having property vandalised	0–10	R	G	T&R	Q2e	J4f
	conflicts with other young people	0–10	R	G	T&R	Q2f	J4g
How often do you	hang around with friends	1–7	R	F	N	Q3a	J5a
	look after people	1–7	R	F	N	Q3b	J5b
	see mothers' relatives	1–7	R	F	N	Q3c	J5c
	see fathers' relatives	1–7	R	F	N	Q3d	J5d
	visit close friends' homes	1–7	R	F	N	Q3e	J5e
	friends visit your home	1–7	R	F	N	Q3f	J5f
	lunch with friends of family	1–7	R	F	N	Q3g	J5g
	conversation with parents	1–7	R	F	N	Q3h	J5h
How likely for family friends to help with job search		1–4	R	F	T&R	Q4	J6
How many relatives seen annually		1–6	N	F	N	Q5	
How many close friends		1–5	N	F	N	Q6	J7
How many other friends		1–5	N	F	N	Q7	
Distance to close friend		1–5	R	F	N	Q8	
How frequent talk by phone		1–8	R	F	N	Q9a	
How frequent SMS		1–8,na	R	F	N	Q9b	
Which best describes you		1–3,na	N	F	N	Q10	J8
One or more groups of friends		1–2	N	F	N	Q11	
Taking sides		1–2	R	F	N	Q12	J9
Friends have same music tastes		1–4,na	N	F	N:div	Q13	
Agree with	teachers treat me fairly in class	1–4	R	F	T&R	Q14a	J10a
	feel lonely at school	1–4	N	F	N	Q14b	J10b
	talk to teachers about schoolwork	1–4	R	F	T&R	Q14c	J10ci
	talk to teachers about personal matters	1–4	R	F	T&R	Q14d	J10cii
How well are you doing in subjects		1–4	R			Q15a	J11
How well are you going at school	with friendships	1–4	R	F	N	Q15b	J12a
	with sport	1–4,na	R			Q15c	J12b
How likely to achieve goals in life		1–4	R			Q16	J13
How safe in your neighbourhood		1–4	R	G	T&R	Q17	J14
Would lost wallet be returned		1–4	R	G	T&R	Q18	J15
Free to express views to stranger		1–3,na	R	G	T&R	Q19	J16
Would police treat you fairly		1–4	R	I	T&R	Q20	J17
Can people in Australia be trusted		1–4	R	G	T&R	Q21	J18
Trust Australian media		1–4	R	I	T&R	Q22	

Item		Response		Concept[1] structure		Question[2]	
Stem	*Text[3]*	*Format[4]*	*Sense[5]*	*Domain[6]*	*Element[7]*	*2004*	*2005*
How often do you	go to library	1–6	R			J1a	J1a
	read book	1–6	R			J1b	J1b
	read newspaper	1–6	R			J1c	J1c
	use internet	1–6	R			J1d	J1d
	play computer games	1–6	R				J1e
	play sport	1–6	R	G	N	J1e	J1f
	community activity	1–6	R	G	N	J1f	J1g
	go to church	1–6	R	G	N		J1h
	voluntary activity	1–6	R	G	N		J1i

Notes: 1 Blank cells indicate the item could not be assigned to a domain or element.
2 Blank cells under 'Question' indicate that the question was not asked in that year.
3 Represents an abbreviated form of the original question(s).
4 Shows the response options used in the questionnaire.
5 Either normal (N) or reversed (R). Reversed items are those for which a high response score corresponds with a low level of social capital.
6 Either informal (of familiars) (F), general (G) or institutional (I).
7 Trust and reciprocity (T&R) or network structure (N).

Source: Curtis (2006a).

APPENDIX B: SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL-RELATED QUESTIONS

Table 3 Social capital and social capital-related questions, LSAY 2003 cohort

LSAY questions	Wave(s)	Notes
INFORMAL NETWORKS		
Teachers		
• Thinking about the teachers at your school: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? – Students get along well with most teachers – Most teachers are interested in students' wellbeing – Most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say – If I need extra help, I will receive it from my teachers – Most of my teachers treat me fairly • Your school teachers: do they influence your thinking about what you'd like to do in the future?	Wave 1	Standard LSAY question(s)
• How much of a problem do you think these are for young people you know: being unfairly treated by teachers		Social capital question(s)
• Teachers treat me fairly in class • I feel that if I need to, I am able to talk to teachers outside class about schoolwork • I feel that if I need to, I am able to talk to teachers outside class about personal matters	Waves 3 and 4	Social capital question(s)
School		
• My school is a place where: – I feel like an outsider (or left out of things) – I make friends easily – I feel like I belong – I feel awkward and out of place – Other students seem to like me – I feel lonely • Your school is a place where you feel safe and secure	Wave 1	Standard LSAY question(s)
• How well would you say you are going at school with friendships • I feel lonely at school • Generally, other students treat me fairly • I feel part of the student community	Wave 3 Waves 3 and 4 Wave 4	Social capital question(s)

LSAY questions	Wave(s)	Notes
School activities		
• How often did you take part in the following school-organised activities: – Sport – Music, band or orchestra – Debating – Drama, theatre, dance or a school play – School support such as peer mediation, peer support or student representative council – Volunteer activities in the wider community, which were organised by the school	Wave 1	Standard LSAY question(s)
• How well would you say you are going at school with sport	Wave 3	Social capital question(s)
Friends and family		
• How important in your life are your close friends • How important in your life are the family members you live with • How important in your life are relatives that you don't live with • How important in your life are your neighbours • How important in your life are your friends' parents • How important in your life are your parents' friends or workmates • Outside study or work, how often do you hang around with friends • Outside study or work, how often do you see any of your mother's relatives (apart from those you live with) • Outside study or work, how often do you see any of your father's relatives (apart from those you live with) • Outside study or work, how often do you visit your close friends' homes • Outside study or work, how often do you have your close friends visit your home • Outside study or work, how often do you have lunch or dinner with friends of your family • Outside study or work, how often do you have a conversation with at least one of your parents about things in general	Waves 3 and 4	Social capital question(s)
• How many close friends do you have? • Which of the following three statements best describes you: I have friends, but no particular group; I have one main group of friends; I have more than one group of friends.	Wave 3	Social capital question(s)
• How many of your friends are fully involved in work or study • How many of your friends are out of work, but looking for work • How many of your friends are not involved in work, study or training and not seeking work	Wave 4	Non-standard LSAY question
• In thinking about your future, how much does your family influence your thinking? • How about your friends: in thinking about your future, how much do they influence your thinking?	Wave 1	Standard LSAY question(s)
Employment networks		
• How much of a problem do you think these are for young people you know: being unfairly treated at work	Wave 3	Social capital question(s)
• Some of my fellow apprentices/workmates are also close friends • I feel part of a team at work • My boss treats me fairly at work • Most of the other people I work with treat me fairly at work	Wave 4	Social capital question(s)
Employment networks: job-seeking		
• Contacted friends or relatives about a job • Asked school or another organisation for advice	Wave 2 onwards	Standard LSAY question(s) – unemployed respondents only
• How likely is it that your family's friends and work contacts will help you when you are looking for a job in the future	Waves 3 and 4	Social capital question(s)
GENERAL NETWORKS		
• How safe do you feel walking alone after dark in your neighbourhood? • If you or a neighbour lost their wallet in your neighbourhood, and it was found by another neighbour, how likely is it that it would be returned? • Do you believe that most people in Australia can be trusted?	Wave 3	Social capital question(s)

LSAY questions	Wave(s)	Notes
• Imagine you're talking to someone you don't know well, about something important to you. If they have an opinion that is quite different to yours, are you most likely to: 1 Say what you want; 2 Say very little; 3 Say nothing at all; 4 Don't know • How much of a problem do you think these are for young people you know: being pressured by other young people to do things they don't really want to do • How much of a problem do you think these are for young people you know: having their property vandalised • How much of a problem do you think these are for young people you know: being involved in conflicts with other groups of young people • If there is a conflict between someone in your group of friends and someone in another group, do you think most of the people in your group will: expect group not to take sides; expect group to take the side of group member		
Activities		
• On average, how many hours do you spend each week: playing sports • On average, how many hours do you spend each week doing unpaid/voluntary work	Wave 1	Standard LSAY question(s)
• Outside study or work, how often do you go to the library • Outside study or work, how often do you play sport or do regular exercise	Waves 2 to 6	Standard LSAY question(s)
• Outside study or work, how often do you take part in any community-based activity. This could be a political group, cadets or scouts, a choir, orchestra or something similar?	Waves 2 to 6	Standard LSAY question(s) – spans several network types
• Outside study or work, how often do you do voluntary work	Waves 3, 4 and 6	Standard LSAY question(s) – a more detailed set of volunteer questions were asked in wave 5
• Outside study or work, how often do you look after people (e.g. young children, grandparents)	Wave 3	Social capital question(s)
• Have your volunteer activities given you new skills that you could apply directly to a job or business? • Have your volunteer activities ever helped you get a job?	Waves 5 and 7	Standard LSAY question(s)
Careers advice		
• How about the career advisor or counsellor at school: do they influence your thinking?	Wave 1	Standard LSAY question(s)
• Have you listened to a talk from the school's career advisor at your school? • Have you received handouts or written material about careers at your school? • Have you taken part in a group discussion about careers at your school? • Have you spoken individually to the school's career advisor at your school? • Have you looked online for career guidance or advice at your school? • Have you listened to a talk by an employer representative at your school? • Have you listened to a talk by someone from a TAFE or university at your school?	Waves 1 to 5	Standard LSAY question(s)
Work experience		
• As part of your schooling, have you done or will you be doing work experience at any time this year?	Waves 1 and 2	Standard LSAY question(s) – Year 10 students only
• Does your own involvement in jobs or work experience at school influence your thinking?	Wave 1	Standard LSAY question
Workplace learning		
• And (do/did) your TAFE/VET subjects involve any time spent learning in a workplace away from school?	Waves 1 to 4	Standard LSAY question(s) – Year 11 or 12 students undertaking VET subjects only
INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKS		
Media		
• And when you think about your future, how much does the media influence you	Wave 1	Standard LSAY question
• Outside study or work, how often do you read newspapers or magazines	Waves 2 to 6	Standard LSAY question

LSAY questions	Wave(s)	Notes
Church		
• Outside study or work, how often do you go to church or other place of worship	Waves 2 to 6	Standard LSAY question
Police		
• If you were stopped in the street and questioned by police about what you were doing, and had done nothing wrong, how confident are you the police would treat you fairly?	Wave 3	Social capital question(s)
• How much of a problem do you think these are for young people you know: being unfairly treated by police		
Tertiary institutions		
• It helped me make contacts I could use in the future to help me get work.	Waves 4 onwards	Standard LSAY question
• You really like being a tertiary student • You think student life really suits you • You really like the atmosphere on campus • Student life has lived up to your expectations • You've made close friends at your current educational institution	Waves 2 to 5	Standard LSAY question(s)
• Some of my fellow students are also close friends • I feel part of the student community • Most of the lecturers treat me fairly • Generally, other students treat me fairly	Wave 4	Non-standard LSAY question(s)

Note: Respondents from the LSAY 2003 cohort are drawn from students participating in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). As a result, information collected during the first wave of the LSAY 2003 cohort is essentially based on information collected as part of PISA. The PISA data are collected using paper-based questionnaires and achievement tests. Students who participated in PISA in 2003 were then contacted later in 2003 using telephone interviews to gather additional information. From 2004, this cohort has been contacted using telephone interviews.

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Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth

NCVER

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