WHANAKE

THE PACIFIC JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ePress Unitec

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2 2015

WHANAKE

THE PACIFIC JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2 2015

CONTACT
cdjournal.unitec@gmail.com

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand, in 2015

ISSN 2423-009X

THIS IS AN EPRESS PUBLICATION

epress@unitec.ac.nz
www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/
Unitec Institute of Technology
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Cover design by Penny Thomson
penny.thomson@ihug.co.nz

Photograph by Dianna Fuemana

Contents

ISSN 2423-009X

About Whanake

Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development is a bi-annual ejournal for practitioners and academics who love community development. The journal mission is to serve as a crucible of democracy, where people come together to share their dreams and plan their common futures. It has refereed papers of 4000-6000 words, reviews, practice notes from the field, and opinion pieces. The journal provides space for posing questions, documenting emerging trends in research and practice, and sharing case studies and biographies.

Community development journals exist in the UK and USA but none have survived in this part of the world. We see this as a journal for Australasia with particular focus on the Pacific Islands. As such it reflects cultural diversity and is about the WE, not the I.

Painting the Desert Pink:

Where Place Making, Social Cohesion and Wellbeing Collide

by **KRISTY McGREGOR**

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand, in 2015

This publication may be cited as:
McGregor, K. (2015) Painting the desert pink: Where place making, social cohesion and wellbeing collide, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, **1**(2), 2-13

ISSN 2423-009X

Article

Painting the Desert Pink:

Where Place Making, Social Cohesion and Wellbeing Collide

by KRISTY McGREGOR

ABSTRACT

In remote communities of western Queensland, where gatherings are rare and take the form of gymkhanas and campdrafts, women hardly take time out to invest in themselves. During droughts, the pressures are so great that social events are neglected in favour of survival of stock and life. This paper reports on a participatory action research project exploring the value of a community development approach to drought. The community-driven event for women discussed in this paper is shown to help build strong remote communities, contributing not only to improved social and emotional wellbeing, but also to a strong and healthy landscape in which rural and remote communities reside.

INTRODUCTION

Rural Australia is currently in the grip of an ecological crisis. The environment is altering from a rich and vibrant source of life to a dry and barren landscape in the grip of drought. The drought is seemingly determined to destroy the glue that binds rural communities, carrying unbearable implications for social and emotional wellbeing (Alston and Kent, 2004). Drought, influenced by climate change on a planet further challenged by human activities, demands that social workers situate their responses to personal stress and family reactions in the context of climate-related issues (Coates and Gray, 2012).

The Channel Country is a region in the south west corner of Queensland. It is a region of prolific beauty, with intertwined rivulets that run into the Lake Eyre basin. It is also a sparsely populated region, with its inhabitants widely dispersed on cattle stations and in small towns. The Channel Country is currently in the grip of one of the most concerning droughts on record; many graziers[1] have had limited rainfall for four years (Nunn, 2014). During times of despair, loss of hope, and immense stress, opportunities to gather are rare – yet they offer much needed escapes from the demands of life on the land (Alston and Kent, 2008). Initiated in 2012, the Channel Country Ladies Day brings women together from across remote western Queensland, the Far North of South Australia, and northern New South Wales (NSW) each October to inspire, empower and celebrate women of the Outback. In a familiar and comfortable setting within this remote region, the shared bonding of station women and remote town women who call the Channel Country home is at the heart of the event (Cock, 2007).

This article reports on research that explores the reach and impact of a community development event, the Channel Country Ladies Day, on the lives of women in the Channel Country. Utilising participatory action research methodology, the project explores how Ladies Day reduces social isolation through networking, and by encouraging women to pursue their goals and aspirations, improves their social and emotional wellbeing (Cavaye, 2001). By supporting women to nurture themselves and their families, this research examines how building healthy and strong minds contributes to resilient communities and resilient landscapes (Kingsley et al., 2009).

[1] A grazier is a person who rears or fattens cattle or sheep for the market; the term refers to a large scale sheep or cattle farmer.

The literature review outlines the nature of drought, its effects on the economic sphere of rural communities, and the subsequent consequences on social connections within rural communities. Following Cavaye's (2001) approach to community development, the literature review explores the link between personal health and wellbeing, and the state of the land. Reporting on findings from the two chosen research methods, the Partnerships Analysis Tool and open-ended interviews, the paper then explores the reach and impact of the Channel Country Ladies Day according to the women who both organised and attended the event. The Discussion and Conclusion sections of this paper provide an opportunity to consider the potential future of the Channel Country Ladies Day, or similar events, for improving social and emotional wellbeing in rural communities.

Literature Review

Drought, the Environment and the Rural Economy

Rural communities are more intimately connected with the environment and at the beck and call of the weather than any other community (Alston and Kent, 2008). They are the first to feel the effects of our current ecological crisis, which has led to land degradation, pollution and drought (Coates, 2003). Drought places human existence in perspective – people are merely specks on the world's horizon (Jones, 2010). Drought impacts on water availability, agricultural production and bush fire regimes, the end shrouded in uncertainty as dry periods and water scarcity increase due to the impacts of El Niño,[2] which are felt globally (Sherval and Askew, 2011). With prolonged drought, critical social resources are depleted through the lowering of social capital. The socio-economic outcomes of drought have the greatest direct impact on mental health and wellbeing by increasing vulnerability and adverse outcomes, particularly when changes to the vitality of the natural landscape are profound (Albrecht et al., 2007, cited in Tonna et al., 2009). Lowered income, increased debt, prolonged environmental stress, land degradation and a loss of hope have led to 'mental health problems for some, and to the tragedy of despair and suicide for a few' (Berry et al., 2008, p. 3). During drought, farm Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and farm incomes fall, and dependence on off-farm incomes rise (Lu and Hedley, 2004, cited in Tonna et al., 2009). Driven out of farming by an overwhelming sense of hopelessness, there is a decline in the number of people and families employed in agriculture (ABS, 2008, cited in Tonna et al., 2009; Pearce et al. 2010). Drought affects not only farming families; the impact is felt by the wider community and local businesses as well (Laoire, 2001, cited in Alston and Kent, 2008).

Social Impact of Drought

Drought places increasing demands on one's time, as graziers are forced into feeding supplements to stock, and checking that water is available to stock. Animals are very vulnerable in such times. In these ways, drought accelerates the deterioration of rural communities' social structures, networks and infrastructures, which are already deteriorating as a result of the longer term agricultural restructuring taking place within many agriculturally-based communities (Crockett, 2002, cited in Tonna et al., 2009). Such changes negatively impact on communities' ability to respond to pressures, increasing their vulnerability to mental health problems. Focusing on their difficult circumstances and stresses can impede the ability of local community members to come together for socialising, through sport and recreation for example, which keeps rural communities active, well and prosperous (Drought Policy Review Expert Social Panel, 2008, cited in Sherval and Askew, 2011; Alston and Kent, 2008).

In rural communities, mental health issues exist within a backdrop of limited access to health services (Nelson and Park 2006; Smith et al., 2008, cited in Tonna et al., 2009), and a stigma surrounding the lack of knowledge regarding mental health problems (Judd et al., 2006, cited in Tonna et al., 2009). Current service models do not address the current resource limitations, geography and social characteristics of rural communities (Tonna et al., 2009). Further, the dominant form of rural identity, which has served men well during good and flourishing times, is a stoicism that prevents blokes asking for help (Courtenay, 2006, cited in Alston and Kent, 2008). Many women, too, have been expected to adopt this stoicism.

Community Development and Social Connectedness

A community development approach to mental health is most effective when conducted at a local level with the active participation of the affected community (Hart et al., 2011). Introduced in 2007, the Rural Adversity

[2] El Niño refers to an irregularly occurring and complex series of climatic changes affecting the equatorial Pacific region and beyond every few years. Trade winds lead to the rise in sea surface temperature in the Pacific. The effects of El Niño include reversal of wind patterns across the Pacific, drought in Australia and Asia, and unseasonal heavy rain in South America.

Mental Health Program, funded by the NSW Government, partnered with established service providers to offer women's Pamper Days, designed to support women impacted by drought (Hart et al., 2011). The Channel Country Ladies Day draws on this model of connecting participants with service providers.

According to Cavaye's (2006) approach to community development, community members are best positioned to engage in a process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the community. Cavaye (2001) argues that rural community vitality relies on communities 'rethinking assets, developing networks, building local cooperation and acting on local passion and motivation' (p. 109). Community development improves the ability of communities to make better decisions collectively regarding the use of infrastructure, labour and knowledge (Schaffer, unpublished, cited in Cavaye, 2006). Cavaye argues that successful community development not only contributes to infrastructure or community organisation, but also changes community thinking, networks and overall capabilities. In other words, effective community development provides the opportunity to redefine apparent needs and local capabilities. Lasting development in rural communities relies on community ownership, local leadership, action, rethinking and motivation (Cavaye, 2001). A broad-based rural development agenda needs to recognise and foster passionate people, and see emotional capital as a real component of community development (Cavaye, 1999).

The Landscape and Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Caring for country is inextricably linked with caring for health and wellbeing in rural communities (Kingsley et al., 2009). As Guest et al. (1999) acknowledge, the health of the population depends on the quality of the environment in which people reside. Thus, protection of the environment is essential for promoting health and preventing illness – it is a social determinant of health, as acknowledged by the World Health Organisation. This concept draws on Aboriginal people's conceptions of health as social, emotional, cultural and environmental wellbeing, in which connection to country, and one's sense of community and kin, is integral (Kingsley et al., 2009). Thus, the Channel Country Ladies Day is grounded in building a strong community of women that is confident in caring for the land, and is critical for improving ecological literacy (Orr, 1992).

The Channel Country Ladies Day Concept

In 2010, the researcher attended the Daly Waters Ladies Day in the Victoria River District. This event provides an opportunity for women to come together to lunch, shop, and socialise. As a participant, these events appeared as a potential means of bringing together women in isolated areas for improved social and emotional wellbeing – expanding beyond 'feel-good' social and fundraising activities to incorporate opportunities for skill development, confidence and cultural development.

Upon moving to work on a property in the Channel Country region as a governess, the researcher realised there were limited opportunities for social connections outside the regular gymkhanas and campdrafts in the region. As a governess, the researcher's role on the property was to teach the manager's four young boys through School of the Air.[3] Establishing the Channel Country Ladies Day was a way of providing women in the area with the opportunity to don hats and heels for a weekend. In 2012, the inaugural Channel Country Ladies Day was held at Durham Downs Station, a remote S. Kidman & Co. station close to the Queensland-South Australia border. Drawing eighty women from across far western Queensland, northern South Australia and northern New South Wales, the event was well-regarded as an opportunity for women in remote areas to gather, connect, inspire and cement their social and emotional selves.

The weekend was organised by the researcher in conjunction with her employer and the mother of the children taught, with whom there was (and remains) high levels of trust. The co-facilitator had previously organised a centenary event for 300 people at Durham Downs station, and was familiar with the logistical issues associated with holding an event in a remote location.

In 2012 a pilot arts program was run at the Ladies Day to gain a better understanding of how women would respond to arts-based initiatives. Local artist Lyn Barnes co-ordinated a community canvas, where women were encouraged to experiment with their artistic talent. Along with developing regional skills, this pilot exemplified how an Artsbreak Area at the Ladies Day could contribute to greater community capacity and the development of self-confidence and resilience. As women discovered their passion for the arts, the Artsbreak Area served to enhance and advance talent, as well as develop visual arts skills within the remote area. This pilot was expanded in 2013 to include nine artists working in an outdoor Artsbreak Area.

Following the success of the 2012 Channel Country Ladies Day, the second annual Ladies Day was

[3] School of the Air is a correspondence school that caters for the primary education of students who are too isolated to attend a conventional school. Classes were traditionally conducted by radio, but now utilise the internet.

held at Noccundra in far western Queensland, from 18-20 October 2013. Noccundra is a meeting place for landholders and residents in remote Western Queensland. It is located 160km west of the nearest town of Thargomindah, within the Bulloo Shire Council area, an area with a sparse population of only 380 people across 74,000km. Noccundra consists of a pub, tennis court and race track. Most members of the surrounding community are employed in the agriculture and labouring industry, and women in particular are both geographically and socially isolated. The rare opportunities for the community to meet occur at local campdrafts and rodeos, held twice a year at Noccundra.

A committee was formed to run the 2013 event. Women across the region were invited via email, word of mouth, and phone conversation to submit an expression of interest to join the committee. Capturing a wide cross-section of geographical areas, disciplines and ages, the committee was designed to receive input from towns across the Channel Country region. The Royal Flying Doctor Service offered use of infrastructure to support regular teleconferences for committee members. All of the committee members who participated in the development of the 2013 event were Anglo-Saxon, reflecting the dominant make up of station managers and owners in this region of western Queensland (see Table 1 below).[4] The participatory action research described in this article involved most of these committee members as participants, and took place during and immediately after the 2013 event.

Representative	Organisation	Location	Age Bracket (years)
Researcher	Co-facilitator from 2012 / Volunteer	Longreach	20 - 24
Representative 1	Co-facilitator from 2012 / Volunteer / Station Manager	Via Eromanga	35 - 39
Representative 2	Volunteer / Department Natural Resources & Mines	Roma	25 - 29
Representative 3	Volunteer / Governess	Via Windorah	25 – 29
Representative 4	RFDS Longreach Social & Emotional Wellbeing Team	Longreach	40 – 44
Representative 5	RFDS Charleville	Charleville	50 – 54
Representative 6	Volunteer / Freelance Journalist	Birdsville	25 – 29
Representative 7	Volunteer / Station Owner	Stonehenge	50 – 54
Representative 8	Frontier Services Outback Links / Volunteer	Charleville	40 – 44
Representative 9	Charleville Neighbourhood Centre	Charleville	30 – 34
Representative 10	Volunteer / Station Manager	Innamincka	55 - 59

Table 1. **Ladies Day Committee Members 2013**

One hundred and twenty women, along with a number of brave male helpers, travelled from across the entirety of Southern Queensland to attend the event at remote Noccundra. Participants, also primarily Anglo-Saxon, came from Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales, the Northern Territory and Victoria.

[4] Note that in 2014, the event was held at Betoota, in the Diamantina Shire, a shire in which one quarter of the population is Aboriginal. Due to the remaining strong links with the local people in this Shire, we worked with the community to ensure that we respectfully acknowledged the relationship to land and the role of women in the local community. One of the local elders was invited to join in the committee. Two of the local female elders, themselves artists, engaged women in the Artsbreak Area through their community canvas. They also shared their dreamtime stories with the women at their impressive art installation piece, the Snake, located on the side of a hill not far from Betoota. The involvement of local Aboriginal people in the weekend, through the arts, added immensely to the rich nature of the weekend.

In addition, some women travelled from Brisbane, Toowoomba and the regional centres of Townsville, Emerald, Roma, Longreach and St. George, along with the local Channel Country towns of Innamincka, Birdsville, Windorah, Eromanga, Quilpie, Charleville, Thargomindah and Tibboburra, and properties in the Channel Country region. The shaded area on the map in Figure 1 represents the geographical location of the women and the distances travelled to attend the event. Those that came from urban centres as guest speakers aren't represented on the map.

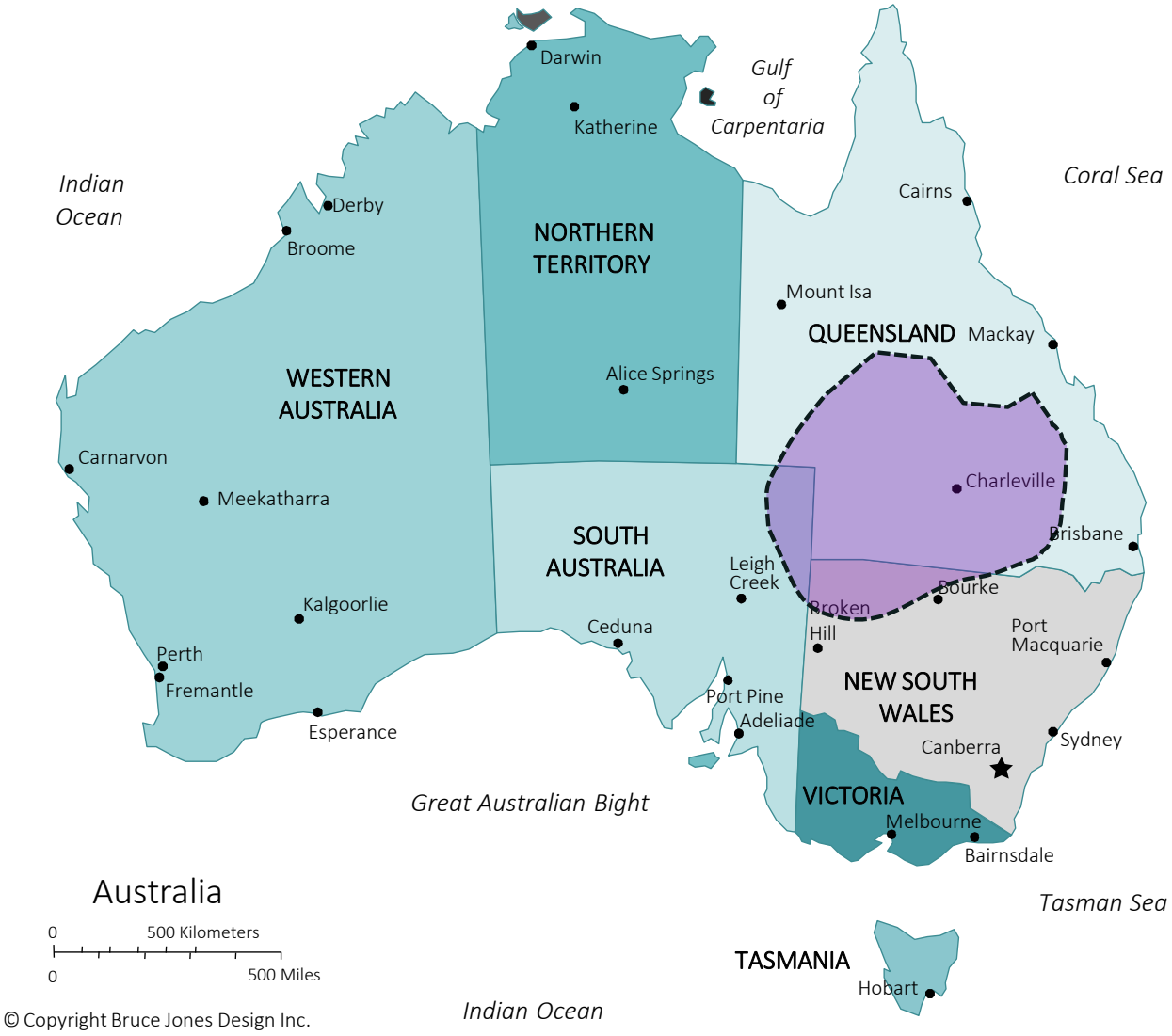


Figure 1. **Map of the geographic spread of participants in the weekend. #16281. Australia Map, Administrative Districts, Capitals. Edited with permission. www.mapsfordesign.com**

The Ladies Day runs over a weekend each October, with a programme that consists of keynote speakers, concurrent workshops, and an opportunity for women to book an appointment with a massage therapist, beautician or hairdresser, or naturopath. The event is also attended by the local women's health nurse, a female doctor, and allied health professionals. With workshops on mindfulness for positive mental health and wellbeing, grief and loss, understanding of sexuality, fitness, health and nutrition – and with access to women's health professionals – wellbeing is at the core of the weekend. The arts are a critical part of the weekend, and through a partnership with Red Ridge Interior Queensland, the local arts organisation, the Channel Country Ladies Day has each year provided women with an opportunity to experiment with different artistic mediums through community artwork.

The event rotates between small localities in the Channel Country region, and is held at rodeo

grounds and racetracks. While this rotation presents logistical challenges, it allows for different populations in the region to be engaged, and without mobile reception, it enables women to escape the responsibilities and demands of everyday life. Fine dining is provided, and women are accommodated in tents should they not bring their own swag or gooseneck trailer.

Since 2012, the event has grown to a maximum capacity of 150 women, with the 2014 event held at Betoota, which is the smallest town in Australia, with an official population of zero. Since the inaugural event, a number of approaches have been made from people requesting information on how they could hold a similar event in their own communities.

In the inaugural year (2012), evaluation occurred to determine more effective processes, and improvements for sequential years. For the 2013 event, it occurred to the committee to examine the impact of Ladies Day on the lives of women in western Queensland, in a time of drought and dire situations. Hence, a small research project was designed for this purpose.

Research Method

This project employs qualitative research to examine the reach and impact of the Channel Country Ladies Day on the lives of women in remote outback Australia.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was utilised. In PAR, people concerned with a given issue adopt a lead role in producing and using knowledge. PAR is driven by participants, offering a democratic model for who can produce and own knowledge. It demands collaboration at every stage, and often results in some action or change for improving the identified issue (Paine et al., 2011). For the current project, as noted above, PAR was conducted via the majority of the 2013 Channel Country Ladies Day Committee members who are responsible for the organising of the event, consisting of eleven women of various ages and in varying employment and volunteer roles in differing geographical locations across western Queensland.

Methods

Two methods were used for this research: the Partnerships Analysis Tool, to measure the effectiveness of the event's organization, and interviews, which explored the reach and impact of the event.

Partnerships Analysis Tool

The Partnerships Analysis Tool (PAT) was employed to examine the strength and effectiveness of partnerships developed and maintained for health outcomes. PAT is a Victoria Health tool that considers partnerships to be an important mechanism for building and sustaining capacity to promote health and prevent illness (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2011). The mapping component of the exercise, described more fully below, outlines a clear understanding of the range of purposes of collaborations through a visual interpretation of the nature and strength of the relationships. The PAT mapping exercise was conducted via teleconference with six participating committee members. The second component of PAT, the partnership checklist, was conducted with committee members to ascertain their understanding of the partnerships, in keeping with participatory action research (Lewis, 2005). Five committee members returned the PAT checklist.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted as trusted and personal engagements or conversations with a distinct purpose (Minichiello et al., 1995, cited in Shreval and Askew, 2012), as women shared their experiences of the Channel Country Ladies Day in a truly emotive and heartfelt manner. Eight women were interviewed. The sample size is considered robust for a qualitative study of this kind (Tracy, 2013). The interviews were completed by telephone in the two weeks following the event, and were up to one hour in duration.

The interviews sought to explore the impact of the weekend, as identified by the committee members who were able to observe the growth amongst the women around them. Questions were open-ended, in keeping with the exploratory nature of the research (Kilpatrick et al., 2009). The interviews allowed women to make sense of their experiences, critical to understanding the impact of drought (Pearce et al., 2010). Sherval and Askew (2011) argue that 'listening to lived experiences of those experiencing drought at a local and regional level is not only paramount to developing an appropriate government response, but also key to driving future adaption strategies in Australia and perhaps globally' (p. 362). Thematic analysis allowed for the extraction of patterns and themes present within the interviews (Tracy, 2013).

FINDINGS

PARTNERSHIPS ANALYSIS TOOL

The PAT refers to four types of partnerships in health promotion. On a continuum, networking involves the exchange of information for mutual benefit; co-ordinating involves the exchange of information and altering of activities for a common purpose; co-operating involves the sharing of resources; and collaborating, considered the highest level of partnership, allows a seamless delivery.

The Partnerships Analysis Tool mapping exercise (see Figure 2) shows the number of connections the Channel Country Ladies Day has formed with health service providers, regional arts organisations, state advocacy bodies, national foundations, local councils, and corporations and local businesses through events planning and execution, according to the committee members. The strongest partnerships were the collaborative relationships with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and Nockatunga Station, whose staff invested considerable time and commitment to achieve the desired purpose of the Channel Country Ladies Day. Co-operating partnerships were identified between the Channel Country Ladies Day and Red Ridge Interior Arts Queensland, Charleville Neighbourhood Centre, South West Hospital and Health Service, Frontier Services Outback Links, Santos, and other community and health-based organisations. Each of these listed organisations not only committed in-kind support and financial investment, but also developed a rapport with the committee over the course of the organisation of the Channel Country Ladies Day.

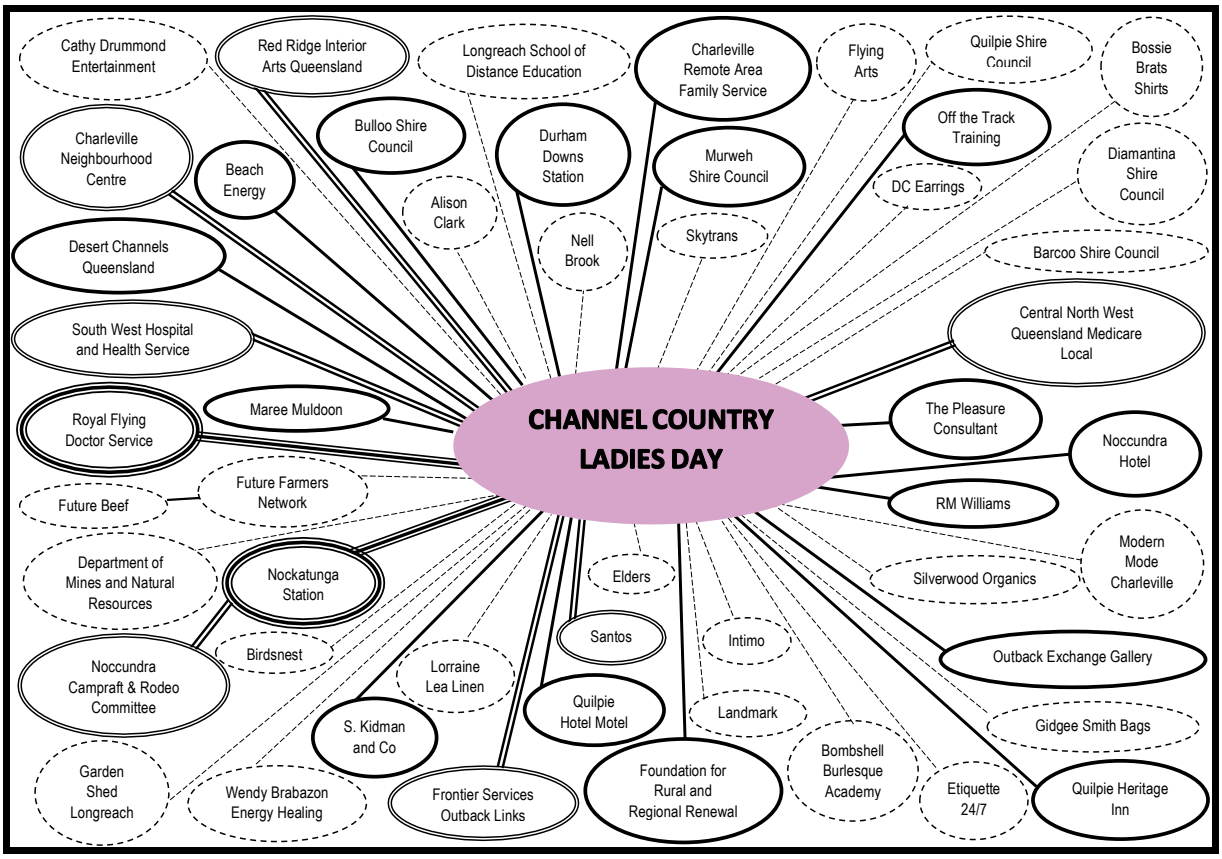


Figure 2. **Partnerships Analysis Tool Mapping Exercise**

The Partnerships Analysis Tool checklist examines the partnerships within the committee. The checklist data reveals a shared perception amongst committee members that very strong partnerships had

been established based on genuine collaboration. All committee members indicated a strong need for the partnerships, as well as a clear understanding of and common commitment to the purpose of the weekend. The committee perceived good relations between partners and clarity of responsibilities and decision making structures to ensure the partnerships worked. The committee members also described good planning for collaborative action for the running of Ladies Day, and the implementing of collaborative action, along with clear processes for reflecting on and continuing the partnerships. The lowest scoring field across all committee members was the barriers to partnerships; committee members cited a lack of formal structure for sharing information and resolving disputes. This identified problem has been addressed over the past two years as the committee has formalised its governance model, and additional structures and processes have been put in place to challenge what is sometimes a small town desire to avoid evaluation or conflict.

Interviews

Interviews were completed with eight members of the committee. By late 2013, the whole of the Channel Country was drought declared. In her interview, one mental health professional describes how drought impacts on all women in the region, including local business and townships. 'We say that drought impacts on those living on properties, but even the women in small communities it impacts on them as well. It is a definite atmosphere in the air when drought is around, and it impacts on businesses and other people.' This interviewee's comment sets the scene for the themes that emerged about growth amongst (and in spite of) despair during the interviews.

The Importance of a Temporary Reprieve

The weekend was described by women as more than just a good time. It was seen as an opportunity to discuss common issues, and as a temporary reprieve from the drought. For many women, the event was the first break in a long time. For one woman, it was her first break in seventeen years, and for a young mother, it was a break after six stressful weeks mustering. The latter stated, 'this weekend was exactly what I needed'. One woman reflected that 'it's so much more than a fun weekend, you can see them lift, some are putting themselves first for only once in their lives'. According to several interviewees, many of the women attending the event described themselves as emotionally recharged.

The weekend commenced with comedian Bev Killick. For many of the women, this event marked the first time they had laughed in a long time. 'It put a lot of people out of their comfort zone,' one of the committee women noted; 'Listening to the women laugh, you couldn't put a price on that. You don't hear that anywhere out here at the moment, laughing hysterically. It just rolled from then on in…' In reference to the comedian's jokes about forever cleaning the house after the children have been through, and about men's hands forever out for the grope, one health professional noted that 'The crudeness (of the comedian) was a release. They needed that escape from reality. The comedian just brought the realities home of what it is like to be a woman'.

Building Connectedness and Community

A recurring theme amongst the women was the inspiration and sense of connectedness they felt as a result of the weekend. One participant described the impact of the weekend thus: 'the sense of inspiration, deep inside of you, is overpowering. You can see it in so many women; all so positive, all smiles. It reaches them on a level you just can't explain'. A mental health professional described the notable connection between the women. 'The level of participation by the participants, the level of engagement; to see the women chatting while they were doing the silverwork or the millinery, there was a definite connection between women that attended this year.'

Importance of the Artsbreak Area

Women described how the weekend filled them with a sense of achievement and confidence to explore skills they had never tried, and sparked new interests. As one property manager metaphorically described, when she was watching women in the Artsbreak Area, 'the ones that [participated in the arts] climbed a few steps, climbed out of holes for a couple of days. [Getting rid of pressures] constantly weighing down on you. Skills up, empowerment that [can] carry [them] through hard times and drought.' Many interviewees noted that by instilling confidence in socially isolated rural and remote women, the weekend provided event participants with the opportunity to engage in self-expression, and the Artsbreak Area served to build the artistic capacity of the community.

Increasing Accessibility to Health Services

The event provided women with access to health professionals and knowledge regarding health services and healthcare. One health professional described how 'there were a lot of questions of the resources, a lot of

people weren't aware of the latest dietary guidelines; they weren't aware of the latest health messages that women get a lot in the major urban areas. The fact they could ask doctors questions, they could get pap smears'. The health professionals described participating alongside their clients in the weekend's activities as an opportunity to connect with their clients. 'It breaks down barriers of professionals and clients. It really makes you on that same level. Joining in really helped when people wanted to ask questions.'

Relationship to Hardship

Hardship was a recurring theme for all the women interviewed. As noted by a mental health professional, many women are in difficult circumstances: 'I'm sure the decision to attend wasn't taken lightly by any of the women, and required great sacrifices from those at home that continued with the mundane tasks.' She adds,

> I just hope when women get home the spark stays there. I'd like to think it is going to be very sustainable. I think the memories that they created that weekend will carry them through the coming months. We hope that the rains will come, and I don't think the memories will diminish with the rain. The women learnt a lot about themselves and generally, how important it is to treat themselves and have a break.

The event 'strengthens them, and the resolve to get on with what they have to face when they get home'. One health professional described the weekend as an opportunity for women to 'come, enjoy themselves, and have a release from the pressures of everyday life'.

Driven by a Shared Purpose

A shared passion and purpose was evident in the commitment of the committee members driving the project. As one committee member put it: 'even those that are doing it as part of work would have a blurry line with it being work or personal because of that commitment to and passion about the idea behind it all.' Behind each of the women on the committee is a sincere passion for supporting rural women to achieve their greatest potential, through sharing and gathering.

Prior to the event, many of the committee members had not met face to face. Despite the challenges of planning and executing an event without meeting physically, one committee member described it as a 'special, encouraging weekend. Friends came in with us and assisted us in doing it'. One health professional stated that there is 'no faltering in level of commitment – everyone wants to see something like this for women out here.'

Discussion and Conclusions

This report highlights the need for a more comprehensive evaluation framework at future Channel Country Ladies Day projects. Interviewing and surveying event participants both prior to and after a given event would provide more substantial evidence about the outcomes and impacts on the women attending. It would also be useful at future events to allow for ongoing evaluation throughout the Ladies Day weekend, through a whiteboard or butchers paper on which women could record their reflections on the event.

Considering the growth of the event, and its significantly increasing budget year on year, this project points to the need to maintain formalized structures within the committee, with defined roles and responsibilities. Such formalisation will assist in a more equal sharing of responsibilities amongst committee members, and allow for clearer processes for conflict resolution.

There is potential for the Channel Country Ladies Day to become a model for other rural and remote communities to address social and emotional wellbeing. The numerous approaches of communities interested in holding a Channel Country Ladies Day-type event reveals the considerable need that exists in remote areas to support women. Communities could work to a size that is appropriate for their capacity, and could adapt the content to suit their needs. Thus, the Channel Country Ladies Day concept could be a model for addressing drought and environmental disasters and building the capacity of rural and remote communities via a community directed and owned approach.

At the heart of community development is community ownership and involvement, whereby the community makes and implements decisions. The community's initiative and leadership is the source of change (Cavaye, 2006). The success of the Ladies Day lies in the fact it has always been an initiative of women in the Channel Country; it has been developed and implemented by women of the Channel Country, and only assisted by outside supporters. As Cavaye notes, the passion and enthusiasm of local people drives action; it is their belief, motivation and commitment that fuels change. The committee has assisted in building motivation and community capacity through participation and active involvement in decision-making and implementation. In line with Cavaye's community development framework, external facilitators were invited in to work with rural communities, including sponsors, organisations, speakers and presenters. At the heart of

the event is the decision to hold it in a remote location that is in a relaxed and familiar setting, and allows women to celebrate their identity as rural women without having to travel to the city (Cock, 2007).

The very nature of the event in the remote, dusty location of the racetrack, which is marked by weather extremes, cements the women's lives as at the beck and call of Mother Nature in this arid part of Australia. Women are enlightened as they explore the inextricable links between their own wellbeing and the land, and the importance of nourishing both in order to survive, especially at a time of drought (Kingsley et al., 2009). The landscape gives space to value and appreciate nature, with heightened ecological consciousness (Coates, 2003). Informed by the land, the event celebrates women of the outback's ecological consciousness and equips women with skills for enhanced ecological literacy in our contemporary and changing world (Coates and Gray, 2012). Through the arts, women were able to explore their connection with nature. A mosaic that was created depicted the desert channels that run through the Channel Country, which not only define the Channel Country landscape, but also run deeply through each woman in the area. For another arts project, women dragged scrap metal from locations on their property, and together with the assistance of a welder and sculpture artist, it was shaped into a beautiful emu that is now a piece of community art. In addition, by bringing together leaders in sustainable agriculture to engage and interact with the women through the stories they told about bringing family up on the land, we are actively contributing to a community that is skilled and confident in caring for our landscape (Cock, 2007).

The Channel Country Ladies Day fosters leadership, entrepreneurship and altruism (Cavaye, 2006). Through the committee, the event developed the leadership and skills of regional people who took on leadership roles within their communities and contributed to the creation of a regional event that celebrates their identity as rural women. The Ladies Day committee actively engaged in community development, reaching a decision to initiate a social action process to change their economic, social, cultural and environmental situation (Christenson et. al., 1989, cited in Cavaye, 2001). By working as a collective, and having ownership over the event, women were actively involved in shifting their social and emotional wellbeing. The high level of trust and existing engagement with the host property, Nockatunga Station, enabled the development of the concept; thus, our community development process rested on interaction between people and joint action, or collective agency, rather than individual activity (Flora and Flora, 1993, cited in Cavaye, 2006).

Cavaye (2006) notes that attitudes and networks are just as important as material outcomes in community development (see also Payne, 2005). For many of the women who attended, the event transformed the manner in which they are able to interpret their experiences, and offered an opportunity for community rethinking about self and being. Since the first event, women have approached the researcher, describing how the event has provoked the questions 'I wonder what I'm doing with my life. What am I passionate about?'. The event also encouraged the exploring and advancing of talent, and developed the skills of regional people through access to artistic experimentation in a region otherwise devoid of such experiences. It encouraged collaboration of women in the region, the sharing and development of community ideas, the cementing of community spirit, and the celebration of female identity. The event engendered the development of a stronger sense of community-celebrated community spirit (Cavaye, 2001). Through the creation of a community canvas, community mosaic and sculpture piece, the event served to develop community ideas through collaborative works of art.

The Channel Country Ladies Day has become a sought after meeting point to indulge and savour company and community. From the Noccundra racetrack location, it reconfirms the women's identity that is so intertwined with the desert landscape. From this position, women are able to experiment, create, inspire and connect.

These findings are provided in the hope that other communities enduring stress may be assisted by similar activities and events. The Channel Country Ladies Day possibly offers a model from which other remote communities could work to secure the future sustainability of healthy bodies, healthy minds, healthy communities and a healthy landscape. And it is this that, as Kahn (2010) argues, would serve well for future social work education – ecopedagogy that synthesises traditions of ecoliteracy and grass roots social research (cited in Jones, 2011).

KRISTY McGREGOR is a Regional Policy Advisor with Federated Farmers of New Zealand, NZ's advocacy body for agriculture and rural communities. She lives on a dairy farm in the lower North Island and is passionate about building vibrant rural communities. She has only recently moved to New Zealand (in 2014) from Western Queensland, where she spent a number of years living on a cattle station on the remote Queensland-SA Border. It was in Western Queensland that she was involved co-ordinating a number of arts projects connecting local artists with women across the west, and established the Channel Country Ladies Day, a project she continues to be involved in from across the ditch. When not advocating for the better of New Zealand's rural sector with Federated Farmers, she is studying for her Masters in AgriScience, with an interest in rural sociology and community development, at Massey University.

Contact **kmcgregor@fedfarm.org.nz**

REFERENCES

Alston, M. and Kent, J. (2004) *Social Impacts of Drought*, Centre for Rural Social Research, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Alston, M. and Kent, J. (2008) The big dry: the link between rural masculinities and poor health outcomes for farming men, *Journal of Sociology*, **44**(2), 133-147.

Berry, H.L. Kelly, B.J. Hannigan, I.N.C., et al. (2008) *Rural Mental Health Impacts of Climate Change*, Commissioned Report for the Garnaut Climate Change Review, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

Cavaye, J. (1999) 'The role of public agencies in helping rural communities build social capital', paper presented at the International Symposium on Society and Resource Management, July 1999, Madison, WI, USA.

Cavaye, J. (2001) Rural community development: new challenges and enduring dilemmas, *Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy*, **31**(2), 109-124.

Cavaye, J. (2006) Understanding Community Development, *Rural Community Development,* University of Queensland, accessed at: http://www.southwestnrm.org.au/sites/default/files/uploads/ihub/understanding-community-developments.pdf (19 January 2014).

Coates, J. (2003) *Ecology and Social Work: Toward a New Paradigm*, Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Coates, J. and Gray, M. (2012) The environment and social work: an overview and introduction [Online], *International Journal of Social Welfare,* **21**(3), 230-238. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2397.2011.00851.x

Cock, P. (2007) Grass root communities as the heart of green citizenship, *New Community Quarterly*, **5**(3), 2007, 26-27.

Guest, C. Douglas, R. Woodruff, R. and McMichael, T. (1999) Health and the Environment, *TELA: Environment, Economy and Society*, **1**, 1-37.

Hart, C. R. Berry, H. L. and Tonna, A. M. (2011) Improving the mental health of rural New South Wales communities facing drought and other adversities, *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, **19**(5), 231-238.

Jones, P. (2010) Responding to the ecological crisis: transformative pathways for social work education, *Journal of Social Work Education*, **46**(1), 67-84.

Jones, P. (2011) Transformative learning, ecopedagogy and learning ecology: pathways for social work education, in P. Jones, D. Miles, A. Francis and S.P. Rajeev, eds, *Eco-social Justice: Issues, Challenges and Ways Forward Voices from De Novo'11,* Books for Change, Bangalore, India, pp. 1-24.

Kilpatrick, S. Cheers, B. Gilles, M. and Taylor, J. (2009) Boundary crossers, communities, and health: exploring the role of

rural health professionals, *Health & place*, **15**(1), 284-290.

Kingsley, J. Townsend, M. Phillips, R. and Aldous, D. (2009) "If the land is healthy… it makes the people healthy": the relationship between caring for country and health for the Yorta Yorta Nation, Boonwurrung and Bangerang tribes, *Health & Place*, **15**(1), 291-299.

Lewis, J. M. (2005) A network approach for researching partnerships in health, *Australia and New Zealand Health Policy*, **2**(1), 22-32.

Nunn, L. (2014) Verbal communication, 10 October.

Orr, D. (1992) *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World,* State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, USA.

Paine, R. Whitman, G. and Milledge, D. (2012) Participatory Action Research Toolkit: An Introduction to Using PAR as an Approach to Learning, Research and Action, Durham University/RELU/Lune Rivers Trust, accessed at: http://wwww.dur.ac.uk/resources/beacon/PAR/toolkit.pdf (10 January 2014).

Payne, M. (2005) *Modern Social Work Theory* (3rd Edition), Palgrave MacMillan, Hampshire, England.

Pearce, M. Willis, E. Wadham, B. E. N. and Binks, B. (2010) Attitudes to drought in outback communities in South Australia, *Geographical Research*, **48**(4), 359-369.

Sherval, M. and Askew, L. E. (2011) Experiencing 'drought and more': local responses from rural Victoria, Australia, *Population and Environment*, **33**(4), 347-364.

Tonna, A. Kelly, B. Crockett, J. Greig, J. Buss, R. Roberts, R. and Wright, M. (2009) Improving the mental health of drought-affected communities: an Australian model, *Rural Society*, **19**(4), 296-305.

Tracy, S. J. (2013) *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*, Wiley-Blackwell, West Sussex, England.

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. (2011) *The Partnerships Analysis Tool*, accessed at: https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/the-partnerships-analysis-tool (15 February 2014).

How does Voluntary Ethics Improve Research?

Introducing a Community Research Development Initiative

by **PAUL FLANAGAN and EMMA TUMILTY**

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand, in 2015

This publication may be cited as:
Flanagan, P. and Tumilty, E. (2015) How does voluntary ethics improve research? Introducing a community research development initiative, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, **1**(2), 14-23

ISSN 2423-009X

Article

How does Voluntary Ethics Improve Research?

Introducing a Community Research Development Initiative

by PAUL FLANAGAN and EMMA TUMILTY

ABSTRACT

Until recently, community organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) have not had any avenue for ethical review of research involving human participants unless they were connected to researchers involved with health and disability research (narrowly-defined), or tertiary education institutions. The New Zealand Ethics Committee (NZEC), a recent community research development initiative, has invited organisations to submit their proposals for voluntary ethics review and provides research methodology support where sought. This paper introduces this initiative, describing both its make-up and processes. It also explores the relationship between reviewer-applicant in the NZEC as distinctive to the relationship of reviewer-applicant in traditional ethical review settings, explaining this difference of power relations and philosophy. Those in the community see research ethics review as something to be learned along with research methodology/practice.

INTRODUCTION

Compulsory ethical review of research with human participants has been mandated within the health, disability and tertiary education sectors in Aotearoa New Zealand since the findings of the Cartwright Inquiry in 1988 (Tolich and Smith, 2015). There have been a number of iterations in the Health and Disability Ethics Committees' (HDEC) structure and governance (namely, Ministry of Health reforms of HDECs in 2004 and 2012 [Tolich and Smith, 2015]). An effect of these changes is that groups engaged in research outside of health/disability and tertiary education have found it increasingly difficult to seek advice or guidance for their projects, let alone receive formal ethical approval.

Until the 2012 Ministry of Health restructuring of purpose and process for health and disability research ethical review, community groups could approach these HDECs[1] – and were largely responded to in good faith. However, these doors are now firmly closed. In fact, a number of health and disability projects also no longer comply with criteria set for HDECs by the Ministry of Health, as these criteria have been reduced to focus on high risk, interventionist, well-funded trials, and mainly randomised clinical trials[2]. It appears that health and disability research has now been shaped into medical research – and the review of ethics is now returning to the landscape of 1988 where there were concerns about the absence of cultural and lay voices within ethical review processes. Inclusion of these voices was a significant consideration when HDECs were introduced. But in the current context social researchers within the voluntary and low-paid social service/practice community are not guided or supported to engage with ethics review for their research.

[1] Within the international research community, such Research Ethics Committees (RECs) are sometimes known as Institutional Review Boards (IRBs).

[2] This change will potentially increase workload for tertiary institution ethics committees from applicants who can no longer approach an HDEC for ethical review of their project.

The formation of the New Zealand Ethics Committee (NZEC) by a group of former HDEC chairs has been welcomed by governmental and non-governmental groups[3], as it aims to support researchers in the community. Initially, this group of chairs established New Zealand Ethics Limited in 2008 to explore alternative possibilities for ethics research in the New Zealand health and disability research environment (Tolich and Smith, 2015), from which came the NZEC. This independent committee has taken a clearer direction since the Ministry of Health review and reform of HDECs in 2012. NZEC is now clearly established as an ethics committee for researchers who cannot access an HDEC or an institutional committee. As the work of this committee has become gradually more widely known, a growing number of researchers and community organisations have approached the committee for advice.

WHAT IS NZEC?

NZEC has taken up a unique position within the ethics review sector in New Zealand. It is focused on community-based research initiatives conducted by not-for-profit groups who are independent of health and tertiary education institutions. It also accepts applications from national and local governmental agencies who ironically also have no avenue of ethics review outside of health ethics review in New Zealand. As such, it holds a distinctive place within the ethics committee landscape in New Zealand given the relations of power concerning ethical review of research: it cannot *approve* research in the traditional sense; it is *not an accredited committee* (as determined by the Health Research Council); and its legal status is simply one of being a charitable limited liability company – functioning due to the goodwill of a group of volunteers with an indemnity clause outlining the limits of its responsibilities.

This means that the committee cannot be charged with competing interests. Discourse in the research ethics review literature charges Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) with risk averse positions – IRBs have a focus on research governance and institutional reputation over and above their commitment to participant safety (Feeley, 2007). We understand this to mean that these IRBs can have considerations regarding their institution that make them more likely to be restrictive in their recommendations. The NZEC, as an independent group with an indemnity clause, has no other priority than participant safety and ethical practice, and operates with no external pressures.

ACCREDITATION

The NZEC Committee is not accredited. While discussions were originally held with the Health Research Council (as the legislated ethics committee accrediting body in New Zealand based on the Health Research Council Act 1990) and the Royal Society of New Zealand regarding the potential for accrediting NZEC, the former found NZEC fell outside of its mandate (health) and the latter found it had no mandate (to accredit an ethics committee). This affords the NZEC freedoms as well as creating obstacles for serving those communities left out by traditional ethical review.

Firstly, freedoms are afforded insofar as its processes and standards are dynamic and reflexive. NZEC subscribes to the view that ethical practice evolves and as such trenchant prescriptivism will not do. Secondly, obstacles are created insofar as those applying, while receiving ethical review and guidance, cannot claim a recognised (accredited) review process has been completed. Nonetheless, the NZEC has received growing numbers of applications (see below), showing that regardless of the non-accreditation status of the committee, groups in the community find benefit in voluntarily completing ethical review through the NZEC process.

The committee provides the minimum of guidelines, directing applicants to the Royal Society of New Zealand website for Code of Professional Standards.[4] This is in line with the philosophy of the committee, insofar as it wants to encourage ethics review as a means of improving ethical practice rather than a step in research governance. As such, the NZEC committee members agree with others (Eriksson et al., 2008; Johnsson et al., 2015) that creating ethical guidelines can lead to documents that are either too broad or too prescriptive – both being unhelpful when dealing with a diverse applicant population working with various participant populations within multiple settings. The committee wishes to foster and support ethical thinking and practice and does this through consultation and dialogue. Its starting point for many of the ethical questions that arise in applications is not 'they (the applicant) cannot do that', but rather 'how can we help them do that better in their setting for the sake of their participants and themselves?' This second question can be answered only through relational engagement, i.e. in dialogue with the applicant in order to understand their specific setting. Tolich and Tumilty, both members of the NZEC, while writing about a

[3] A small seeding fund was received from the Ministry of Social Development in 2013 to support the committee's members to meet and review processes and applications as received. In 2014, NZEC received funding for two years from the Tindall Foundation to establish a secretariat, plan for an increase in business, and explore members' professional development and attendance at a conference (Ethics in Practice, University of Otago, May 22-24, 2015).

[4] Available from: http://www.royalsociety.org.nz/organisation/about/code/

resource created to share ethical expertise (TEAR – The Ethics Application Repository)[5] have discussed the need to conceive of ethics committees as learning institutions rather than mechanisms of research governance (Tolich and Tumilty, 2014), which is operationalised in the NZEC setting.

The question of accreditation, therefore, is currently a double-edged sword. On one side, firstly, there is the sense that accreditation is unnecessary, as the current functioning of the committee, as a provider of ethical review and as an advisor of research design and method, is clearly effective. Secondly, not having accreditation offers flexibility to focus on ethical review within a context of relational dialogue that offers a shift in power relations, different from those of traditional committees which tend to have a mandate to focus on governance of research ethics and risk management. On the other side, the question remains: what benefits would NZEC have in being accredited, but more directly (and importantly) what benefits would community researchers receive if NZEC were to be accredited?

PROCESS

Currently there are thirteen members of the committee, including a mix of gender, ethnicity and expertise. Their experience includes research, ethics, law, education, health and social practice – and they come to the committee from academia, government and community settings. Three members are previous HDEC chairs (who, upon recognising the shortcomings in the HDEC system reviews for community groups, then established NZEC), and multiple members are currently chairs or members of other institutional or accredited ethics committees. This inclusion of previous HDEC chairs and other institutional chairs/members goes some way to legitimising the committee regardless of its accreditation status. By including members who have experience in the 'accredited' system, the committee demonstrates appropriate knowledge and expertise of regulation in addition to its knowledge and expertise surrounding applicants' settings (i.e. community, social, or non-medical research).

The review process itself is conducted via email. Each application is received and is assigned a lead reviewer, plus two tofour additional review team members. This team reviews an application (see Appendix 1) and may discuss it amongst each other as they review (via email or phone) and may also contact the applicant during this stage for clarification (via the lead reviewer). The lead reviewer collates responses and then provides the applicant with a table of responses and the offer of further discussion (either in person or over the phone) regarding any of the items in the table. Table 1 is an example of how a review table of responses might look to an applicant with recommendations from committee members.

Item	Issue	Recommendation
e.g. Consent Form	Statement regarding withdrawal is not consistent with the process outlined in the application.	Please clarify whether participants can withdraw their data and at what stage. Please correct documentation to be consistent once decided, so that participants are clear on what is possible and when.
e.g. Recruitment process	How are potential participants approached or contacted?	Please explain how contact information will be shared with potential participants, or how participants are being approached, i.e. when, by whom, where, etc.? Be mindful of the relationships between different parties and what this might mean in terms of people feeling obligated to take part, as well as the Privacy Act and how information can be used.

Table 1. **Example of Review Table Responses sent to Applicants**

[5] This is an open, online archive of exemplary ethics applications shared by scholars to encourage the sharing of ethical practice/knowledge in the international research setting. Available from: www.tear.otago.ac.nz

Applicants submit to the NZEC using a simple application form (Appendix 1). The form is user-friendly and contains direct and open questions about the work being conducted. The committee has revised the form over time to ensure that the questions elicit the responses required to evaluate a project. The committee also believes that by not prescribing formats for the information sheet or consent form that groups applying design their own forms in modes more appropriate to their settings. There is discussion in the ethics review community about how ineffective traditional information sheets and consents forms can be; committee templates may hinder rather than help (Loverde et al., 1989; Paasche-Orlow et al., 2003; Waggoner and Mayo, 1995). As a committee serving a diverse, largely non-academic community, the NZEC wanted to be open to innovation and responsiveness regarding the design of forms from a range of disciplines. Review will always aim to ensure the appropriate information is provided to facilitate informed consent; i.e. that the layout, design, language and extent of content in the form, as well as the process, can be described by the applicant. This is particularly important in the community setting where projects often require a nuanced understanding of their context.

Thus, the committee's contribution to community-based and governmental researchers responds to the specific circumstances of their research. During the process of communication between committee members and researcher applicants, NZEC review and advice is shaped by the context of the researcher(s) and research space, and in this process, the committee intentionally engages applicants in relational dialogue. Research is considered a unique site of knowledge production, within time and space, and particularly because of who (researcher and participant) is involved (Larkin, 2008). Within the NZEC process, an application involving a community photo-voice project, for example, is something that would be discussed and understood with the applicant to negotiate the most helpful solution for researcher and participants (especially, perhaps, regarding the information documents and informed consent forms). Such a project might require a number of drafts, until a final iteration of the consent form occurs. Some of this drafting and revision may occur verbally. Anecdotal evidence suggests the experience for many researchers, in settings where research-governance dominates an ethics committee's functioning, is to respond to a rule-based system of completing a template form, and signing and submitting it without an opportunity to discuss the content with a member of the ethics committee. NZEC recognises a meaningful dependency on context for the 'performance' of ethical practice within any given project.

Another point of difference between the NZEC and some committees within New Zealand is the review of methodology/scientific validity. HDECs used to include review of scientific validity, but that has since been specifically separated from ethical review within the HEDC process (Marlowe and Tolich, 2015; Tolich and Smith, 2015). There is ongoing debate in the research ethics community regarding ethics committees' scope in reviewing scientific validity or the methodologies of social science research projects (Bond, 2012; Emanuel, 2000; Freedman, 1987; Gunsalus, et al., 2006; Ozdemir, 2009 – to name a few). Some authors describe expansion of scope in this area as mission creep (Bond, 2012; Hammersley, 2010; Schrag, 2010). NZEC handles this issue in the following way: it not only explicitly reviews scientific validity as a factor of ethical practice (see Emanuel, 2000), but also provides supplementary research methodology advice to applicants who sit outside the academy. This contributes to supporting the protection of participants and also provides applicants with the means of improving skills and producing rigorous work. It has to be noted that the pressures on community groups and government organisations to produce evidence of their efficacy in line with evidence-based policy decision-making (Black, 2001; Gray, 2004) has created a greater degree of research activity in the sector, in the form of evaluations and intervention studies. This has not been accompanied by any form of research activity support for these groups.

The NZEC committee discusses the methodology of projects with applicants where these are potentially mismatched with the stated aims or unlikely to provide adequate data. Any project that is methodologically unsound is unethical in that it either wastes participants' time or exposes them to risks that are unnecessary. Where other committees would agree with this as a premise, in practice they are divorced from this review through their Standard Operating Procedures[6] or are implicitly removed from it, insofar as methodological input is unwelcome and contested. NZEC advice to applicants is not provided as a distinct or additional service (i.e. groups cannot seek only methodological input for example), but rather as an essential part of the fundamental service of ethical review, which (as discussed below) has been found to be valuable (Marlowe and Tolich, 2015).

COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO NZEC

The NZEC has been reviewing applications since 2013. In that time, applications have been received from government entities and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) (see Table 2).

[6] See: http://ethics.health.govt.nz/guidance-materials

	2013	2014	2015 (to date: 31 August)
Government[7]	3	2	5
NGO[8]	9	13	8
Other[9]	1	3	2
Total Applications [10]	15	22	30

Table 2. **Number of Applications by Organisation Type per Year**

A research project exploring the experiences of those accessing the committee (Marlowe and Tolich, 2015) found that applicants experienced the process to be supportive and worthwhile. Those Marlowe and Tolich spoke with described their exclusion from other avenues of ethical review. Not only did they value being able to maintain control of their own projects (i.e. not having to sacrifice control to other researchers in order to gain access to an institutional committee), but also the process was described as being less onerous, while more helpful (Marlowe and Tolich, 2015). Applicants had the opportunity to refine or balance methodology and discuss options, and felt that they had gone through a process that showed respect for their participants, who were often clients of their services.

What stands out here is the perception of applicants that their projects were improved by the ethical review process. This perception stands in stark relief to the experiences reported in the literature and in submissions to a government enquiry[11] of those going through traditional IRBs or RECs, who describe ethics committees as gate-keepers (Getz, 2011; Heimer and Petty, 2010), and the changes they require as bureaucratic for the purposes of compliance (Coe, 2007; Gunsalus, 2004) rather than the purposes of improving ethical conduct or honouring participants. This perception is also evidenced by the fact that over the years NZEC has been in operation, some of the organisations with regular research activity have repeatedly applied to NZEC.[12] It must be remembered that none of these groups are obligated at present under New Zealand legislation/regulation to seek any ethical approval whatsoever.

One area the committee has debated amongst members is whether, when reviewing applications from government agencies, there is potential for political and ethical tension. As a committee that has transparently informed applicants that responses will cover not only ethical issues, but also research design and methodology, the committee also openly critiques projects where the committee is concerned about the potential effects for participants during the research process, as well as potential effects of the outcomes of the research for participants. However, as an advisory committee, NZEC accepts that responsibility for the research and what advice is taken (or not) remains with the government agency (Ministry or Department). Nonetheless, we recognise that NZEC offers a unique contribution as an independent and non-governmental committee, in providing critique of these research projects.

The importance of NZEC independence from institutional research governance, and its responsiveness to the social science audience it serves, are keys to its success. Positive word-of-mouth, recognition through funding, and increasing use of the committee's services may prove to be forms of credibility that are as important as formal accreditation for this committee.

IMPOVED RESEARCH QUALITY

Scientific merit is a key factor for the assessment of the ethical nature of any given research project (Freedman, 1987) – if the research rationale or methodology is unsound, the project cannot be ethical. As noted above, the evaluation of scientific merit by an ethics committee can be unwelcome (see Ministry of Health, 2012); NZEC however provides methodological input to those applicants who may need it, in order to support community-based research and develop research quality in the sector. It bears repeating that the

[7] Government ministries, agencies, organisations, departments, etc.
[8] NGOs – charities, trusts providing services.
[9] Other applicants include private research companies and education providers (both national and international, etc.).
[10] Categories represent the number of different organisations applying, and totals represent the total number of applications received; therefore totals are higher since some organisations have submitted more than one application.
[11] Submissions can be found at http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/pb/sc/documents/evidence?custom=00dbsch_inq_9752_1
[12] To date in 2015, there are eight groups who have submitted more than one application to NZEC, and three who have made more than two submissions – voluntarily.

demand for evidence of support services efficacy has meant a rise in the NGO sector of research and evaluation to justify activities. Groups conducting this work are highly skilled practitioners, with expert knowledge of their settings, but less experience of the specifics of question framing in surveys, or statistical methods, for example. The NZEC provides a mentoring role to applicants who are conducting work in this manner. Marlowe and Tolich's (2015) study, which interviewed NZEC applicants about their experiences of NZEC in general, found that the methodological input specifically had been very helpful. Applicants commented: 'The review itself gave us a few good ideas in terms of tweaking the survey to become more balanced … So it definitely enhanced the design of the study.' (p. 8), and '… that's actually where we got most of our help around the questions and how they were framed up. The convener gave quite a bit of really good advice around that and made quite a few changes as a result of that ….' (p. 9).

One applicant in the study specifically explained how important going through this voluntary process was and what benefits there were in terms of ensuring both ethical and scientific robustness:

> We wanted to do this right. We needed to know that our project was sound and we needed to know that it was ethically valid I suppose. …There is an enormous amount of information in there and I think for me it was just about making absolutely sure that our process was right, you know, none of us are researchers and I guess it was to make sure we had followed the process along the way. I would hate for there to be any questions in the future surrounding the validity of what we had done so I guess it was another step towards making sure that was addressed (p. 6).

The NZEC takes the time to address project design in a meaningful way to ensure that applicants achieve what they set out to achieve for their organisation and the participants in the project. Without this review and help provided by NZEC, NGOs especially have little in the way of support or resources to generate the evidence required of them.

Voluntary Review – Perceptions and Power

The authors, two members of the NZEC committee, find what is most interesting about the NZEC is the relationship between applicants and the committee. Both authors have been or are currently members of other committees, both institutional and accredited, and have found anecdotally that those applying to these more 'formal' committees are less likely to perceive the process as one that is valuable and has improved their work, an impression that is supported in the literature (see Tolich and Smith, 2015). This difference in perception of the ethics review process can be explored from a number of perspectives.

The Committee

The committee's membership is much like other committees, insofar as there is a high level of research expertise and experience, there are a number of demographic variables included and all members are members voluntarily while also having other workloads (i.e. there is no difference in workload/commitments). One thing that is different is the inclusion of three previous chairs of HDECs.

The committee's governance of its ethical review procedures is self-directed. It meets once annually in person to review the year's operation, to evaluate its procedural items, to engage in professional development, and to discuss ethical issues and standards. The committee is therefore independent and self-governing. This independence provides what was previously discussed as a double-edged sword. It cannot provide its applicants with the same approval and related safety that is provided by ethics committees that are formally accredited (i.e. accredited committees can, for example, provide access for participants to the ACC insurance structure for approved applications), but it can also be more supportive of applicants given there are no external restraints on the committee. As an independent entity, NZEC has the freedom to make decisions and set standards solely in line with ethical practice and participants' (as well as researchers') safety, rather than enforcing any form of research governance.

Since the inception of NZEC, members of the committee have been aware that it is something new and radical; it offers a service to those who cannot access review in any other way. Not only that, but the freedoms discussed above and the members' experiences of research and ethics in the past meant the committee had a sense that they had an opportunity to provide ethics review to an underserved population in a way that was positive and productive with room for innovation. This space to reimagine ethics review outside of the academy is exciting for many members and creates a strong drive to make ethics review work, and work well.

The Applicants

Applicants apply to this committee voluntarily and in this voluntariness alone there is a difference in the dynamic between committee and applicant. Where ethics review has been described as pejorative by those

within the academy (Israel and Hay, 2006; Johnsson et al., 2015; Schrag, 2010), those seeking review voluntarily are asking for input to ensure they are doing things in a manner that they think is worthwhile. Anecdotally, this changes the perception the committee has of applicants – mistakes are viewed more favourably. Where information is missing or a process is in and of itself poor or described poorly, NZEC members tend to consider these mistakes as indicating a lack of experience rather than as a sign of either deception or laziness on the part of the applicant. This may be quite different than what occurs in institutional settings where the relationship between committees and applicants has been marked as one of '*institutionalised distrust*' (Johnsson et al., 2015). One aspect of institutional and HDEC committees is their role as representatives for their respective organisations (i.e. Ministry of Health or individual tertiary institutions). Through acting representatively on behalf of those organisations, such committees include considerations beyond those of ethical practice, protecting also against possible business and legal risk to their organisation. In contrast, the NZEC as an independent body acts on its own conscience to promote ethically and methodologically sound research practice.

In addition, applicants to the NZEC range from the research-experienced to those new to the process, but their setting is always one where their primary skills are professionally-based not research-based, i.e. their professional esteem is based outside of research practice. It is the authors' opinion that, unlike in the academy where applicants to committees are partly judged on their research performance continually, in this setting applicants are less likely to feel affronted when questioned on their ethical practice as set out in an application. Those in the community see that research ethics is something to be learned along with research methodology/practice. It is our experience that sometimes those in the academy find the questioning of their ethics in research as a direct questioning of their research practice. One potential result is that they might be less open to input from the committee, which they perceive as less knowledgeable, which may be true of their speciality, but not necessarily of reviewing ethical research practice.

All of this speaks to the difference in power relations between the NZEC and its applicants and the traditional IRB/REC and its applicants. As Boser (2007) describes, the power relation between committee and applicant is parallel to that which is often perceived between applicants and their research participants: that is, IRBs/RECs adopt a power-as-dominance model with applicants (reviewing applications through that lens). The NZEC, however, has no power given it is not accredited. Applicants apply voluntarily, so the relationships between NZEC and its applicants are, by their very nature, relational and more equal. Applicants tend to consider the relationships between themselves and their participants quite differently also.

Limitations for NZEC

The number of applications to NZEC has increased over the years, as the work of the committee becomes known, and its processes and quality is tested. In response, the committee has created a secretariat, invited and welcomed new members, and sourced interim funding for its growth. In contrast to HDECs (which are funded by the Ministry of Health) and institutional RECs (funded by their institutions), NZEC is voluntary and funded by donors and two one-off grants (from the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and Tindall). NZEC finds itself currently at a crossroads in the sustainable development of its vision, and the directors are focusing on potential revenue sources (including donations) that will not negatively affect community projects that cannot pay (or pay much) for ethical review. There is goodwill from committee members – and a view that this work is worthwhile and useful, as evidenced by applicants' feedback and Marlowe and Tolich's (2015) survey. Members of NZEC are not seeking recompense for their time, but do want to know that this project is sustainable, well-founded and sufficiently funded for its future. The time spent with applicants, as numbers of applications increase, is sustainable only if the committee adapts.

Conclusion

This article has described the development and function of the NZEC. This community-focused organisation currently remains a viable ethics committee without accreditation, providing a valuable service to those doing important work, both in government and community sectors. This development is interesting in and of itself, as an innovative project in a neo-liberal political research environment, and useful learning from this committee may also apply to other ethics committees. Specifically, joining with applicants relationally and fostering engagement on broader (methodological) matters related to research projects has contributed greatly to the success of NZEC as credible and helpful.

Irrespective of the future of the NZEC within the New Zealand accreditation environment, the applicants' perception of the process of review by NZEC is worth considering further in ensuring the ongoing development of the current accredited committees and the regulations that govern them. In 2015, the National Ethics Advisory Committee (NEAC) in New Zealand initiated a process of consultation around ethical review in New Zealand and one of the topics about which input is sought is alternative forms of ethical

review.[13] One would hope that this consultation indicates a potential broadening of the ethical review environment in New Zealand, while recognising the need to address ethical review with applicants as a partnered process rather than a paternalistic one.

Ethics committees accredited by the Health Research Council Ethics Committee are limited – not only in the groups they serve, but in the standards they apply (i.e. guidelines cover only interventional and observational health studies).[14] The assumption that all research revolves around health is problematic on a number of counts. Moreover, too many New Zealand researchers fall outside either health or the tertiary sector and are therefore excluded from participating in ethics review within these committees. The NZEC goes some distance towards filling these gaps.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is developed from two papers presented at international conferences (Flanagan et al., 2014; Tolich and Tumilty, 2014a). The authors wish to acknowledge the reviewers' and editor's helpful comments.

PAUL FLANAGAN is a senior lecturer in counsellor education at the University of Waikato, and is a member of the university's Human Research Ethics Committee. He is currently researching the contested area of children's sexuality for his PhD, analysing discursive contexts that shape how children's words and actions are understood by parents, teachers and counsellors. Paul is also a director and member of the New Zealand Ethics Committee, and was previously a member of the Waikato Health & Disability Ethics Committee (2002-2004) and chair of the Northern Y Health & Disability Ethics Committee (2004-2009).

Contact: **paulf@waikato.ac.nz**

EMMA TUMILTY is currently undertaking her PhD in Bioethics exploring how research practices effect health inequity. She also sits on two ethics committees – as a member of the New Zealand Ethics Committee and as the Vice-Chair of Otago Polytechnic Research Ethics Committee. She collaborated with Assoc. Prof. Martin Tolich to create The Ethics Application Repository (TEAR), an open-access repository of exemplary ethics applications that serves as a tool for novice researchers and ethics committee members. Her interests cover research ethics, social values in decision-making, open data, research-policy relationships and animal ethics.

Contact: **emma.tumilty@op.ac.nz**

REFERENCES

Black, N. (2001) Evidence based policy: proceed with care, *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, **323**(7307), 275-278.

Bond, T. (2012) Ethical imperialism or ethical mindfulness? Rethinking ethical review for social sciences, *Research Ethics*, **8**(2), 97-112.

Boser, S. (2007) Power, ethics, and the IRB dissonance over human participant review of participatory research, *Qualitative Inquiry*, **13**(8): 1060-1074.

[13] NEAC consultation http://neac.health.govt.nz/cross-sectoral-ethics-arrangements-health-and-disability-research-consultation
[14] NEAC guidelines http://neac.health.govt.nz/streamlined-ethical-guidelines-health-and-disability-research

Coe, F. L. (2007) Costs and benefits of a well-intended parasite: a witness and reporter on the IRB phenomenon, *The Northwestern University Law Review,* **101,** 723-734.

Emanuel, E. J. Wendler, D. and Grady, C. (2000) What makes clinical research ethical? JAMA, **283**(20), 2701-2711.

Eriksson, S. Höglund, A. T. and Helgesson, G. (2008) Do ethical guidelines give guidance? A critical examination of eight ethics regulations, *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, **17**(01), 15-29.

Feeley, M. M. (2007) Legality, social research, and the challenge of institutional review boards, *Law & Society Review,* **41**(4), 757-776.

Flanagan, P. Tolich, M. and Marlowe, J. (2014) 'Does voluntary ethics review improve research? Evaluating a community research development initiative', paper presented at Contemporary Ethnography Across the Disciplines: Sensual Landscapes of Ethnography, 26 November 2014, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

Freedman, B. (1987) Scientific value and validity as ethical requirements for research: a proposed explication, *IRB: Ethics and Human Research,* **9**(6), 7-10. DOI: 10.2307/3563623

Getz, K. A. (2011) Frustration with IRB bureaucracy & despotism, *Applied Clinical Trials*, **20**(1), 26-28.

Goldstein, A. O. Frasier, P. Curtis, P. Reid, A. and Kreher, N. E. (1996) Consent form readability in university-sponsored research, *The Journal of Family Practice*, **42**(6), 606-611.

Gray, J. M. (2004) Evidence based policy making: is about taking decisions based on evidence and the needs and values of the population, *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, **329**(7473), 988-989.

Gunsalus, C. K, (2004) The nanny state meets the inner lawyer: overregulating while underprotecting human participants, *Research, Ethics & Behaviour*, **14**(4), 369-382.

Gunsalus, C. K. Bruner, E. M. Burbules, N. C. Dash, L. Finkin, M. Goldberg, J. P., Greenough, W. T. Miller, G. A. and Pratt, M. G. (2006) Mission creep in the IRB world, *Science*, **312**(5779), 1441.

Israel, M., and Hay, I. (2006) *Research Ethics for Social Scientists*, Sage, London, England.

Hammersley, M. (2010) Creeping ethical regulation and the strangling of research, *Sociological Research Online*, **15**(4), 16. DOI: 10.5153/sro.2255

Heimer, C. A. and Petty, J. (2010) Bureaucratic ethics: IRBs and the legal regulation of human subjects research, *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, **6**, 601-626.

Johnsson, L. Eriksson, S. Helgesson, G. and Hansson, M. G. (2015) Making Researchers Moral, in D. Mascalzoni, ed., *Ethics, Law and Governance of Biobanking,* Springer, Houten, Netherlands, pp. 261-277.

Larkin, P. J. de Casterlé, B. D. and Schotsmans, P. (2008) A relational ethical dialogue with research ethics committees, *Nursing ethics,* **15**(2), 234-242.

Loverde, M .M .E. Prochazka, A.V. and Byyny, R. L. (1989) Research consent forms, *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, **4**(5),410–412.

Marlowe, J. and Tolich, M. (2015) Shifting from research governance to research ethics: a novel paradigm for ethical review in community-based research, *Research Ethics* (online first). DOI: 10.1177/1747016115579536

Ministry of Health (2012) *Standard Operating Procedures for Health and Disability Committees,* Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Health, accessed at: http://www.bopdhb.govt.nz/media/36069/SOPSforHDECv1%200.pdf (15 May 2015).

Ozdemir, V. (2009) What to do when the risk environment is rapidly shifting and heterogeneous? Anticipatory governance and real-time assessment of social risks in multiply marginalized populations can prevent IRB mission creep, ethical inflation or underestimation of risks, *The American Journal of Bioethics*, **9**(11), 65-68.

Paasche-Orlow, M. K. Taylor, H .A. and Brancati, F. L. (2003) Readability standards for informed-consent forms as compared with actual readability, *New England Journal of Medicine*, **348**(8), 721–726.

Schrag, Z. M. (2010) *Ethical Imperialism: Institutional Review Boards and the Social Sciences, 1965–2009*. JHU Press, Baltimore, ML.

Tolich, M. and Smith, B. (2015) *The Politicisation of Ethics Review in New Zealand*, Dunmore Publishing, Auckland, New Zealand.

Tolich, M. and Tumilty, E. (2014) Making ethics review a learning institution: the ethics application repository proof of concept. tear.otago.ac.nz, *Qualitative Research,* **14**(2), 201-212. DOI: 1468794112468476.

Tolich, M. and Tumilty, E. (2014a) 'The New Zealand Ethics Committee: A sheep outside the fold', paper presented at the Australasian Ethics Network Conference, 4 December 2014, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

Waggoner, W. C. and Mayo, D. M. (1995) Who understands? A survey of 25 words or phrases commonly used in proposed clinical research consent forms, *IRB Ethics of Human Research,* **17**(1), 6–9.

APPENDIX 1.
APPLICATION FORM

http://www.nzethics.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/NZEC-Application-Form-v3-May20132.docx

Community Organisations, Contracts for Service and the Government: An Unholy Trinity?

by CHARLOTTE MOORE and CHARLIE MOORE

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand, in 2015

This publication may be cited as:
Moore, C. and Moore, C. (2015) Community organisations, contracts for service and the government: An unholy trinity?, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, **1**(2), 24-33

ISSN 2423-009X

Article

Community Organisations, Contracts for Service and the Government:

An Unholy Trinity?

by CHARLOTTE MOORE and CHARLIE MOORE

Abstract

The New Zealand Productivity Commission is currently undertaking an inquiry into the tensions bewteen government contracts and community organisations. The inquiry raises important issues, and has potentially far-reaching consequences for these organisations and the sector as a whole. This paper explores the tension between a contracting model that privileges tight specification of outputs, short time frames and rigid accountability mechanisms, and community organisations grounded in a desire to work for a more equal, inclusive and just society. This tension is heightened by a reliance on an 'evidence based' approach that is narrowly focused and uninformed by a clear or transparent problem definition or view as to how societal change will occur. There is often no apparent 'theory of change' to underpin government contracting for social services. Within this context, how can community organisations respond and sustain themselves while resisting the many incentives to become just another contractor delivering widgets for government? This paper draws on a submission made to the Productivity Commission's inquiry by Community Waitakere and the WAVES Trust (a West Auckland family violence network), and is supported by a number of West Auckland community organisations (WAVES Trust and Community Waitakere, 2014). While it is possible to identify community outcomes that are attractive to both government and community, it is also clear that community organisations and government will likely remain uncomfortable bedfellows with potentially very different dreams and goals.

Introduction

It has become increasingly obvious to policy makers and politicians alike over recent decades that complex social issues, or 'wicked problems' (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p. 160), as they are often described, require solutions that transcend the traditional boundaries between different areas of social service provision (Humpage, 2006). As such, the effort to foster collaboration and integration across government services, as well as between government agencies and local government and community organisations, has become a key feature of recent policy initiatives (Cheyne et al., 2005). As Cheyne et al. note, the idea of whole of government approaches to policy issues is manifested particularly in the concept of partnerships in the social services, and the need to move beyond the contractual relationships that emphasise specifically purchased outputs to a focus on outcomes, which emphasise results.

At the same time as the realisation has grown that partnership and collaboration are likely to play an important role in responding to these wicked problems, there has also been a growing concern to identify the particular 'intervention' that will make a difference. There has been a significant level of frustration amongst ministers that they cannot be confident that money spent on social services is achieving their objectives, and this in turn has led to a renewed emphasis on the importance of 'evidence'. For example, as the Minister of Social Development, Anne Tolley, stated: '[a]t the moment there is little evidence of the effectiveness, or not, of funding in this sector, because up until now most contracts have focused on the numbers of clients receiving services, rather than the effect that the service has on improving the lives of vulnerable people' (Tolley, 2015, para. 4).

A renewed interest in evaluation and research is also shown by the transformation of the Families Commission into a Social Policy Research and Evaluation Unit (Superu): 'Our purpose is to increase the use of evidence by people across the social sector so that they make better decisions – about funding, policies or services – to improve the lives of New Zealand's communities, families and whānau' (Superu, 2015, para 3).

The co-existence of these two drivers – acknowledgement of the complex and joined up nature of the issues to be addressed, and the desire for evidence – creates its own tension. To be effective, joined up approaches need to be based on sustained and respectful relationships that are developed over time. The search for evidence, however, has tended to lead to a narrow focus on available data, clearly specified deliverables and, ideally, a rigorous point of comparison to demonstrate the efficacy of a particular intervention.

A relatively short political cycle of three years, and the consequent desire from ministers to demonstrate value, adds to an environment of competing and often conflicting motivations and agendas. It is within this context that the relationship between community organisations and government needs to be navigated.

The first part of this paper lays the foundation for our argument by outlining the key shifts that have influenced the current contractual relationship between government and community organisations. We then consider the issues confronting these organisations in entering into contracts with government for the delivery of social services.

Definition of Terms

Lyons (1998, p. 1) argues that there are a variety of terms commonly used to refer to those organisations which are neither seen to be 'business' (i.e. profit making) or government, and that these terms differ depending on the field. He comments: '[f]or example, in the social services, non-profit organisations are commonly referred to as community organisations, but sometimes as charities or as voluntary or non-government organisations.' Beyond the fact of being non-profit, however, clearly articulating what constitutes a 'community organisation' is fraught with difficulty, given that such entities are diverse, and differ with regards to size, workforce and organisational structure. As Neilson et al. (2015, p. 11) comment, '[t]his diversity makes it difficult to demonstrate how the work of the sector impacts positively on New Zealand without reverting to generalisations, abstract concepts, taken-for-granted assumptions and broad rhetoric.' Furthermore, not all community organisations are contracted to deliver social services – nor would many wish to be. Instead, many such organisations would describe their core function as 'community development', which Frank and Smith (1999, p. 3) define as 'a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems'.

Nielson et al. (2015) argue that community organisations are distinguished from other sorts of organisations by virtue of the 'organizational specific capital' that such entities possess, which they have defined as:

- Their organizational mission in action;
- Their accessibility for clients;
- The fact they are embedded in their community;
- Their knowledge of government agencies and community;
- Their networks and ongoing collaboration with other agencies, both government and community;
- Their ability to respond innovatively to identified community needs; and,
- How they express manaakitanga (that is, how they care for their own wellbeing and that of others) (Nielson et al., 2015, p. 8).

This article is primarily focused on the tensions that exist for community organisations contracted by government to deliver social services, which also see themselves as undertaking community development or offering organisational specific capital as described by Neilson et al. above.

Background

In 1984, the Fourth Labour Government embarked on a series of reforms, which resulted in profound changes to the social services landscape. These reforms were influenced by an international shift away from the previous Keynesian model of a state-managed economy and towards a market-based approach to social service delivery, which was concerned with minimising state intervention while promoting the market as the key mechanism for the distribution of goods and services within society (Cheyne et al., 2005). In

particular, neoliberal reforms introduced by the Labour Government (and continued and expanded under the subsequent National Government in 1990) included the corporatisation and privatisation of state assets as well as the separation of the roles of funder, purchaser and provider of social services. Competition between social service providers was encouraged, as this was seen as a means of giving consumers choice. As Humpage and Craig (2008, p. 45) comment:

> [T]he language of the market (choice, self-reliance, and devolution) appealed to a range of groups, not just free market economists, because it appeared to meet the calls by Māori, women and other identity groups for improved access, cultural appropriateness and control over the services they used.

Although the new market-based approach seemed to offer opportunities for community organisations to have more control over services previously delivered by government, the new emphasis on contractualism, which underpinned these changes, would have significant implications for the relationship between government and community organisations. Prior to the 1980s, this relationship was largely informal and often reliant on personal connections. Government provided support in the form of grants-in-aid, which enabled non-profit organisations to prioritise their own agendas and work programmes while at the same time supporting government goals (Baxter, 2002, cited in O'Brien et al., 2009). As Stace and Cumming (2006) note, this somewhat relaxed system enabled a measure of flexibility in the use of government grants, with minimal reporting requirements on the part of recipients. However, following the changes brought in by the Labour Government in 1984, these grants were increasingly replaced by formal contracts, which were awarded by a process of competitive tender, tightly specified the outputs required by government, and contained strict accountability and compliance mechanisms (Stace and Cumming, 2006). These changes served to place a number of organisations under significant stress by pitting previously collaborative entities against each other in competition for funding, while at the same time prioritising government goals over the needs of the communities they were serving. Furthermore, this shift raised a number of important questions about the nature and roles of both government and community organisations in the provision of social services.

A Shift to Third Way Approaches and an Emphasis on 'Partnership'

By the late 1990s, it was increasingly acknowledged that the 'New Zealand Experiment'– as the rapid introduction of neoliberal economic reform had come to be known by some commentators – had failed to achieve significantly improved outcomes for the country's most vulnerable citizens (Kelsey, 1995). Instead, a reliance on the 'market' had resulted in increased rates of unemployment and rapidly increasing income inequality. In 1999, a Labour Government was again returned to power, as voters increasingly turned away from the hard neoliberal stance held by the previous administrations. The incoming government took its cue instead from Britain's New Labour, which attempted to find a middle way between the Keynesian model of a state-managed economy and the market-led approaches which underpinned neoliberalism – an approach which would become characterised as the 'Third Way' (Humpage and Craig, 2008). Third Way policies focused on issues of 'social inclusion' while also reflecting an increasing awareness that solving complex social issues, or 'wicked problems' (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p. 160), required solutions that transcend the traditional boundaries between different areas of social service provision (Humpage, 2006). 'Partnership' thus became a key focus of government with regards to achieving social outcomes, both across the various state departments and between government and community organisations.[1]

Partnership and collaboration are themselves contested concepts. They are variously described as broadly defined terms applying to a wide range of relationships (working to advance shared objectives), or more specifically as displaying particular characteristics at a point on a continuum between coexistence and partnership as shown in Figure 1. below:

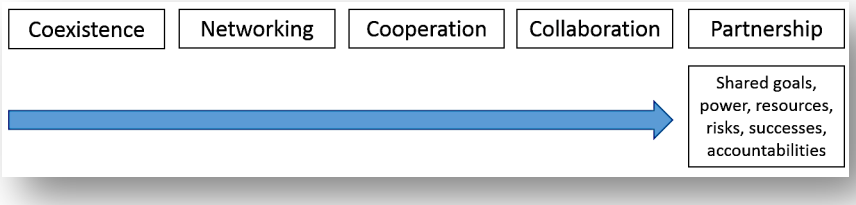


Figure 1. **Coexistence to partnership: A continuum**
Source: Craig and Courtney (2004, p. 38)

[1] This focus on partnership can also be seen in the state's attempt to reconcile its relationship with Māori through the Treaty settlement process, as well as through its strategy of devolving some social service delivery to kaupapa Māori organisations.

Coexistence, networking and cooperation involve a range of relationship possibilities from awareness of each other's existence, to working together, to helping another organisation to achieve a task without necessarily any commitment to long-term engagement. Collaboration, however, is described by Craig and Courtney (2004, pp. 38-39) as having the following ingredients:

- Involves trust;
- Is based on negotiated and agreed actions;
- Has an agreed set of principles for working together;
- Has shared decision-making;
- Means giving up some things (like power and control); and,
- Provides an opportunity to add value to others as well as yourself.

In response to the desire for an improved relationship between government and community organisations, the government undertook a number of actions. In 1999 a new ministerial portfolio, Minister Responsible for the Community and Voluntary Sector, was established in recognition of the value of building strong government sector relationships. This portfolio was supported by the establishment of an Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector in 2003, which was situated within the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) (O'Brien et al., 2009). However, the commitment on the part of government for improved partnership with community is best illustrated by the Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Government-Community Relationship (SOGI), which was signed by Prime Minister Helen Clark and Steve Maharey, who held the Community and Voluntary Sector portfolio. Amongst a number of commitments made by government, the SOGI included the statement that:

> '[g]overnment acknowledges the valuable contribution made by community, voluntary and iwi/Māori organisations to the achievement of shared social, cultural, environmental and economic goals. Government agencies will, together with the community sector, undertake a programme of work to address concerns about funding arrangements, effectiveness, compliance costs and related matters' (Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, 2001, para. 3).

As O'Brien et al. (2009, p. 19) note, '[the SOGI] framed the language used by government agencies to describe interaction with sector organisations – building capacity, capability and co-operation being key phrases repeated in many key documents.'

However, in spite of the clear commitments made by the government in the SOGI to overcome some of the key barriers to effective partnership between government and community organisations, the Government has continued to rely on the contractual system as the basis for these relationships. As such, a number of tensions continue to exist between the social service delivery goals of government and the goals of non-government organisations, which often encompass a broader focus on community development. We explore these tensions in the remainder of this paper.

Competing Priorities: Government Goals versus Community Intentions

It could be argued that, at least initially, some organisations responded to the opportunities afforded by government contracts enthusiastically. It was seductive (and sometimes useful) to be able to make visible outputs that had been delivered; to feel that efficiencies had been gained and that it was possible to demonstrate to funders (or now purchasers) that community organisations could be as businesslike as the corporate world (Tennant, 2007). Almost immediately, however, cracks have appeared in the façade, and there is significant concern that the role of community organisations has been undermined and diminished.

The factors that drive a contractual approach do not sit easily with a number of the core values and intentions of community organisations. Nowland-Foreman (1998) suggests that the shift from a system of grants-in-aid to formal contracts enabled the government to exert increased control and specification of services that had previously been provided autonomously by community organisations. In response, many community organisations have sought to increase their size and capacity in order to meet rising costs of compliance and to remain competitive with larger and more corporate entities. Nowland-Foreman (1998, p. 117) comments that, as a result, 'smaller community-based organisations often seem to survive in the contract culture by modifying the qualities that might have made them attractive in the first place as contractors: being smaller, more informal, and perhaps more accessible'. Elsewhere, Nowland-Foreman (2000, p. 3) refers to the pressure placed on organisations to remake themselves according to the requirements of funders as 'funder capture'.

These challenges are crystalised when the priorities and motivations of a purchaser are considered alongside those of a 'typical' community organisation:

Purchaser of a contract for social service delivery	Community organisation
Wants a clearly defined service to be delivered to specified standards.	Wants to assist people/neighbourhoods to make changes.
Is not really interested in 'other' issues for which there is no purchase agreement.	Sees the connections between issues and wants to connect them – and work broadly.
Is interested in evidence which 'scientifically' proves efficacy.	Is interested in feedback and stories from those they are working with.
Wants time bounded arrangements that avoid long-term commitment and facilitate competitive tendering processes.	Values long-term relationships and sustained effort. Seeks long-term, sustainable change but is less clear on 'the next step'.
Sees advocacy as threatening and in no one's interests.	Sees advocacy as a key responsibility to speak to issues of social justice and for those marginalised.

Table 1. **Priorities and motivations of purchasers versus those of typical community organisations**

The tensions described above arise partly from the fact that community organisations typically start from a different position from government, and have their own origins and history. In some measure this is linked with a struggle for social justice and a voice for the excluded and marginalised. A starting assumption for many community (development) organisations is that the bureaucratic institutions of central or local government are the 'enemy', to be challenged wherever and whenever possible.[2] This impulse may be characterised by a strong concern about issues of inequality, the grossly disproportionate wealth and power of the 'one percent', or concern about the impact of big business on the environment. In the face of this seemingly overwhelming context, community organisations may also be characterised by a desire to regain some sense of agency over a neighbourhood via 'place making', or a concern about family or community well-being generally.

Tension is often most visible around the issue of advocacy. As briefly alluded to before, the issue of advocacy can be the lightning rod that crystalises the divergent attitudes and perceptions of community organisations and purchasers of services. Communities feel that a crucial part of being 'empowered', as the Mayor of Auckland intends (Auckland Council, 2015),[3] is the freedom to criticise, to comment and to make life 'difficult' for large agencies at both central and local government levels. However, there is increasingly a view held within community organisations that advocacy or criticism of government is unwelcome, and places an organisation at risk (Elliott and Haigh, 2013). The *State of the Sector Survey 2014 Snapshot* of over 300 organisations (ComVoices, 2014) reports that 60% of those surveyed are not prepared to speak out publicly about the issues they are facing. Identified reasons for this silence include a desire 'not to jeopardise currently positive relationships with ministers and officials for fear that they might not support future funding' (ComVoices, 2014, p. 7).

The situation described, however, cannot be where it all ends. In New Zealand there is some sense of a mutual dependence between community organisations and government. We are a small place, and we know each other at a very personal level. Individuals wear many hats (Elliott and Haigh, 2013). Community organisations and government institutions (and policy) each have enormous influence on people's lives at every level. Interactions are numerous and complex, and the tensions described here need to be navigated. There undoubtedly needs to be significant change from government and associated agents. It is not good

[2] There is also, of course, a long history of 'charitable' organisations working to assist the 'deserving' poor and essentially seeking to maintain the status quo.

[3] 'The community development function is an area where I would like to see us change our delivery to a much more empowered community approach. This would see us move away from direct delivery (and therefore save overheads) and fund community groups to deliver more' (Auckland Council, 2015, p.15).

enough (and there is no point) in seeing a community organisation as simply one amongst a number of potential delivery agents. Many community organisations seek to represent the interests of the sector, or to speak directly to the issues of inequality and social justice that they confront in their work. Governing documents of community organisations often explicitly identify this activity as a key role. At the same time, community organisations need to be prepared to engage constructively. They need to be brave enough to speak out when needed, and to choose not to place themselves in the position of a supplicant waiting for the crumbs to fall from the table of government. This is not what 'a place at the table' means.

Given the tensions between the goals of government and the goals of community organisations described above, it is useful to consider the extent to which current government strategies for improving social outcomes are likely to resolve these gaps.

Shifting Back to a Market-led Approach to Achieving Social Outcomes

If the relationship between government and community organisations can be broadly described as having moved through periods of devolution and contractualism in the 1980s and 1990s to capacity and relationship building in the 2000s, it is arguable that recent initiatives introduced by the current National-led administration (2008 to present) are signalling a shift back towards a market-led approach to achieving social outcomes. One of these initiatives is the Productivity Commission, an 'independent' Crown entity, which was established in 2011 in order to: 'provide advice to the government on improving productivity in a way that is directed to supporting the overall well-being of New Zealanders, having regard to a wide range of communities of interest and population groups in New Zealand society' (New Zealand Productivity Commission Act, 2010, p. 3).

Since its inception, the Commission has undertaken a number of inquiries that focus on social issues such as housing affordability, as well as the current inquiry into the contracting of social services (Productivity Commission, 2014). The Commission's issues paper, More Effective Social Services, was released in October 2014. According to the terms of reference, the aim of the inquiry is to 'focus on potential improvements in the ways government agencies commission and purchase social services' (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2014, p.5). This clearly limits the scope of such an inquiry to a narrow focus on improving the design of contracts, rather than challenging the basis for a contractual relationship in the first place, or continuing previous conversations about how to progress the relationship between government and community organisations. The issues paper signals a renewed interest in market-led approaches in the form of social enterprise models and the introduction of social bonds, both of which attempt to circumnavigate these historical tensions between the government and community organisations by introducing third parties in the form of for-profit business and philanthropic sectors. Importantly, what the Commission's inquiry explicitly excludes from its scope is any discussion about overall levels of funding for social service delivery, despite many community organisations identifying significant shortfalls while delivering services on behalf of government.

The language used by government to articulate its goals for social policy has undergone a quiet transformation across a number of different government departments and Crown entities. The fact that an entity such as the Productivity Commission is seen as an instrument for improving social outcomes suggests that, from the government's perspective, the primary goal of addressing such issues is not to facilitate social justice, or to remove barriers to people participating equally in society (i.e. the ability to exercise the rights of citizenship), but rather to reduce the cost burden to the state, and in doing so improve 'productivity'. This increasingly corporatised language is also found in the restructuring of the procurement arm of the Ministry of Social Development, which in 2014 was re-branded from 'Family and Community Services (FACS)' to 'Community Investment'. As Deputy Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development Murray Edridge comments:

> The Strategy also signals a renewed focus on informed decision-making and service effectiveness, to help MSD and service providers understand what works to make a difference in people's lives. We want to be able to demonstrate that things are getting better for individuals, families/whānau and communities because of the services delivered by providers (Ministry of Social Development, 2014, para 4).

More recently, we have also seen a more subtle shift in the language used to describe New Zealand's state housing portfolio, with the term 'social housing' replacing 'state housing'. This small change is significant, because in the latter articulation the role of the state as a social housing provider is clear, whereas this is less obvious in the use of 'social housing'. 'Social housing' could indicate that housing for some of our most vulnerable citizens is provided by any number of entities including private interests (or, indeed, community organisations).

Alongside the work of the Productivity Commission, the current administration has implemented a number of other initiatives and policy changes that further support our hypothesis that we are witnessing a shift back towards a market-led approach to achieving social outcomes. These include an increased emphasis on the use of 'evidence-based' policy and a reduced focus on partnership with community organisations. The emphasis on the role of 'evidence' in making decisions around the funding of social services is a key factor in the recent restructuring of the New Zealand Families Commission, and its subsequent re-articulation as the Superu. This change was driven significantly by a frustration on the part of ministers that large amounts of social expenditure were resulting in little or no movement in social indicators, and a concern that spending was being wasted:

> Social Development Minister Paula Bennett has welcomed the passing of a Bill refocusing the role of the Families Commission, to house a vital new Social Policy Evaluation and Research unit (Superu). The new Superu offers a much needed service for the whole social sector to fill the gap that exists in New Zealand for independent, evidence-based research around social services. "By looking across the entire social sector, Superu will give organisations a clear and accurate picture of how effective their services are, and what could be done better" (National Party, 2014, para. 1-3).

However, while obtaining a comprehensive evidential basis for the services that are delivered by both government agencies and non-government organisations is arguably important, the use and role of evidence is open to contestation at a number of levels. In the first instance, unequal power relations are maintained where the government is the sole arbiter of what constitutes evidence and how such evidence might be interpreted and communicated. The use of evidence is not purely objective; evidence can be marshalled to further particular political agendas. Therefore it is important that there is transparency around who is conducting the measurement and evaluation. Furthermore, there is frequently asymmetric access to crucial information, including statistics held by various government departments, with the government maintaining control over what information can be accessed, by whom and when. This makes it extremely difficult for some non-government agencies to be able to get a full picture of the extent of the need that exists within the community. For example, the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has been critical of the Government's decision to stop producing its annual Social Report, which used a range of statistical indicators to monitor key trends and to track progress towards improved outcomes for New Zealanders:

> 'The current National Government often talks about the need for transparency in decision-making and in many areas argues for improving access to data to make better decisions about public policy. However, it appears that the Ministry of Social Development is exempt from these exhortations to be more open' (CPAG, 2015, para. 3).

The issues identified above are indicative of the fact that the tensions that have developed over the past three decades surrounding community organisations and the government operating under a contractual model are far from resolved. Furthermore, while previous administrations have made some attempts to address these tensions, we appear to be seeing a roll back of efforts aimed at brokering partnership between community and government. This is evidenced in the stripping back of the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector. Although there is still a ministerial portfolio attached, it has been shifted from the Ministry of Social Development into the Department of Internal Affairs, and in the process, the capacity of the office has been significantly reduced; the website for the office was 'disestablished' in 2013. This suggests that while the façade of the office still exists, there is no longer a genuine commitment on the part of the current National-led government to give more than lip service to the notion of partnership with community organisations.

Conclusion

This paper has described the ways in which a managerial or neoliberal view of the world has become pervasive for community organisations over the last thirty years; so pervasive that it is often difficult to remember or give credence to alternative constructs that allowed for a grant making rather than contracting approach, and at some level either tolerated or even supported community organisations that represented the interests of those otherwise marginalised or excluded. The challenges posed to community organisations as a result of this shift from grants to contracts have been significant. Three decades on, it is clear that the tensions that have arisen between government and community organisations have yet to be fully resolved, and may in fact be strengthening. It is difficult to see how these tensions can be reconciled,

and the more important challenge may be to work to acknowledge and navigate the reality of these tensions, at least in those areas where there are overlapping interests.[4]

In order for government and community organisations to work together without losing the added value that community organisations can offer, the following areas need to be addressed:

Relationships and Trust

Work across sectors needs a high level of trust to be developed. This requires time and investment and a willingness for all those involved to share successes and failures. There is currently a strong tension between competitive drivers both within and across sectors (including contracting processes), and the need for 'joined up' responses to complex social issues. There is a vast difference between being committed to social change as a community member or citizen, and being a 'delivery agent' seeking to provide a specified service as cheaply as possible.

Transparency

There is an ongoing challenge regarding information being easily and simply available to all involved. Information being held 'exclusively' or disproportionately by one sector is a real barrier to establishing good working relationships. Many government agencies still have a culture of keeping information close to themselves, rather than embracing an assumption of openness.

Long Term Thinking

It is not possible to work across sectors on a short-term basis. There are inevitably 'costs' associated with the involvement of multiple participants, and for such involvement to be effective, these costs need to be incurred in the context of a long-term commitment.

Clarity of Role and Purpose

Each participant needs to be clear about the role and contribution they make. It is also vital that when a 'cross-sector' approach is undertaken, there is a shared awareness and agreement about what it is that is being 'changed'. Too often initiatives are started that are poorly defined, and the hard work of agreeing on objectives is 'fudged'.

If the lens through which a group is working to make change is to do with 'place' or with particular groups of families one is much more likely to see an issue broadly, to see connections and to identify issues not visible to those concerned with purchasing social services. When this approach meets a government system looking to specify outputs and narrowly define evidence there will be tension.

Summary

Community organisations are noticing a strengthening of narrowly focused accountability mechanisms and a strong interest in a bounded view of evidence that is poorly equipped to deal with complex social issues. Community organisations continue to be seen as convenient providers of social services (as is currently apparent in relation to social housing), rather than as partners developing long-term and shared responses to long term challenges. The limits to effective partnership between government and community organisations are articulated clearly in the following comments made by the Auditor-General:

> Collaboration and partnership between local and central government public entities and communities is now often expected if public policy objectives are to be realistic and achievable. However, I acknowledge that strong and sustainable relationships and, most particularly, partnerships, may be difficult to achieve where there are major disparities between public entities and NGOs in terms of relative power, size, and governance structures (Office of the Auditor-General, 2006, p. 4).

[4] It should be noted that this paper has focused largely on the relationship with central government. There is potentially a very important role for local government in providing an alternative reference point and funding channel to support 'joined up' approaches to complex social issues. Local government is also interested in place making – and can think about a neighbourhood holistically through the experiences of families that live there. The concept of the 'well-beings' that were enshrined in local government legislation were important in this regard and The Waitakere City approach to establishing partnering agreements with community organisations provides an interesting example of this. Central government is more likely to mimic a collection of cabinet portfolios (Education/Health/Social Development/Justice, and so on), and fail to understand more joined up opportunities and approaches.

In this context, community development practitioners and organisations need to approach the business of contracting to deliver social services and their relationships with government with a degree of caution and an awareness of the likelihood of competing agendas and priorities. If we accept that government and community organisations are bound together in a desire both to deliver social services in the community, and to make a difference, we have to also accept that the binding will be uncomfortable for both parties.

CHARLOTTE MOORE is a Research Analyst and Family Violence Network Coordinator at WAVES Trust. Prior to this she held a number of roles in both the public sector and the private sector before returning to the University of Auckland to study Sociology and Māori Studies. Her recently completed Master's thesis focusses on the evolution of the government's Whanau Ora approach to social service delivery. Charlotte is particularly interested in the way in which social policy is influenced by the values and political ideology of those in power and how this in turn can serve to promote particular discourses around notions of rights and responsibilities, both for the state and its citizens.

Contact: **Charlotte@waves.org.nz**

CHARLIE MOORE has spent many years working in both Auckland and Wellington in a variety of public sector and community settings. This work has included a number of roles with the Dept of Labour, (including 3 years as General Manager of the Community Employment Group (CEG)), with the Dept of Internal Affairs, the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector and with the Families Commission. Charlie is currently employed as the manager at Community Waitakere. A constant theme has been a recognition of the critical importance of community development and working to improve the connection between community and government systems.

Contact: **Charlie@communitywaitakere.org.nz**

References

Auckland Council, (2015) *Mayor's Proposal Long Term Plan 2015 – 25*, accessed at: http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/planspoliciesprojects/plansstrategies/longtermplan2015/Documents/mayorsltpproposal201525.pdf (10 February 2015).

Cheyne, C. O'Brien, M. and Belgrave, M. (2005) *Social Policy in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Critical Introduction* (third edition), Oxford University Press, Auckland, New Zealand.

ComVoices (2014) *State of the Sector Survey: 2014 Snapshot*, ComVoices, accessed at: https://comvoicesdotwordpressdotcom.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/comvoices-state-of-the-sector-survey-summary1.pdf (12 February 2015).

Craig, D. and Courtney, M. (2004) *Key Learings and Ways Forward The Potential of Partnership: Based on Waitakere City Experiences,* Local Partnership & Governance Research Group, Auckland, New Zealand.

CPAG, (2015) *Researchers Disappointed by 'Disappearing Data',* Child Poverty Action Group, accessed at http://www.cpag.org.nz/news/disappearing-data-a-blow-to-research/ (25 July 2015).

Elliott, S.J. and Haigh, D. (2013) Advocacy in the New Zealand not-for-profit sector: nothing stands by itself*, Third Sector Review,* **19**(2), 157-178.

Frank, F. and Smith, A. (1999) *The Community Development Handbook: A Tool to Build Community Capacity,* Quebec: Human Resources Development Canada, accessed at: http://glocal.huji.ac.il/documents/communitydevelopmenthandbook.pdf (18 July 2015).

Humpage, L. (2006) Experimenting with a 'Whole of Government' approach: indigenous capacity building in New Zealand and Australia, *Policy Studies*, **26**(1), 47-66.

Humpage, L. and Craig, D. (2008) From welfare to welfare to work, in N. Lunt, M. O'Brian and R. Stephens, eds, *New Zealand, New Welfare*, Cengage Learning, South Melbourne, VIC, Australia, pp. 41-48.

Kelsey, J. (1995) *The New Zealand Experiment: A World Model for Structural Adjustment?* Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, Auckland, New Zealand.

Lyons, M. (1998) Defining the nonprofit sector: Australia, in L. M. Salamon and H. K. Anheier, eds, *Working Papers of John Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project,* The John Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, Baltimore, pp. 1-20, accessed at: http://ccss.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/08/Australia_CNP_WP30_1998.pdf (22 September 2015).

Ministry of Social Development (2014) *Message from Murray Edridge, Deputy Chief Executive, Community Investment*, accessed at: http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/stories/community-investment-update/2014/message-from-murray-edridge-deputy-chief-executive-community-investment.html (13 February 2015).

National Party, (2014) *Families Commission Role Changes Under New Legislation*, accessed at: https://www.national.org.nz/news/news/media-releases/detail/2014/03/19/families-commission-role-changes-under-new-legislation (13 February 2015).

Neilson, B. Sedgwick, C. and Grey, S. (2015) *Outcomes Plus: The Added Value Provided by Community Social Services,* New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, accessed at: http://nzccss.org.nz/publications/ (23 July 2015).

New Zealand Productivity Commission Act (2010), accessed at: http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2010/0136/latest/DLM3104306.html (10 February 2015).

New Zealand Productivity Commission (2014) *More Effective Social Services: Issues Paper*, accessed at: http://www.productivity.govt.nz/sites/default/files/social-services-issues-paper-dec.pdf (2 February 2015).

Nowland-Foreman, G. (1998) Purchase-of-service contracting, voluntary organisations, and civil society. Dissecting the goose that lays the golden eggs? *American Behavioral Scientist,* **42**(1), 108-123.

Nowland-Foreman, G. (2000) 'Dangerous accountabilities: Remaking voluntary organisations in someone else's image', paper presented at the 29th Annual Conference of the Association for Research on Non-profit Organisations and Voluntary Action, 16-18 November 2000, New Orleans, accessed at: http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/formidable/nowlandforeman5.pdf (23 July 2015).

O'Brien, M. Sanders, J. and Tennant, M. (2009) *The New Zealand Non-Profit Sector and Government Policy: A Review of the Policy Relationship Between Government and the Non-Profit Sector, Undertaken as Part of the New Study of the Zealand Non-Profit Sector,* Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, accessed at: http://www.giving.org.nz/files/nz-nonprofit-sector-and-govt-policy.pdf (5 February 2015).

Office of the Auditor-General (2006) *Principles to Underpin Management by Public Entities of Funding to Non-Government Organisations,* Office of the Auditor-General, accessed at: http://www.oag.govt.nz/2006/funding-ngos/docs/funding-ngos.pdf (11 August 2015).

Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector (2001) *Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Government-Community Relationship*, Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, accessed at: http://ndhadeliver.natlib.govt.nz/ArcAggregator/arcView/frameView/IE1138320/http://www.ocvs.govt.nz/ (5 February 2015).

Rittel, H. W. J. and Webber, M. (1973) Dilemmas in a general theory of planning, *Policy Sciences*, **4**(2), 155-169.

Stace, H. and Cumming, J. (2006) Contracting between government and the voluntary sector: where to from here? *Policy Quarterly,* **2**(4), 13–20.

Superu (2015) *About Us*, Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, accessed at: http://www.superu.govt.nz/about-us/our-role (23 July 2015).

Tennant, M. (2007) *The Fabric of Welfare: Voluntary Organisations, Government and Welfare, 1840 – 2005*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, New Zealand.

Tolley, A. (2015) *Strategy to Improve Results in Social Services,* accessed at: https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/strategy-improve-results-social-services (July 25 2015).

WAVES Trust and Community Waitakere (2014) *Submission on the Productivity Commission's Issues Paper: More Effective Social Services,* accessed at: http://www.productivity.govt.nz/sites/default/files/sub-social-services-83-waves-trust-and-community-waitakere-873Kb.pdf (15 February 2015).

Auckland Inner-City Residents' Experiences and Expressions of Community Connectedness

by LOVE CHILE and XAVIER BLACK

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand, in 2015

ePress Unitec Institute of Technology

This publication may be cited as:
Chile, L. and Black, X. (2015) Auckland inner-ciry residents' experiences and expresions of community connectedness, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, **1**(2), 34-52

ISSN 2423-009X

Article

Auckland Inner-City Residents' Experiences and Expressions of Community Connectedness

by LOVE CHILE and XAVIER BLACK

Abstract

The concept of community connectedness has become increasingly important in inner-city residential development planning as high-rise apartment living becomes consolidated in inner cities. The distinct nature of the built environment of inner-city apartment living creates particular challenges for residents' experiences and expressions of community connectedness. This is further exacerbated by the growing ethno-cultural and socio-economic diversity of inner cities. This paper examines the experiences and expressions of community connectedness by Auckland inner-city residents with a view to extending our understanding of what constitutes community connectedness for high-rise inner-city communities. Using multi-stage, multi-method research consisting of a survey questionnaire, intensive interviews and focus group discussions, the study found significant association between residents' experiences and expressions of community connectedness and their socio-economic and ethno-cultural backgrounds. The findings suggest that planners, city authorities and community service provider organizations need to take account of sense of community, belonging and connectedness in developing high rise apartment neighbourhoods to pre-empt some of the social issues that impact on residents' well-being and quality of life.

Introduction

Inner-city living has become the focus of much research as city habitation has grown internationally. UN Habitat (2010) reported that by 2050 70 percent of the world's population will be located in urban areas. In developed countries this proportion is expected to be as high as 86 percent (UN Habitat, 2010, p. 5). Substantial proportions of urban populations are moving to the inner cities for a variety of reasons including the cost of commuting to work, access to social and economic services, and proximity to centres of entertainment, work and study (Auckland City Council, 2003, p. 3). At the same time, inner cities have become characterized by crises of identity and social polarization. Social polarization is evidenced by the new physical and social geographies of contestation between the rich and the poor, and between the needs of commuter workers, visitors and pleasure seekers, and inner-city residents (Chile et al., 2012). This contestation extends to the tensions between the mainstream society and the marginalised, particularly the growing number of homeless, unemployed and low-income residents in the inner cities. This has resulted in an intricate relationship between sense of belonging, community identity and connection on the one hand, and socio-economic and physical isolation and disconnection on the other (Chile et al., 2014).

The objective of this paper is to examine critically the concept of community connectedness from the perspective of Auckland's inner-city residents with a view to extending our understanding of what constitutes community connectedness for high-rise inner-city communities.

The paper is divided into seven main sections. Following this introduction, the next section outlines a brief historical context of Auckland inner-city living and some of the major forces that led to the resurgence of inner-city apartment development from the 1980s. In section three, we provide a brief theoretical overview of community connectedness and some of the factors that mediate connectedness. Section four explains the methodological approach of the study, outlining in detail methods of data collection and analysis. In section five we provide the empirical evidence from the surveys, interviews and focus group discussions of

respondents' perspectives on community connectedness. Section six brings together quantitative and qualitative data in an effort to abstract them to theory through an understanding of respondents' reported experiences and expressions of community connectedness. We finish with a brief conclusion that identifies policy and practice issues for civic authorities and community service organizations to help build community connectedness in inner-city high-rise communities.

Brief Historical Context of Auckland Inner-City Living

Inner-city high-rise apartment living in New Zealand and Australia has increased exponentially in the 30 to 40 year period since the mid-1970s (Costello, 2005; Henderson-Wilson, 2006; Murphy, 2008). In Auckland, a number of convergent forces led to a surge in inner-city apartment living in the 1990s. First was the release of a large number of surplus central business district (CBD) properties following the slump in commercial property leasing in the wake of the 1987 economic crisis and the collapse of the share market (Murphy, 2008). This was further boosted by liberalization of building codes and planning practices in the 1980s that favoured residential intensification. These changes made it easier to convert old office buildings into residential apartments. Furthermore, urban planning policy responses to expansive growth in the metropolitan Auckland population have been to consolidate development within confined areas to prevent urban sprawl and the attendant cost of infrastructure development to service expansive urban development. In addition, the gentrification of city-fringe suburbs such as Ponsonby, Grey Lynn, Herne Bay, and Freemans Bay spilled over into the inner city through the development of high-value apartments in areas such as the Viaduct Harbour (Chile et al., 2012). Major changes in immigration policy in 1987 boosted migration from Asian countries such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India and Korea; for many of these immigrants, high-rise apartment living is the norm in their countries of origin (Friesen, 2009). Younger adults whose employment and educational needs are best met by institutions and organizations located within or close to the CBD were also attracted to the inner city. The inner-city population also consists of New Zealanders moving from other parts of the country into Auckland, as well as Auckland residents choosing to move from the suburbs to the inner city to reduce commuting time to both work and entertainment (Auckland City Council, 2003).

The Auckland metropolitan population was 1.42 million in 2013, about one-third of the country's population of 4.5 million (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Auckland's inner city, defined by the boundaries of the CBD, extends over an area of 433 hectares. The demographic structure of Auckland's inner city has changed remarkably since 2001. For example, the resident population in 2013 of 26,307, consisting of 12,012 households, represents more than a three-fold increase in 12 years from 8,295 in 2001 (Auckland Council, 2014). During the same period, the number of apartments constructed to accommodate the increasing demand for inner-city living increased by over 20,000 (Chile et al., 2012).

Auckland has one of the fastest-growing, multi-ethnic populations in New Zealand. The experiences of community connectedness in the lives of individuals and families within the Auckland metropolis, and especially Auckland's inner city, have significant implications for community cohesion and future sustainability.

Theorizing Community Connectedness

The conceptual framing of community is theoretically complex, consisting of a wide range of perspectives. What constitutes 'community' includes a wide range of elements such as sense of place and place attachment (MacQueen et al., 2001; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Patrick and Wickizer, 1995), community as social capital (Xu et al., 2010), and community as collective efficacy (Duncan et al., 2003). Despite the range of perspectives and conceptualizations, the common underpinning features that define community are sense of belonging, identity and active engagement with others in both organized/formal and un-organized/informal interactions, which create some level of group consciousness (Chile, 2007). It is the quality of interactions that determine the level of connectedness among community members.

Similarly, connectedness in urban areas may be understood from a range of perspectives. These include physical infrastructural, economic developmental, environmental, and community connectedness. From a physical infrastructural perspective, connectedness may refer to the ease and effectiveness of the links between various parts of the central city, as well as how the inner city is linked to suburban areas and the larger metropolitan region through networks of highways, railroads, and public transport systems. An economic development perspective of inner-city connectedness may be constructed in terms of how the various businesses in the city's economic system work to bring about better-informed decision-making processes that more effectively engage the private sector and rally support to help shape the dynamics of inner-city economies. Environmental connectedness may be examined by mapping the networks of parks, public spaces, and leisure and recreation facilities available to inner-city residents, workers and visitors. Community connectedness, which is the focus of this paper, may be examined in terms of the ways inner-city residents, workers and visitors engage with each other and create networks of support that enhance positive

experiences and access to services and other resources for residents, workers and visitors. These networks may be facilitated by individuals, community not-for-profit organisations, and civic and public agencies, but are most often a combination of these. However, given the diversity of inner-city residents, it would be expected that their experiences and expressions of community connectedness may be mediated by their socio-economic and ethno-cultural backgrounds, as well as other factors.

The four perspectives on inner-city connectedness identified above are inter-related, and often work together to enhance the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of those who live, work and visit in the inner city. In this paper, we focus on Auckland inner-city residents' experiences and expressions of community connectedness. Evidence of connectedness include the ways in which individuals and groups express sense of belonging, the relationships individuals develop with each other and across communities, and attachment to the physical, built and social environment. Our construction of community connectedness recognizes, but is broader than, the cognitive-affective construct (McMillan, 1996; McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Whitlock, 2007).

Whitlock (2007) reports that 'empirical study of contextual features important in predicting community connectedness is scant' (p. 501). The concept of community connectedness used in this paper derives from Robert Putnam's work *Making Democracy Work* (Putnam, 1993) and *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000). Putnam's thesis is that community connectedness, which he defines as 'features of social life, networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives' (Putnam, 1995, p. 664), are central to sense of identity, engagement, inclusion and community cohesion (Lee and Robbins, 1995; Yoon et al., 2012; Walton et al., 2012). Putnam argues that community connectedness is central to individuals and groups engaging in the life of their community, and is mediated by ties such as those to family and friends, organizational membership, involvement in socio-economic and cultural activities, political involvement, civic engagement, and valuing of community collectivity (Flanagan, 2003). These expressions of community connectedness are critical to sense of belonging, as well as individual and collective identity (McMillan, 1996).

The role of social ties in enhancing community connectedness is often analysed using a framework that identifies 'strong' and 'weak' ties (Easley and Kleinberg, 2010). Strong ties refer to connections that individuals have with family and friends and those that are valued outside of the family, such as ties with other families and institutions in the community (Frumkin et al., 2004). Much literature on community connectedness has focused on these strong ties, but the importance of 'weak ties' is also increasingly being recognized (Granovetter, 1973; 1983). Weak ties are formed through less explicit or intentional relationships that enable individuals to reach beyond immediate 'strong-ties-networks' to those outside their social circle. Ensminger et al. (2009) argue that 'such contacts play an important role in the diffusion of information and resources across society, including links to education and employment' (p. 12). In inner-city communities, often characterized by diversity and anonymity, weak ties may be especially significant in enhancing community connectedness, particularly where strong-ties-networks are absent, such as among new immigrants, international students, and single-person households. Furthermore, circumstances such as poverty, illness and disability, and social or structural factors such as racism, sexism, intolerance, lack of acceptance, and power struggles also limit access to strong-ties-networks and undermine community connectedness (Wei et al., 2012; Bolland et al., 2005; Dudgeon et al., 2000; La Prairie, 1995). The next section examines some of the studies that describe the relationship between community connectedness and factors such as ethnicity and urban design.

Ethnicity, Diversity and Community Connectedness

La Prairie's research into Canadian inner cities reported that indigenous populations living in the inner cities were likely to be least connected to families and communities. They were also more likely to be poorer, less skilled, and less educated than other Canadians; and most likely to be over-represented in correctional institutions and more involved with the criminal justice system (La Prairie, 1995). For Australia's Aboriginal people, Dudgeon et al. (2000) reported 'ongoing struggle to build a sense of community in the face of many social, historical and political forces that have created significant trauma and breakdown in the culture and community' (p. 9), all of which affect Aboriginal people's sense of belonging. Bedolla and Scola (2004) argue that while studies on social capital have failed to address the structural factors underlying its development and the role of gatekeepers in the process of determining the potential connections people can make, race is fundamental to and constitutive of the structure and function of social capital. Referring to the U.S. context, they contend that race is an important factor in terms of who Americans feel comfortable with, and with whom they want to spend time. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, Letki (2008) reported that 'racial diversity does have a direct effect on the perception of, and trust in, fellow neighbours' (p. 121). Therefore, ethnicity

affects sense of community and ways in which people experience and express connectedness within their communities.

A key factor that can increase community connectedness in inner cities is urban design and the built environment in the form of physical spaces which enable interactions between residents to occur 'naturally' and non-intrusively (Bean et al., 2008, p. 2833), and create the opportunity for 'routine encounters and shared experiences' (Knox, 2005, p. 2). Urban design also impacts on accessibility, particularly the opportunity to walk easily in the neighbourhood. Walking increases the opportunity for routine encounters 'with strangers as well as other neighbourhood residents and acquaintances' (Bean et al., 2008, p. 2844), and enhances residents' identifications with their physical location, thus facilitating 'deep bonds' with neighbourhoods (p. 2845). Community connectedness in inner-city high-rise apartments is also mediated by networks of public open spaces, which influence the creation of physical and social patterns that enhance interaction and engagement between residents.

The studies reviewed above have adopted a variety of methodological approaches reflecting a diversity of disciplines. In this study, we adopt the methodological approaches of phenomenology and appreciative inquiry to enable our critical examination of Auckland's inner-city residents' experiences and expressions of community connectedness. We explain our choice of these approaches in the following section.

Research Design, Methodology and Data Collection

Two methodological approaches informed the development of the original research study from which this paper has been drawn, namely phenomenology (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008) and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Srivastava, 1987). We adopted a phenomenological approach because we wanted to ground the understanding of the concept of community connectedness in the personal knowledge, experiences and perspectives of research respondents. The diversity of perspectives on the concept of community connectedness explained in the preceding sections demands that we privilege respondents' personal knowledge, experience, perspectives and interpretations of connectedness to enable better insights into some of the assumptions about the concept. Our epistemological position is that such knowledge gives respondents epistemic privilege. Furthermore, phenomenology enabled us to design the research in ways that explored local and contextual meaning (Lewis-Arango, 2003) so that research findings were grounded in participants' experiences and reflected their subjective meanings surrounding the concepts, rather than the research team inferring objective external reality of what constitutes community connectedness for residents.

Appreciative inquiry, a methodological approach that focuses on constructing positive change by asking questions that draw on the strengths – what is positive and enriching – rather than the weaknesses of individuals, organizations and communities, enabled us to identify what community connectedness meant for inner-city residents. Respondents' views articulated a preferred future for inner-city communities, and an understanding of how current expressions and experiences of connectedness could build towards that future. Respondents' perspectives and expressions provided a framework for us to make recommendations to civic agencies and community-based organisations working with inner-city communities about ways to build on the positive experiences and expressions of connectedness. We developed the study from the position that inner-city communities' expressions of connectedness provide 'new knowledge and ideas [that] enhance and enrich' (Quinney and Richardson, 2014, p. 96) the theoretical perspectives on the concept. Appreciative inquiry helped us link community connectedness to Putnam's concept of community capital, which is enhanced by active engagement between individuals, and through communication which underpins dynamic relationships in a community (Stavros and Torres, 2005).

We used a multi-stage, multi-method approach to collect, analyse and interpret data, including a survey questionnaire to collect quantitative data, and interviews and focus groups to collect qualitative data. This approach enabled us to examine critically the concept of community connectedness from multiple perspectives and to analyse research data at multiple levels. The multi-stage, multi-method approach uses triangulation across different methods, increasing validity and giving a more holistic view from the multiple perspectives of participants. Qualitative data enabled us to capture contextual and complex data while quantitative data gave us evidence to derive generalisations.

This research programme was conducted with approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC), Ethics Approval Number: 11/62 dated 18 May 2011. AUTEC is accredited by the New Zealand Health Research Council.

Data Collection and Analysis

We collected 429 surveys from inner-city residents over a 20-day period in November 2011. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in December 2011. A total of 414 completed surveys were accepted as valid. Fifteen surveys were excluded from analysis because returned questionnaires were incomplete or because

respondents lived outside of the geographical area defined as inner-city for the purposes of this study. The 414 completed surveys provide a 95 percent confidence level for data being within + or - five percent of the slated value (Sarantakos, 2005) for the inner-city population of 19,917 at the time of the survey (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

The survey questionnaire was made up of 41 questions. Each question consisted of subsidiary questions which sought detailed responses. Research assistants administered the questionnaire and recorded the answers. Each questionnaire took between 45 and 60 minutes to complete.

The survey questionnaire was administered using stratified random sampling to access predetermined key strata of the inner-city resident population by place of residence, ethnicity, age, and gender. The number of required surveys was predetermined in relation to the size of each stratum as outlined in the Statistics New Zealand census data. Place of residence referred to the five 'area units' identified in New Zealand Statistics Census mesh block areas (Statistics New Zealand, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c): namely, Central East (population: 7,158), Harbour Front (population: 2,799), Central West (population: 7,986), Newton (population: 522), and Grafton (population: 1,452). Newton and Grafton were excluded because of their comparatively small populations compared to the others, and also because the larger parts of both Newton and Grafton Area Units are located outside of what Auckland Council has officially defined as the inner city. The number of surveys from each area unit was roughly proportional to their population: 40 percent each from Central East and Central West and 20 percent from Harbour Front.

The 2006 census reported an Auckland inner-city resident population composition of approximately equal proportions of New Zealand European/Pakeha (29.1 percent) and Chinese (28.7 percent), with the balance of 42.2 percent a diverse assortment of other ethnicities. The survey sample consisted of 30 percent each for New Zealand Europeans and Chinese, and 40 percent for other ethnic groups. To ensure we captured the accurate meanings of the expressions and experiences of all participants, the survey was presented in both English and Mandarin.

Auckland's inner-city residents' demographic structure consists of 67.1 percent in the age group 20-39 years old, 13.9 percent 0-19 years old, and 19.9 percent 40 years and over. For this study we developed three age group categories: 16-24 years (28.7 percent), 25-34 years (39.6 percent), and 35+ (31.8 percent), which match as closely as possible the overall inner-city population capable of influencing policy developments, and meet our ethics approval requirements to exclude participants who are under 16 years of age. We surveyed 33 percent each from the age groups 16-24 years and 35+ years, and 34 percent from 25-34 years. We targeted a fifty-fifty percent split between males and females to reflect the gender figures in the 2006 census. Thus the sampling strategy reflected a delicate matrix of demographic variables.

Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted using interview guides developed flexibly to allow respondents to elaborate on their answers, and the interviewer to probe for further experiences and explanations to understand more fully the meanings conveyed. Each interview took between 60 and 75 minutes. The stratified sampling strategy used in the survey was utilized to select interviewees, so that interview respondents closely matched the Auckland inner-city population with regards to location, ethnicity, age and gender.

In addition, we conducted four focus groups using open discussion that allowed for social interaction between participants with minimum intervention from the research team. This allowed for free expressions of individual understandings of concepts as well as group construction of meaning to enable us to uncover latent information and to tease out and clarify concepts. The methodological justification for this approach was to allow ideas to be developed through the social interaction of participants. Three focus groups were conducted in English and one exclusively in Mandarin to facilitate active engagement of Chinese participants. The three English-speaking focus groups were age-category based, consisting of Pakeha and Other Ethnic groups excluding Chinese: 16-24 year olds (both males and females), 25-34 year olds (both males and females), and 35+ year olds (both males and females). The Mandarin focus group was exclusively Chinese, with both males and females of all age groups. There was no requirement for focus group participants to be representative of the three census units. This was already adequately covered in the surveys and interviews.

In line with a phenomenological methodology, we privilege the voices and experiences of research participants in reporting the research findings rather than our own interpretations of what they said. We use extensive direct quotes to ensure that their voices are clearly articulated, employing descriptive statistics from surveys to support qualitative data from participants' voices. We report the diversity of experiences expressed by respondents because each experience has value, recognising that 'reality is created in the moment, so each experience will differ' (Hammond, 1998, p. 52). We coded the focus groups 'FGP' followed by the age group of the focus group, and the interviews 'INT' followed by the age group of the respondent and then the respondent's number.

We select quotes that we consider represent the perspectives and experiences of the various cross sections of respondents, and best capture the diversity of views. In doing this, we take into account the diversity of age groups, gender and ethnicity.

Residents' Perspectives on the Concept of Community

Respondents were asked in the survey questionnaire to answer 'Yes', 'No' or 'Don't know' to the statement: 'I think there is an inner-city community'; and 'Yes', 'Sometimes' or 'No' to the statement: 'I feel part of this community'. These questions were followed up during interview and focus group discussions in which participants were asked to explain their understanding of the concept of community connectedness.

The concept of 'community' meant different things to different respondents. This was reflected in survey results where 38 percent of respondents reported that there was 'community' in Auckland's inner city, 26 percent reported there was no community and 36 percent did not know whether or not there was community. The different understandings of 'community' ranged from community being defined in ethno-cultural, age-group, neighbourhood-geographic location, and/or some form of common interest terms. The notion of village was referenced by a number of respondents in terms of 'sharing living space': 'I suppose community is that know your neighbours thing, talk to them, know their names, where you go to, you know gym, club, park or something nearby; it's being part of your little village. What is it about 150 people they say makes up the original social group?' (INT, 35+, 3). Some of the most comprehensive definitions of community included:

> For me it means a degree of comfort so I get in more the emotional rather than a logical, how comfortable I feel about living in this place and of course it will cover a host of things. So for me it is about a sense of memory because for me the history, the environment, and the people, provide for me a sense of memory, some permanence, a sense of ownership (FGP, 35+).

For this focus group, participant community was primarily a 'physical space', a location consisting of what they described as 'friendly people and areas' that gave them 'a sense of belonging' and 'a feeling of comfort' which provided a sense of belonging.

Another participant defined community as:

> where I know most of the people, the people I can trust, where I can find everything. That place is comfortable, I feel like really comfortable living there, I feel like it's my home. If you are new, people are welcoming you like, "well you are home", I am not in an unknown place. My mates are really friendly, people are really helpful. They are just like, "you are a family member, we will do anything for you" (INT, 16-24, 15).

This was one of the most powerful expressions of community from an international student, for whom community meant 'home away from home' with neighbours and fellow residents whom they described as 'really helpful, even my building manager he treats me like we are all family, and I think when you accept people as human beings who need love'.

Community was also defined from the perspective of common experience, values, interests and even aspirations: 'I guess for me it's about common interests, common values and understanding each other. I have a good bunch of friends and the support I get from the circle, the good atmosphere we enjoy being together' (INT, 16-24, 29).

For this respondent community was being with people with whom they 'feel really happy and comfortable' to 'share food and drinks, everything', 'everyone ends up knowing everything pretty much, and you feel comfortable'. Being an international student they felt that this was very important because they could 'share' with someone.

Community as common interest was also expressed as where 'you usually meet through something you have in common' (INT, 25-34, 23). This respondent went on to explain that their community consisted of:

> A bunch of good friends – we meet because we were fans of the same TV show and from there we found out we had more in common. Especially with cult TV shows have similar ideas with politics and whatnot, and then we had jumping off point to get to know each other better. I recently got on to a knitting community (INT, 25-34, 23).

The knitting community referred to in the quote above was a virtual community the respondent found online. Other communities of interest included 'my graduate school community at the university' (INT, 25-34, 30), and

'church community, I was welcomed immediately and suddenly felt warm. They are so helpful and nice as a church' (INT, 35+, 6).

Respondents' perspectives on the concept of community traverse the categories of geographical-location sense of place, human relationship and social capital outlined earlier in this paper. It is clear from the research respondents' perspectives outlined here that these conceptualizations are not mutually exclusive, they cover the wide range from physical location, people, shared values and interests, rallying points for joint action, social ties and relationships, and fellowship of warmth and acceptance.

Despite these unifying ideas, respondents' expressions of community suggested that the inner city consisted of various forms of communities rather than a single cohesive community: 'we all have a community within here but my community isn't your community, yours isn't mine and vice versa. We may know areas and people in common but I don't think it's Matamata or Morrinsville' (INT, 35+, 3). Matamata and Morrinsville are small town settlements in the middle of the central North Island of New Zealand, thus implying that residents of Auckland's inner city would not expect to experience a small village-like homogenous community environment. Thus a respondent in one of the focus groups stated: 'we do not share our tomatoes do we?' (FGP 35+), suggesting that:

> people in the city are more individualistic rather than community oriented although you do get suburbs where people don't know each other but in the city it's easier to not know your neighbours. I don't know many people in my place other than a nodding acquaintance and don't know anyone in the apartment complex next door. People in the city tend probably to keep to themselves (INT, 25-34, 1).

The complex mix of activities in the inner city, where commuter workers and visitors significantly outnumber residents, challenged inner-city residents' sense of identity with the broader inner-city community. A respondent suggested that inner-city community meant different things to residents, commuter workers, and visitors:

> In this area the population is very large during the week time but the people who live here is actually just a small part of that population, so I guess the challenge would be how those two groups have an investment in making this kind of a community possible. There are two different groups and they have different views as to what the inner-city is to them, so people who come here during the day just to work in an office might have different ideas about what they need from the inner city and what kind of community it might be. But for people who live here it's where we have our children or for students who live here it's where they study and where they can meet other students and where they maybe hope to meet people from their own country or countries. So, different groups using this space think about the inner city area as a community that they all belong to for different purposes (INT, 35+, 8).

The experience of community for inner-city residents was reported to be different to the sense of community for suburban residents: 'if you live in Grey Lynn you don't share it with anyone except your neighbours so it's very different in that sense; it makes it hard to become a single cohesive community. But I wouldn't say impossible' (INT, 35+, 2).

Also, respondents reflected on the diverse communities that exist side-by-side in the inner city:

> [The inner city is] embedded in a youth culture. The Asian youth definitely have an inner-city connection … any time of the night down Lorne Street and High Street, there's stuff happening … there's a basement there that is occasionally a nightclub. Every so often that place is hopping. There's a community there and they just always walk up and down the sidewalks and they always choose to go to Esquires Coffee … which is kind of self-selected and it is always full of Asians (INT, 25-34, 4).

Asked if they thought there was community in the inner city, another participant responded:

> I think there is. I mean I know my neighbourhood, and I am sure there is – my demographics, I am sure with younger people there is a whole bunch of other things going on – I think there is a strong gay community here, there will be people with kids, there's a whole bunch of people especially Asian people, Vietnamese, Korean (INT, 35+, 8).

Community in the context of the above quotes was defined in terms of age: 'younger people', 'youth culture', 'Asian youth', 'people with kids'; ethno-cultural identifications: 'Asian', Asian people, Vietnamese, Korean; neighbourhood location: 'Lorne Street', 'High Street'; and communities of interest: 'nightclub', 'Esquires Coffee', 'gay community'. This again reflects the diversity of conceptual perspectives of community highlighted in previous sections of this paper.

Respondents' perceptions of the existence of community in the inner city were associated with age, income, and occupation. This is illustrated in Table 1. Respondents in the age groups 25-34 years and 35+ years were more likely to report that there was community in the inner-city than respondents in the age group 16-24 years (see Figure 1). Similarly, high income (48.3 percent) and middle income (38.2 percent) participants were more likely to report that there was an inner-city community than those in lower income groups (see Table 1).

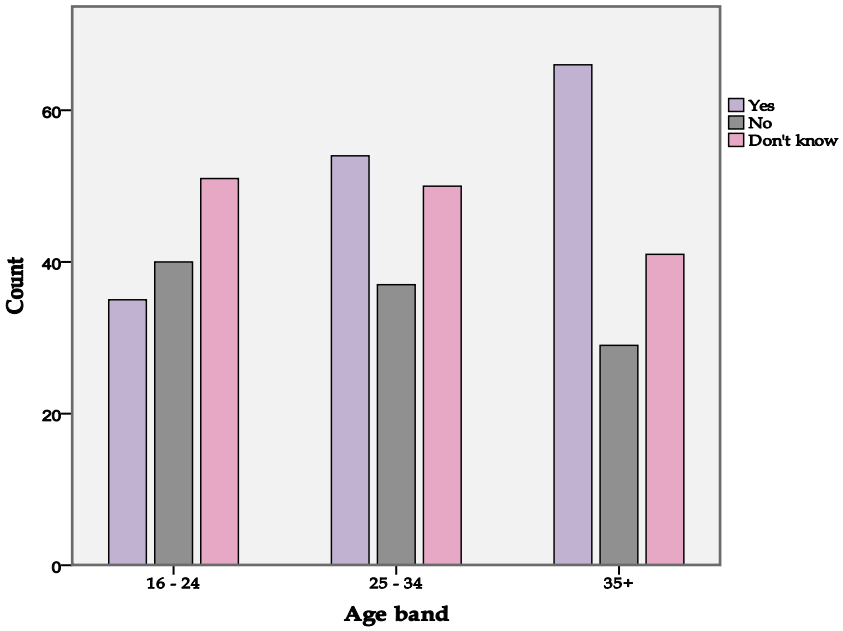


Figure 1. **Perception of an inner city community across age groups**
Source: Chile et. al, 2012, p.63 [figure 4.3]

In the following sections, we report on respondents' understandings of and perspectives on community connectedness.

Residents' Perspectives on the Concept of Community Connectedness

Six key questions in the survey questionnaire were analysed to see if there were associations between community connectedness activities and some of the variables identified in the literature, namely ethnicity, income, age, gender, and type of apartment building/location. Respondents were asked to tick one of: 'Yes', 'No' 'Don't know' to a set of three questions: 'I know my neighbours'; 'I think there is an inner city community'; and 'I feel part of this community'. Another set of questions asked respondents to choose one of: 'Never', 'A Little', 'A lot' or 'Always' in response to the questions: 'I feel accepted by neighbours'; 'In the last seven days I went to social activities with neighbours'; and 'In the last seven days I spent time with neighbours'. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 1 and Tables 1-3. We report on respondents' participation in community-building activities such as residents who knew their neighbours, and residents undertaking social activities with neighbours (Table 3).

All responses to questions answered were used. In partitioning the dataset according to age, ethnicity, location and income categories, between 90-95 percent of the 414 participants responded to each of the category questions, resulting in 5-10 percent of responses not being valid for a particular demographic category. This could mean that while the response rates for two categories could be similar or identical, up to 10 percent of the participants giving a valid response in one category might not have given a valid response in a second category. For example, the 78 people who identified living in the Harbour Front location (the most

expensive location) may have chosen not to answer the income question: only 29 describe themselves as 'High Income'. Consequently, the total percentage values for each category, which would be identical if everyone had answered all the demographic questions, can, in fact, be quite different.

Research respondents' understandings of community connectedness related to interpersonal connection in a dyadic relationship or interrelations within a community or group. Connectedness also related to place attachment, relationship with key features of the physical and built environment, and how these enhanced residents' sense of belonging.

Age	Frequency		Percentage		Cumulative Total
	Yes	No/Don't Know	Yes	No/Don't Know	
16 – 24	37	90	29.4	70.6	127
25 – 34	54	87	38.3	61.7	141
35+	67	69	49.3	50.7	136
Total	158	246	39.2	60.8	404
Ethnicity	**Yes**	**No/Don't Know**	**Yes**	**No/Don't Know**	
European	64	71	47.4	52.6	135
Chinese	47	86	35.3	64.7	133
Others	58	82	41.4	58.6	140
Total	169	239	41.4	58.6	408
Location	**Yes**	**No/Don't Know**	**Yes**	**No/Don't Know**	
Harbour Front	36	42	46.2	53.8	78
Central East	73	107	40.6	59.4	180
Central West	59	84	41.3	58.7	143
Total	168	233	41.9	58.1	401
Income	**Yes**	**No/Don't Know**	**Yes**	**No/Don't Know**	
No Income	34	82	29.3	70.7	116
Low Income	37	115	24.3	75.6	152
Middle Income	39	63	38.2	61.8	102
High Income	14	15	48.3	51.7	29
Total	124	275	31.1	68.9	399
Total valid responses	**156**	**252**	**38.2**	**61.8**	**408**

Table 1. **Research respondents who reported there is an inner-city community**

Note: In this table we combine 'No' and 'Don't know' to mean no community, and 'Yes' means respondents think there is an inner city community.

The perspective of community connectedness as interpersonal relationship between people was expressed in terms of relationship with neighbours, friends, or people with 'common interests, common values and understanding of each other' (INT, 16-24, 3); and involved forming networks beyond close family and friends. We have referred to these networks as 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1983; Ensminger et. al., 2009). In the absence of close family and friends residents sought community through connectedness with other residents for mutual benefit.

Age	Frequency		Percentage		Cumulative
	A little/A lot/Always	Never	A little/A lot/Always	Never	Total
16 – 24	74	48	60.8	39.3	122
25 – 34	75	63	54.4	45.6	138
35+	79	55	59.0	41.0	134
Total	229	165	58.1	41.9	394
Ethnicity	**A little/A lot/Always**	**Never**	**A little/A lot/Always**	**Never**	
European	91	44	67.4	32.6	135
Chinese	70	63	52.6	47.4	133
Others	79	61	56.4	43.6	140
Total	240	168	58.9	41.2	408
Location	**A little/A lot/Always**	**Never**	**A little/A lot/Always**	**Never**	
Harbour Front	59	19	75.6	24.4	78
Central East	108	64	62.8	37.2	172
Central West	95	45	67.9	32.1	140
Total	262	128	67.2	32.8	390
Income	**A little/A lot/Always**	**Never**	**A little/A lot/Always**	**Never**	
No Income	58	64	47.5	52.5	122
Low Income	81	68	54.4	45.6	149
Middle Income	57	41	58.2	41.8	98
High Income	20	8	71.4	28.6	28
Total	216	171	55.8	44.2	387
Total valid responses	**229**	**168**	**57.7**	**42.3**	**397**

Table 2. **Respondents who undertook social activities with their neighbours**

Note: In this table we combine 'A little', 'A lot', and 'Always' as positive responses meaning respondents have undertaken social activities. 'Never' is a negative response.

Respondents suggested that community connectedness consisted of building communities where individuals and groups engaged with others to develop a sense of belonging: 'bringing people together and bringing the community together, bonding, socializing, the people with the people' (INT, 16-24, 4) to 'increase quality of life' (FGP, 35+) for residents, 'so memories would remain' (INT, 25-34, 3). A respondent described this as 'a very nice warm feeling about living here, about the neighbours about the community which is all so close and friendly and you can feel the community' (INT, 25-34, 3). From this perspective, community connectedness provided what another respondent referred to as a 'safety net': 'You're living somewhere, connectedness is who you can reach out to if you need help. Connectedness is educational; it's how you learn about where you live. It's important to know who your neighbours are so that you can help them and they can help you' (INT, 25-34, 6).

Community connectedness was also defined in terms of feelings of belonging to and relationship with physical space, and how the physical environment/location enhanced particular experiences or created opportunity for lifestyle outcomes. This definition also related to the notion of 'access' and ease of movement between locations significant to inner-city residents.

> Initially [community connectedness] meant to me how the different parts of the inner city interact with each other like how easy it is to get from one area [to another], how that area interacts [with others you need to go to]. How convenient [it is] for me to go around to my work at the university or to emergency places like a hospital or police station (INT 25-34, 2).

Age	Frequency		Percentage		Cumulative
	Some/Most/ All	None	Some/Most/ All	None	Total
16 – 24	78	50	60.9	39.1	128
25 – 34	82	60	57.7	42.3	142
35+	84	53	61.3	38.7	137
Total	244	163	59.9	40.1	407
Ethnicity	**Some/Most/ All**	**None**	**Some/Most/ All**	**None**	
European	86	40	68.3	31.7	126
Chinese	72	62	53.7	46.3	134
Others	84	54	60.9	39.1	138
Total	242	156	60.8	39.2	398
Location	**Some/Most/ All**	**None**	**Some/Most/ All**	**None**	
Harbour Front	54	26	67.5	32.5	80
Central East	113	67	62.8	37.2	180
Central West	95	50	65.5	34.5	145
Total	262	143	64.7	35.3	405
Income	**Some/Most/ All**	**None**	**Some/Most/ All**	**None**	
No Income	86	31	73.5	26.5	117
Low Income	107	47	69.5	30.5	154
Middle Income	69	33	67.6	32.4	102
High Income	18	10	64.3	35.7	28
Total	280	121	69.8	30.2	401
Total valid responses	276	134	67.3	36.7	410

Table 3. **Respondents who reported they knew their neighbours**

Note: In this table we combine 'Some', 'Most', and 'All' as positive responses meaning respondents know their neighbours. 'None' is a negative response.

Another perspective on community connectedness is what McMillan and Chavis (1986, p. 9) refer to as 'shared emotional connection, the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together and similar experiences'. Research respondents described it as: 'If we lived in a place long enough we develop a connectedness to it or if only because it's familiar to us, we know where to go when we need things. We make memories in that space or in these areas. We find things that we like in this area' (INT, 16-24, 5).

In further comments on connectedness to the built environment, 32 survey respondents identified specific places such as Britomart, City Library, St Patrick's Square, the Chancery, the Viaduct, Elliott Street, and Lorne Street as places they felt a special connection with. These places were significant for their historical and emotional attachment and aesthetic value, and provided opportunities for routine encounters and shared experiences (Knox, 2005). A number of respondents explained the special feeling of place attachment (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001) in various ways:

> I go to and enjoy the Chancery area. …[It's] the open European cafe feel about it that I like and this is where my idea of Elliott Street and all these streets – put some life into them (FGP, 35+).

> Elliott Street with the Stables and I use that a lot and that's a lovely intimate space and when you are going there for an evening meal or something or other you can sit comfortably on your own

> and don't necessarily have to have people. I never feel weary around that type of environment. That would be the nearest shared space to me. There is more people around and more of a sense of leisure I suppose – just different ages of people – yeah (INT, 35+, 8).

> For peace and quiet I go to the park just in front of the St Patrick's Church, yeah like sitting there and when the sun is bright, shining, watching people walk by and the sound of the water I really like that peace and quiet (INT, 24-35, 2).

> I visit Myers Park and whenever I get time I visit small quiet parks, although it is a tiny park and small I prefer to have a small walk there because once you enter into a park you feel free of traffic noise. Also it's interesting that once you enter, your eyes are clear and it's quiet so I prefer to have a small walk and get some fresh air and yeah look at those lovely babies, kids at the kindergarten down there (INT, 25-34, 5).

The ease of moving around the inner city by walking (73.4 percent reported that they walked as their main means of transport), and the networks of parks and open spaces created avenues for people to engage with each other as well as engage with the environment and connect with local places (Bean at al., 2008; Leyden, 2003).

Relationships with physical space also illustrate the physical infrastructure perspective on connectedness, and show that respondents recognised the intrinsic relationship between the physical environment and sense of community. Ease of movement enhances interaction between people. Networks of open spaces create opportunities for people to engage with others and develop a sense of belonging – in fact, develop ownership of community in terms of place attachment. This holistic perspective of community connectedness was summarised by two respondents thus:

> It means being community connected socially, personally and in employment. Friends and family are important to me and being able to work from the city also and feeling that it's a pleasant environment to work in so there is a connection to a sense of place too. The vibrancy of the city, the safety of the city and being able to get to places quite freely without [any] sort of excessive complexity (INT, 25-34, 6).

> I just have a great sense of place with this place. I know how to access everything I want. There [are] really neat people around. So it is familiar and that is important. A sense of familiarity, a sense of recognising people, stupid things, little things, stuff – knowing people at the Farmers Market, you go to the same guy every week and have a chat. I don't know, it's a feeling about this building, it was built as the Customs Department, a government department, which is why it has marble (INT, 35+, 8).

The empirical evidence regarding Auckland inner-city residents' perspectives on community connectedness raises a number of theoretical and conceptual issues. The following section brings together quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from interviews and focus groups in an effort to abstract them to theory through an understanding of respondents' reported experiences and expressions of community connectedness in Auckland's inner city.

Auckland Inner-City Residents' Experiences and Expressions of Community Connectedness

Community connectedness in Auckland's inner city appears to be dominated by weak ties of loose friendships and casual associations formed around the common use of spaces and services, casual interactions and 'hello greetings' between neighbours. The following quotes from interview responses illustrate the series of activities and interactions that provide foundations for building community among inner-city residents, ranging from families gathering in apartment lobbies to supervise children's play, to engaging with each other in public and private spaces.

> I often visit – my friends invite me because they have bigger lounge areas so I take the two kids with me – [they are] kids' mums, I meet them in the library [and] the playground in the church in Cook Street. I am Korean so I meet the Korean mums and Chinese mums and some Kiwi because not many Kiwis live in city apartments (INT, 25-34, 5).

> Here it is fantastic, we have a lot of friends we hang out with, some of the neighbours on the 7th floor and the 10th floor and especially because both of us love babies we have a relationship with some of the couples who have young boys. We are learning from them and experiencing how to … you know we don't have anybody in New Zealand, no mum, dad or aunties, just friends (INT, 25-34, 3).

> I was surprised to see so many other people with children here and some of them school-age going to I think Parnell would be the school that covers this area. So yeah, when we first arrived I didn't know there would be other children so that's a good thing to know that there are other families in the same space and using the same space, so we learned that it's okay for the kids to be playing in this area and some of the kids do which is good for us. In other apartment complexes you probably wouldn't have that kind of space actually – this huge lobby for kids to play around with. So I guess that's what is community (INT, 25-34, 7).

> The first people, I met in the hostel so none of them were from New Zealand. There is me, another English and guy from Belgium and girl from Germany. Then we sort of linked friends and made more friends that way, but the other friends I made have been from the workplace so are people from New Zealand and I have met their friends and so on. I don't know really, maybe the way they are brought up – just in England people don't really talk to people – shop assistants here are talkative and friends – even if you walk around Albert Park and the Domain people have that connectedness where they say hello (INT 16-24, 24)

The qualitative evidence of residents' experiences and expressions of community connectedness is supported by survey responses. 67.3 percent of survey respondents reported that they knew their neighbours (see Table 3); 57.7 percent had undertaken social activities with their neighbours (see Table 2), and of these 25.7 percent reported 'a lot'/'always'; and 87.7 percent reported that they felt accepted by their neighbours (46.1 percent 'a lot'/'always').

However, 36.7 percent of respondents reported they did not know their neighbours (see Table 3), and 42.3 percent did not undertake social activities with their neighbours (see Table 2), both of which indicate lack of community connectedness. Ethno-cultural factors were identified by a number of respondents as some of the reasons for this experience: 'there are a lot of problems in [the] inner city for people with different languages' (INT 25-34, 15).

> A lot of people tend to stick to their own group and giving example there are two people in my apartment previously they came here but stick to their own people and totally miss out on the rest of New Zealand life – so they are attached to their own group but not the area (INT, 35+, 21).

> The culture and things are the main problem. There are lots of cultural people lots of nationalities and no one knows anyone. Just talking about myself I just came for a job I am not concerned about other people, I don't have much contact with people, nothing (INT, 25-34, 10).

Participants in the Chinese focus group suggested that: 'connection with other people is very rare and there are not many opportunities where you can get together with friends or have opportunities to meet new people' (FGP, CHINESE). In fact some respondents suggested that the diverse communities in the inner city were more connected in-group than with other communities. For example:

> It seems like the Asian communities are a lot stronger especially for new people coming in. It seems like, I don't know if I'm doing something wrong, being Māori and European coming back to Auckland you see the Asian communities so much more, they are more connected and I feel like they have the advantage over us and they do seem to be in their areas and they seem to know each other in their businesses (FGP, 35+).

The lack of connectedness expressed by respondents corresponds with the sense of alienation which came through in the survey results. For example, 32.1 percent of respondents who reported there was community in the inner city also reported that they did not feel part of community. References to language and cultural differences indicate that Chinese and other minority ethno-cultural communities would be more likely to feel alienated within the inner city community than Europeans. This finding may be related to the

argument that ethnicity affects sense of community (La Prairie, 1995; Dudgeon et al., 2000; Bedolla and Scola, 2004).

86.8 percent of Chinese respondents reported that they 'did not feel accepted by neighbours all the time' compared with 19.7 percent of all respondents. Chinese residents were least likely to know their neighbours (53.1 percent) compared with Other Ethnic groups (60.9 percent) and Europeans (68.3 percent) (see Table 3). These findings confirm the theoretical position espoused by Bedolla and Scola (2004) that race is an important factor in terms of who one feels comfortable to spend time with. Critical examination of 2006 census data - which provided the population base for this study - revealed that Central East, where residents were least likely to undertake social activities with their neighbours (62.8 percent), had a 50.6 percent Asian population, which confirms Laurence's (2011, p. 78) suggestion that ethnic 'diversity appears to undermine social capital'. However, Stolle at al. (2008, p. 71) found that 'individuals who regularly talk with their neighbours are less influenced by the racial and ethnic character of their surroundings than people who lack social interaction', which suggests that community building activities where neighbours meet and engage with each other have the potential to increase community connectedness.

Income was also an important factor in residents' experiences of community connectedness. Table 2 shows that residents in the low income category were least likely to undertake social activities with their neighbours (No Income = 47.5 percent; Low Income = 54.4 percent), compared with residents in the high and middle income categories, and residents who lived in the more upmarket areas of Harbour Front and Central West (see Table 2). There was no significant difference between socioeconomic, age groups or location for respondents who knew their neighbours. However, ethnicity comes through as an important factor (see Table 3).

Respondents reported that organised social activities were important avenues for building community connectedness:

> I think that cities should be liveable and the way that happens is that you have to make the effort to know people and I look for opportunities where that happens. I like it when cities create events where people can meet each other. I think Auckland does a lot of things that make that possible, the art in the park thing that's happening, galleries that have free admission (INT, 35+, 6).

Fifty-four of 204 (26.5 percent) survey respondents identified organised activities such as the weekend Farmers' Market at Britomart, the three-day food festivals at Victoria Park Market, the Diwali festival, and Chinese New Year as community-building activities that made them 'feel most connected' because they provided opportunities to 'meet new people' in a 'relaxed environment', 'taking your time and swapping stories about food', suggesting that:

> some kind of cultural or some kind of community functions or events happening once a month or once a week where you have to be there and then probably you start interacting with people and you have some small communities and then you can have inter-community activities happening. You can then interact with everyone in your community, you're doing your community work but also interacting in community activities, you are going beyond that border and interacting with others and have a good circle, a good society and good for you in both ways (INT, 16-24, 4).

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that Auckland inner-city residents' understanding of community connectedness consisted of four main dimensions, namely: sense of belonging associated with place attachment and sense of history; individual and group identity that provides opportunities for the development of collective identity to advance group interests and objectives through collective action; a relational dimension which consists of sustained positive relations and exchanges between individuals and groups within a system of supportive networks; and finally community connectedness as links between a network of physical spaces and institutions in both the natural and built environment which facilitate individual and group emotional and physical well-being. To this extent, we argue that this study has helped to extend our understanding of what constitutes community connectedness for high-rise inner-city communities.

We also found that socio-economic and ethno-cultural factors were important elements in Auckland inner-city residents' experiences and expressions of community connectedness. Middle- and high-income residents were more likely to undertake social activities with their neighbours, and acknowledge the existence of community in the inner city. Low-income residents and those in the age group 25-34 years had less social interaction with their neighbours. Part of the explanation for this may be that middle and high income residents live in apartment buildings with better communal spaces such as gymnasiums, swimming pools, large

balconies, and other shared spaces that provide opportunities for encounters and sustained contact between neighbours. As Ensminger et al. (2009), Bean et al. (2008) and Gifford (2007) point out, sustained encounters enhance sense of community, building trust and stronger relationships that enhance connectedness. Results from this study show that residents in the age group 25-34 years were less likely to have geographic attachment to neighbours and areas within and around their apartment buildings, preferring stronger social ties at places of work and in the large inner city. Consequently, they may have had less need for local community at apartment neighbourhood level because their community was more focused at work and place of study. Further possible reasons include the fact that they spent only limited time at home in their apartment buildings, were more likely to be tenants rather than home owners, and had lived in their apartment homes for shorter periods of time.

Furthermore, we found that the concept of community connectedness was strongly associated with place attachment and ties to specific places significant to individuals, rather than sense of identity and belonging to the larger inner city as a community.

A key finding of this study not extensively reported in previous inner city connectedness studies is the role of organised activities as deliberate interventions to provide community building opportunities for residents in order to create sustainable long-term connections. Research respondents identified organised events that they describe as providing opportunities for encounters with lasting impact. These include the Auckland Lantern Festival, the Diwali Festival and three-day food festivals at Victoria Park Market, as well as small scale intimate community activities such as 'tea parties' where groups share meals, and meet to exchange stories and experiences. While community connectedness may in the first instance be dominated by weak ties at the apartment neighbourhood level, such interactive exchanges, albeit small and brief, have the potential to grow to more substantive longer-term engagement. This may especially be the case for individuals and families that have already taken the initial steps to build sustainable 'features of social life, networks of norms and trust' (Putnam, 1995, p. 664) with significant implications for community connectedness. These research findings suggest that local authorities and community services providers should create spaces and opportunities for residents, individually and in groups and communities, to engage at both organized, formal levels and informal levels because 'that is where community happens' (FGP, 35+).

One of the four dimensions of community connectedness identified by research respondents is the sense of individual and group identity, and the development of collective identity to advance group interests and objectives through collective action. Whitlock (2007) points out that community connectedness plays an important role in promoting participation and mutual positive regard (p. 501). The empirical evidence from this study supports these theoretical arguments.

Another key finding of this research is the importance of links between ethnicity, gender, income, age and community connectedness, which support assertions in literature that ethno-cultural diversity impacts on experiences and expressions of community connectedness (Wei et al., 2012; Letki, 2008; Bedolla and Scola, 2004; Dudgeon et al., 2000). Identifying such links is important because weak connectedness across ethno-cultural and socioeconomic groups in particular presents challenges for social cohesion and harmonious relations in growing diverse ethno-cultural communities in a multi-cultural inner city such as Auckland. Residents with a strong sense of community are more likely to engage actively in community activities such as neighbourhood watch and volunteering with community-based organisations. They are also more likely to participate in local democratic activities such as Body Corporations, attend civic meetings on issues pertinent to local communities and neighbourhoods, and contribute to council strategic planning and other initiatives. Connected residents are also more likely to engage with a range of networks and groups across ethno-cultural and socioeconomic boundaries.

Our findings make it clear that planners and city authorities need to seriously address the issue of community connectedness in policy development and implementation of urban intensification plans. As this study demonstrates, the physical form and network of common spaces in inner-city apartment neighbourhoods are not only important for environmental liveability, but also create opportunities for interaction and sustained encounters to enhance community connectedness and build social cohesion among inner city communities.

This study is timely and pertinent to the development of Auckland in particular, given the contemporary issues facing Auckland's inner city, such as the growing demographic diversity of residents, as well as proposals in the Unitary Plan to develop high-density, high-rise apartments in suburban areas. It is pertinent to other cities as well, and urban planners and civic authorities require critical understanding of the range of activities that provide opportunities for community connectedness in high-rise apartment neighbourhoods. This study makes a contribution to such critical understanding. It also reinforces the need for design requirements that privilege communal spaces and common services to provide opportunities for interaction between individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds. For example, planning regulations may

require high-rise apartments to dedicate specific amounts of buildings' square footage to common amenity areas, shared leisure facilities and community recreation spaces such as playgrounds for children, gymnasiums, fitness centres and even libraries, which are open to the public through membership (Chile et al., 2014). A number of apartment buildings already provide some of these facilities. In addition, authorities may demand specific design requirements such as a prescribed minimum size for apartments to reduce the 'shoe-box' type developments which minimize the size of lobbies and other communal spaces where children can play and increase the opportunity for residents' engagement. These communal spaces help to build cross-cultural engagement and meet the needs of residents from diverse family lifecycles to help build a sense of community. Finally, our respondents' experiences and expressions of community connectedness indicate that civic agencies and community organizations tasked with developing services in the inner city should treat every service provision activity as an opportunity to enhance community building and community connectedness.

FUNDING

The study from which this paper is derived was funded by grants from Auckland Council; Auckland District Health Board; an Auckland University of Technology Research Grant; Parnell Trust, Auckland; and Presbyterian Support Northern. We declare that we do not have any conflict of interest in this study and did not personally obtain any financial benefits from the research or any of the organizations, individuals or groups in this study.

LOVE CHILE is Associate Professor and Equity Leader in the School of Social Sciences and Public Policy, Auckland University of Technology. His areas of research, teaching and practice include community development and community investment, community health, not-for-profit organizations and their contribution to community transformation, international development, refugee and migrant settlement. He has supervised over 20 PhD and Masters' candidates on a range of topics in these areas.

Contact: **love.chile@aut.ac.nz**

XAVIER BLACK works in corporate responsibility at Deloitte New Zealand, having previously been Research Officer in the Institute of Public Policy, Auckland University of Technology. Her main areas of research include education on, and implementation of, social responsibility, community engagement and community investment strategies. She also worked as Researcher with Robin Hood Foundation and Corporate Relations Manager at Fly Ltd.

Contact: **xblack@Deloitte.co.nz**

REFERENCES

Auckland City Council (2003) *Behaviour and Attitudes and the Perceptions of Residents, Workers and Visitors in the Central City,* Report Part A, Auckland City Council, Auckland.

Auckland Council (2014) *Waitematā Local Board Profile Initial Results from the 2013 Census Social and Economic Research Team*, Investigations and Monitoring Unit, Auckland Council, Auckland.

Bean, C.E. Kearns, R. and Collians, D. (2008) Exploring social mobilities: narratives of walking and driving in Auckland, New Zealand, *Urban Studies,* **45,** 2829-2848.

Bedolla, L. G. and Scola, B. (2004) 'Race, connectedness and social capital in the United States', paper presented at the Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting, 11-13 March, Portland, OR.

Bolland, J. M. Lian, B. E. and Formichella, C. M. (2005) The origins of hopelessness among inner-city African-American adolescents, *American Journal of Community Psychology,* **36**(3/4), 293-305.

Costello, L. (2005) From prisons to penthouses: the changing images of high-rise living in Melbourne, *Housing Studies,* **20**(1), 49-62.

Chile, L.M. Black, X.M. and Neill, C. (2014) Experience and expression of social isolation by inner-city high-rise residents, *Housing Care and Support,* **17**(3), 151-166.

Chile, L.M. Mason, N. Neill, C. and Black, X.M. (2012) *Connectedness in Auckland's Inner City,* Parnell Trust, Auckland.

Chile, L.M. (2007) Good practice in community development work, in L.M. Chile, ed, *Community Development Practice in New Zealand: Exploring Good Practice*, AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand, pp. 21-34.

Cooperrider, D.L. and Srivastava, S. (1987) Appreciative inquiry in organizational life, *Research in Organizational Change and Development,* **1**, 129-169, accessed at: http://www.margiehartley.com/home/wp-content/uploads/file/APPRECIATIVE_INQUIRY_IN_Orgnizational_life.pdf (13 October 2015).

Dudgeon, P. Garvey, D. and Pickett, H. (2000) *Working with Indigenous Australians: A Handbook for Psychologists*, Gunada Press, Perth, Australia.

Duncan, T.E. Duncan, S.C. Orkut, H. Strycker, L.A. and Hix-Small, H. (2003) A multilevel contextual model of neighborhood collective efficacy, *American Journal of Community Psychology,* **32**(4), 245-252.

Easley, D. and Kleinberg, J. (2010) *Networks, Crowds, and Markets: Reasoning about a Highly Connected World*, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY.

Ensminger, M. E. Juon, H.S. Lee, R. and Lo, S. Y. (2009) Social Connections in the inner city: examination across the life course, *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies,* **1**(1), 11-26.

Flanagan, C. (2003) Trust, identity and civic hope, *Applied Development Science,* **7**(3), 165-171.

Friesen, W. (2009) The demographic transformation of inner city Auckland, *New Zealand Population Review,* **35,** 55-74.

Frumkin, H. Frank, L.D. and Jackson, R. (2004) *Urban Sprawl and Public Health: Designing, Planning and Building for Healthy Communities*, Island Press, Washington, D.C.

Gifford, R. (2007). The consequences of living in high-rise buildings, *Architectural Science Review,* **50**(1), 2-17.

Giorgi, A. and Giorgi, B. (2008) Phenomenology, in J.A. Smith, ed, *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*, 2nd edn, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 26-52.

Granovetter, M. (1983) The strength of the weak tie: revisited, *Sociological Theory* **1**, 201-33.

Granovetter, M. (1973) The strength of weak ties, *American Journal of Sociology,* **78,** 1360-80.

Hammond, S. (1998) *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry,* Thin Book Publishing Company, Plano, TX.

Henderson-Wilson, C. (2006) *Living High but Healthy: High-Rise Housing, Nature, Health and Wellbeing*, PhD Thesis, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

Hidalgo, M. C. and Hernandez, B. (2001) Place attachment: conceptual and empirical questions, *Journal of Environmental Psychology,* **21**(3), 273-281.

Knox, P. (2005) Creating ordinary places: slow cities in a fast world, *Journal of Urban Design,* **10**(1), 1-11.

Laurence, J. (2011) The effect of ethnic diversity and community disadvantage on social cohesion: a multi-level analysis of social capital and interethnic relations in UK communities, *European Sociological Review,* **27**(1), 70-89.

La Prairie, C. (1995). Seen but not heard: native people in four Canadian inner cities, *Journal of Human Justice,* **6**(2), 30-45.

Lee, R. M. and Robbins, S. B. (1995) Measuring belongingness: the social connectedness and the social assurance scales, *Journal of Counselling Psychology,* **42,** 232–241.

Letki, N. (2008) Does diversity erode social cohesion? Social capital and race in British neighbourhoods, *Political Studies,* **56,** 99-126.

Lewis-Arango, L. (2003) *The Utility of an Integrated Qualitative/Quantitative Data Analytic Strategy (IQ-DAS) to Evaluate the Impact of Youth Development Interventions on Positive Qualitative Change in the Life Course*, PhD thesis, Florida International University, Miami, Florida.

Leyden, K. M. (2003) Social capital and the built environment: the importance of walkable neighborhoods, *American Journal of Public Health,* **93,** 1546-1551.

MacQueen, K.M. McLellan, E. David, S. Metzger, S. K. Strauss, R.P. Scotti, R. Blanchard, L. and Trotter, R.T. (2001) What is community? An evidence-based definition for participatory public health, *American Journal of Public Health,* **91,** 1929-1938.

McMillan, D. (1996) Sense of community, *Journal of Community Psychology,* **24,** 315-325.

McMillan, D. and Chavis, D. (1986) Sense of community: a definition and theory, *Journal of Community Psychology,* **14,** 6-23.

Murphy, L. (2008) Third-wave gentrification in New Zealand: the case of Auckland, *Urban Studies,* **45,** 2521-2540.

Patrick, D. and Wickizer, T. (1995) Community and health in Ben Amick, in S, Levine, A. Tarlov and D. C. Walsh, eds, *Society and Health*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, pp. 46-92.

Putnam, R.D. (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

Putnam, R.D. (1995) Tuning in, tuning out: the strange disappearance of social capital in America, *PS: Political Science and Politics,* **28**(4), 664-683.

Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster, New York, NY.

Quinney, S. and Richardson, L. (2014) Organizational development, appreciative inquiry and the development of psychologically informed environments (PIEs), *Journal of Housing Care and Support,* **17**(2), 95-102.

Sarantakos, S. (2005) *Social Research,* 3rd edn, Macmillan Education, Melbourne, Australia.

Statistics New Zealand (2006) *2006 Census of Population and Dwellings*, accessed at: http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage.aspx (10 June 2011).

Statistics New Zealand (2010a) *Quickstats about Auckland Central East*, accessed at: http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/AboutAPlace/SnapShot.aspx?id=3514103&type=au&ParentID=1000002&expand=2000007&scrollLeft=0&scrollTop=1222&ss=y (10 June 2011).

Statistics New Zealand (2010b) *Quickstats about Auckland Central West*, accessed at: http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/AboutAPlace/SnapShot.aspx?id=3514102&type=au&ParentID=1000002&expand=2000007&scrollLeft=0&scrollTop=1222&ss=y (10 June 2011).

Statistics New Zealand (2010c) *Quickstats about Auckland Harbourside*, accessed at: http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/AboutAPlace/SnapShot.aspx?id=3514101&type=au&ParentID=1000002&expand=2000007&scrollLeft=0&scrollTop=1222&ss=y (10 June 2011).

Statistics New Zealand (2013) *2013 Census QuickStats about a Place, Auckland Region*, accessed at: http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-about-a-place.aspx?request_value=13170&tabname= (14 June 2014).

Stavros, J.M. and Torres, C.B. (2005) *Dynamic Relationships: Unleashing the Power of Appreciative Inquiry,* Taos Institute Publications, Chagrin Falls, OH.

Stolle, D. Soroka, S. and Johnston, R. (2008) When does diversity erode trust? Neighbourhood diversity, interpersonal trust and the mediating effect of social interactions, *Political Studies,* **56,** 57-75.

UN Habitat (2010) *State of the World's Cities 2010/11 – Cities for All: Bridging the Urban Divide*, Earthscan, London, England.

Walton, G.M. Cohen, G.L. Cwir, D. and Spencer, S.J. (2012) Mere belonging: the power of social connections, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* **102**(3), 513–532.

Wei, M. Wang, K.T. Heppner, P.P. and Du, Y. (2012) Ethnic and mainstream social connectedness, perceived racial discrimination, and posttraumatic stress symptoms, *Journal of Counselling Psychology,* **59**(3), 468-493.

Whitlock, J. (2007) The role of adults, public space, and power in adolescent community connectedness, *Journal of Community Psychology,* **35,** 499-518.

Xu, Q. Perkins, D.D. and Chow, J.C.C. (2010) Sense of community, neighboring, and social capital as predictors of local political participation in China, *American Journal of Community Psychology,* **45,** 259–271.

Yoon, E. Jung, K.R. Lee, R.M. and Felix-Mora, M. (2012) Validation of social connectedness in mainstream society and the ethnic community scales, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology,* **18**(1), 64-73.

Community Development and the 'Policy Governance' Approach:

Have we voted out Democracy?

by DAVID KENKEL and PAUL PRESTIDGE

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand, in 2015

ePress Unitec Institute of Technology

This publication may be cited as:
Kenkel, D. & Prestidge P. (2015) Community development and the 'policy governance' approach: Have we voted out democracy?, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, **1**(2), 53-61

ISSN 2423-009X

'This is what democracy looks like' by Charlie Owen, CC NC license

Community Development and the 'Policy Governance' Approach:

Have We Voted Out Democracy?

by DAVID KENKEL and PAUL PRESTIDGE

ABSTRACT

We argue that the ways community organisations are typically structured, with a Board, Chief Executive (CE) and workers, creates an inherently anti-democratic dynamic. We suggest that the hierarchical concentration of power in the governance board and CE, and neo-liberal distinctions between governance and management roles, cut against the inclusive aspirations and hopes inherent in community development.

INTRODUCTION

> The solution is not to 'integrate' them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become 'beings for themselves' (Freire, 1972, p. 48).

The authors have spent considerable time as NGO employees and managers, and in governance roles. We have been friends for a long time and share a passion for community development's commitment to small-scale democracy. Our mutual involvement in social justice activities and organisations goes back to the 1970s and to varying degrees we have both remained active. We also experienced the growing ascendancy of the neo-liberal paradigm through the 1980s and 1990s, and now into the 21st century. It is striking for us that we are the last generation who lived for a time as young adults without the shadow of that ascendance colouring our social world. We decided to write this piece after noticing in recent years similar sorts of 'anti-democratic' problems happening in a wide range of community development organisations and NGOs.

Somewhat tongue in cheek we take the opposite position to Tolstoy's famous statement that: 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.' (Tolstoy, 2015, p.1). Inverting Tolstoy, we have noticed that happy NGOs are usually happy in their own unique ways, whereas unhappy NGOs are typically unhappy in very similar ways and, we have begun to suspect, for very similar structural reasons.

A common feature of these 'unhappy' problems is a reduction in the sorts of behaviours and attitudes one might associate with a vigorous and healthy participatory democracy. That is: a sense that everyone can speak freely and that their opinion is valued, a shared sense that everyone owns the work, and robust inclusive discussion that leads to actions aligned with the aspirations of the many not just the few.

Approach to the Topic

A position we take is that structures determine behaviour rather than the other way round. Structures of governance, in this instance variations on the Carver approach (trade-marked as the policy governance model) (Carver and Carver, 2006; The Authoritative Website for the Carver Policy Governance© Model, 2015), determine how power, authority and information flows operate in the working lives of many New Zealand NGO managers, employees and governance boards. We argue that within any organisation, and dependent on structured role, these operations of power, authority and information flow tend to make it easier for some to speak, while making it harder for others. The authority (or lack of it) that pertains to a role becomes the enabling or disabling factor in what can be voiced, who can voice it, and to whom, and in where and when opinions and ideas are legitimately able to be reported. Following this position, we argue that uncritical adoption of a business derived structure of governance, without an effort to critique and examine the specific power effects of its fundamental premises and operations, poorly serves the democratic ethos of community development.

Our specific critique in this paper focuses on Carver's policy governance model which concentrates power and accountability in the organisation's Board and Chief Executive (CE). We explore the effects of the power and information funnelling of these NGO governance-management structures in New Zealand.

About the Carver Model

The Carver model of governance constructs an organisational hierarchy with the governance board as the ultimate decision makers, having authority over direction and policy. The Board employs a Chief Executive/Manager to manage the organisation, and report to the Board on her/his performance in relation to the decisions, direction and policy set by the Board. The staff employed in the organisation are outside of these power arrangements, and are accountable to the CE.

The following quote captures some of the key elements of the Carver model:

> We recommend that the board use a single point of delegation and hold this position accountable for meeting all the board's expectations for organizational performance. Naturally, it is essential that the board delegate to this position all the authority that such extensive accountability deserves. The use of a CEO position considerably simplifies the board's job. Using a CEO, the board can express its expectations for the entire organization without having to work out any of the internal, often complex, divisions of labour. *Therefore, all the authority granted by the board to the organization is actually granted personally to the CEO. All the accountability of the organization to meet board expectations is charged personally to the CEO.* The board, in effect, has one employee. (Our emphases). (The Authoritative Website for the Carver Policy Governance® Model, 2015, para. 23).

On reading this explanation, we are not surprised that the model is fraught with tensions around the application of power. However, we are curious why community development organisations, so actively engaged *externally* in empowering communities and championing the liberation or active voice of the marginalised, have been so uncritical in adopting an *internal* approach that so explicitly funnels or concentrates power into an elite minority: the Board and Chief Executive.

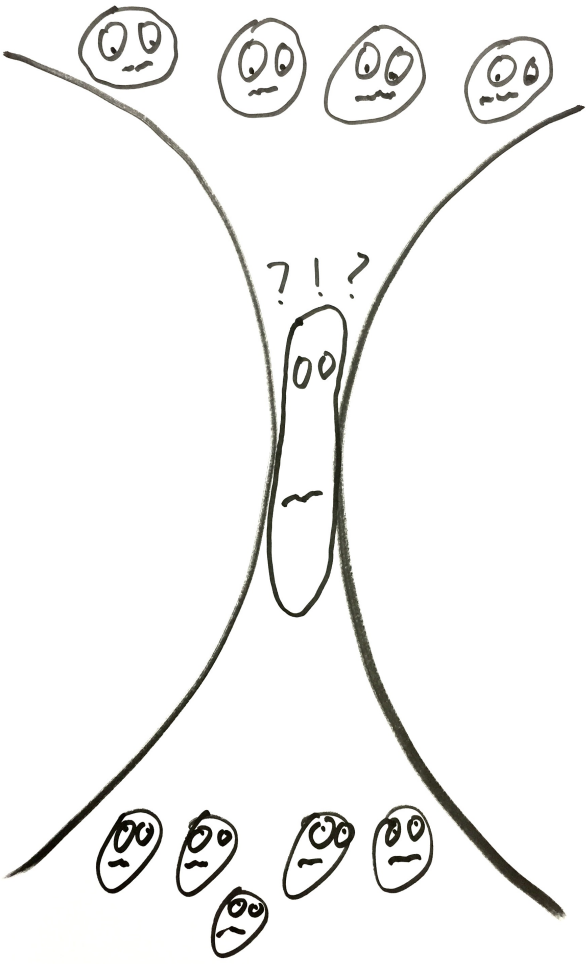
We believe this funnelling produces an inherently problematic dynamic that operates to marginalise the voices of wider staff and community. In addition, we see an unhelpful tension between the Board and CE. In a typical scenario, the CE's reporting becomes increasingly selective to avoid Board scrutiny. While initially content to accept the superficial story that 'all's well', after a time the Board will start asking questions with increasing levels of interrogation. Our observation is that these effects operate irrespective of the experience and character of CE or board members, and in our opinion have at minimum a chilling effect on the sorts of robust discussion and capacity to disagree that lie at the heart of small scale democracy.

At risk of labouring the point, our take on this set of problems is that the frequently dysfunctional relationship between CE, board and workers is a symptom of the sort of human behaviours that inevitably fall out of particular kinds of structure, rather than an expression of an interpersonal human problem in isolation from the structures. Nor do we think that the typical problems we see reflect a lack of clarity around the parties' respective roles or discipline in keeping to their roles, as is commonly asserted by

the legions of consulting expertise that operate in the ecology of the NGO world.

Our thesis is that we need first to look at the operating structures that set up these tense and stifling roles and dynamics. We assert that our wide-scale failure as community development organisations to critique our own structures of governance, in particular with an eye to the internal effects of their associated power relations, does us harm as a sector. Amongst other harms, we believe it weakens our ability to speak with internal cohesion and the passion of solidarity.

What Do the Problems Look Like?



Source: Authors

Common problems for NGOs involve a breakdown of trust between the board and CE, extending to include staff when they express their discontent loudly enough that it comes to the ears of the board directly rather than through the CE.

Others (Bradshaw, Hayday and Armstrong 2007; Campbell, 2011) have also identified the major weakness of the Carver model as its concentration of power within a small elite group of the governance board and CE, which disenfranchises and potentially alienates the rest of the organisation. This weakness is reflected in our experiences of being a) a board member who thinks he's getting a 'snow job'; b) a CE who is anxiously awaiting his interrogation by the board; and c) a staff member whose passionate project is being misrepresented by his CE to the Board. From each of these positions, the Carver model has been problematic.

In typical scenarios that we encounter, we find an escalating cycle of mistrust between the Board and CE, together with a sense of mutual alienation between the Board and those working on the shop floor. A pattern begins to grow of CEs increasingly shading the accuracy of what they tell boards, and boards responding by becoming suspicious of the information they are getting, leading to their questioning the CE's performance. An escalating cycle ensues, wherein the CE's reports become increasingly self-protective, thereby inviting increasingly rigorous oversight (interrogation) by the Board – reinforcing the CE's self-protective behaviour and non-disclosure of uncomfortable information to the Board.

Ramifications of this struggle are felt throughout the organisation, and often further afield – by service users, funders and wider community members. From our experience, there is usually a general sense of powerlessness and frustration, with the blame attributed by all concerned to somebody else within the dynamic. From the CE's side of the experience, often only articulated after having left the position, bitter accusations are made of unclear expectations, blurred boundaries, unhelpful interrogations, unwanted interference and a failure of the Board to either understand or support their work. In reaction to such problems, Boards, whose members are typically recruited for their passion and support for the work of the organisation, often flounder, uncomfortable with the expectations of power and the oft expressed notion that they need to take responsibility. Usually this idea around responsibility is translated to mean that they need to 'step up' and take leadership from the top; i.e. that they need to fix

these problems and show, in the polite discourse of the sector, 'who's boss'.

For most people, serving on NGO boards is a way of contributing to the community. Uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the expectations cast on them, they retreat to prescribed corporatized roles, or resign to be replaced by someone who has 'governance experience'.

The Role of Consulting Expertise in Maintaining Carver-Type Structures

Carver-type governance structures are maintained by an emerging industry of capacity builders and NGO management consultants, determined to ensure that the model works. To a hammer every problem is a nail. In our observation: to the consultants every problem is a failure to adhere to the dictates of the model – the view is that respective roles need to be clearly defined and role boundaries properly adhered to. Perhaps because expertise is usually focused on everything apart from the essential premises that determine it, the attention of the consultancy industry built up around assisting NGOs is to help agencies accommodate the current systems rather than to critique the systems themselves. Proposed solutions to the problems are typically to do more of the same but harder.

Consultants will typically prescribe a set of strategies that will, for a short while, enable the organisation to re-adapt to the system. Firstly, we might expect some governance training for Board members and perhaps some management training for the CE to ensure that they know what is expected of their respective roles within the carefully constructed Carver model. Secondly, some strategic planning will be prescribed. This exercise may include the CE and key staff members, and perhaps important people outside the organisation, to set or refresh the organisation's overall purpose and vision (within the established constraints of its constitution) and to chart some rather idealised statement of goals, outcomes, mission, visions and values. Thirdly, staff are asked to hold a 'team building' day, reinforcing the fiction that the problem is a function of the personalities, not the structure. A common outcome, agreed to by both board members and staff, is to build stronger relationships and get to know each other better. Well-meaning plans involving lunches, get-togethers, or selected staff attending the first half-hour of Board meetings are often mooted but, after an initial bout of enthusiasm, are seldom followed through.

…there was a deep desire on the part of many activists to resist oppressive social structures, and a refusal to replicate these structures in the activist organisations we were establishing.

We have seen and been part of quite some number of such exercises. We have felt the initial guilt at our part in creating the problem, and with renewed energy and clarity have re-committed to the organisation and people we work alongside. What this oft-played scenario misses of course is that the problems are created by the constraining structure and power plays set in place by the Carver governance model rather than deficits of personality or role clarity.

How Did the Carver Governance Model Become the Common Management Modus Operandus for New Zealand NGOs?

We identify two reasons why the Carver model has been adopted so widely in the NGO world in New Zealand. Firstly, it is a reaction against the limitations of collective and consensus based approaches that were quite common in New Zealand in the 1970s. Secondly, it is an adaptive response to the prevailing neo-liberal political and social dominance of the last thirty-five years. The adaption has occurred at both the practical level of accessing funding, and the more subtle level of a broader societal shift away from collective approaches in favour of individualised and competitive understandings of the world (Apple, 1991; Kenkel, 2005; Marshall, 1995; Myers, 2004).

Perspectives on Context and History

The shift from the collective and consensus based approaches of the 1970s and 1980s to the dominance of corporate management and governance models, such as Carver's approach, in the 21st century reflects a significant shift in what is commonly understood to be normal, ordinary and proper in terms of how people should live and how agencies should organise themselves.

Looking back, we now see that there were two important and co-existing influences, or strands of thinking, in the sector in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Firstly, there was a deep desire on the part of many activists to resist oppressive social structures, and a refusal to replicate these structures in the activist organisations we were establishing. One consequence was to prefer consensus based approaches to making decisions. This required a high level of commitment, involved a large amount of time spent talking, and a pace of decision-making that in today's world would seem appallingly inefficient.

Secondly, the beginnings of a neo-liberal economic and social revolution centred around a call for increased freedom of choice, rewarding so-called excellence, and the right/duty of responsible individuals and groups to take charge of their own lives and destinies. As well as economic reform, neo-liberalism promised to create a more expansive and efficient social and economic environment in which the diverse and previously oppressed would have a chance to thrive.

As we moved into the late 1980s and early 1990s, the tensions between these strands of thinking became apparent. While activists focused on what is now often described as identity politics, neo-liberal politicians and business leaders seized control of the economic environment in which activists were required to fight their battles (Edwards, 2009). To take effective action, or exist at all, community organisations were required to engage with an environment increasingly dominated by neo-liberal notions such as competitive tendering, efficiency, and the self-motivated, adaptable and responsible individual (and group) as the ideal citizen (Prestidge, 2010).

This was also the era in which new public management and managerialism began its climb to dominance. Effective management was presented as the application of a set of functional skills and processes that could be learnt. Commitment to the organisation's cause, or deep understanding of the subject area was not necessary to be an effective manager; in fact such commitment and understanding might get in the way of rational, detached decision-making. This managerial way of thinking challenged the unwieldy legacy of collective organising and consensus decision-making.

The collectivist model was not without its own set of problems. From our experiences in such organisations, we are both well aware of the traps of the tyranny of structurelessness (Freeman, 1970). A glacial pace in decision-making and unclear protocols of authority often led to what could seem both an endless talkfest and politics by personality.

The Carver governance model offered a seductive alternative to the challenges of consensus based approaches. As opposed to the ill-defined operations of collectivism, the Carver approach offered an overt structure for decision-making and the exercise of power within the organisation. It also focused attention on the policy and purpose of the organisation, rather than the personalities involved in the organisation.

We suspect that the shift to the Carver approach was not a deliberate abandonment of ideals of collective action; rather it was a pragmatic response to a changing social and political paradigm. In retrospect we were willing participants in a slow slide from social activism to service delivery. In our rush to adopt a new approach that seemed both to solve intractable problems of endless talk paralysis, and to render us fit to function in the new environment, we solved one set of structural problems by introducing another set of structural problems.

…problems are described as individualised fault or group failure rather than a failure or function of the structure itself. Back then, a deadlocked failure to achieve consensus or factional infighting was usually attributed to personal immaturity and/or a lack of commitment to 'working things through'…

Different Problems, Similar Causal Explanations – Behaviour and Structure

From the perspective of 2015, there is something to be learned from looking back on the inside experience of those early days of sitting in endless meetings vainly attempting to achieve consensus, just as there is something to be learned now from looking at the experience of sitting in so many board meetings watching CEs struggle under the earnest inquisitorial gaze of well-meaning Board members.

What we notice is that, while typical organisational problems are different under the consensus model and the Carver approach, attempts

to explain both sets of problems are strikingly similar. In both situations, problems are described as individualised fault or group failure rather than a failure or function of the structure itself. Back then, a deadlocked failure to achieve consensus or factional infighting was usually attributed to personal immaturity and/or a lack of commitment to 'working things through' (code words for more talking). Now, when a Board and CE may be locked into a climate of suspicion and caution, the situation is usually attributed to a lack of role clarity, unclear expectations, insufficient mechanisms for accountability reporting and poor boundaries between governance and management.

Typically the solution is to insist on greater rigour and allegiance to the models – be they models of collective consensus or the more hierarchal Carver approach. Sadly the solution becomes to do more of the same harder – not to examine critically underlying principles or models.

Perhaps why Freeman's (1970) insightful critique of the tyranny of structurelessness still resonates with such authority is her clear recognition that structures tend to determine people's group behaviour rather than people's behaviour determining structure. In our opinion, we in New Zealand's community development world have failed to undertake the same sort of rigorous critique of what now seems an unquestioned norm of how NGOs should arrange the internal conduct of their affairs. We believe this uncritical acceptance of an organisational model operates as a dangerous blind spot in today's NGO world, and is particularly incongruous for community development agencies that pride themselves on promoting inclusive, democratic ways of working.

Neo-liberalism, Community Development and the Shift of Norms

To review and extend some key points above: pragmatic considerations and the demands of a new political climate operated together to institutionalise the Carver governance model as the most efficient model for NGOs. Any losses of collective action over this thirty-year ascendancy of neo-liberalism and the Carver model could be considered accidental (or necessary) collateral damage. Alternatively, these losses could be considered as fine examples of hegemony in action: ideals of collective action, solidarity and consensus in the face of oppression are made to seem faintly ridiculous and are supplanted by the gods of efficient delivery. What is particularly poignant for us is that agencies that exist with the express purpose of promoting community collectivity, connection and democracy at the micro level, unquestioningly adopt internal modes of organisation that seem to represent and embody the antithesis of their purpose.

Margaret Tennant (2007), in her history of the community sector in New Zealand, describes the way a number of community organisations took on neo-liberal norms. Such organisations changed their structure to Carver-style approaches with governance boards, CEs, and workers separated by distinct boundaries around role definitions, tasks and communication protocols. Typically, at the same time, they developed strategic plans, mission statements and marketing plans. These activities were encouraged by government-employed community development advisors (of which we were part) and consultants, with a view to gain government contracts. At the time we did not appreciate the impact of our work; that we were inadvertently active in re-shaping the community sector to fit the neo-liberal model.

With regard to that new shape, a number of authors assert that wherever the neo-liberal project touches the social sphere certain philosophical norms, tenets and ways of being in the world are strongly asserted in ways both subtle and overt (Marshall, 1995; Rose, 1999). These are norms that in a Foucaultian sense are governmental and normative (Burchell, Gordon and Miller, 1991), in that they are instructively productive – they produce or create ways of being, ways of understanding, and ways of acting in the world. Under this regime of the self we are all, or 'should' be, entrepreneurs of our own fate. Success (or failure) is understood as a function of personal effort and ability rather than a reflection of privilege, advantage or luck of position (Duttons and Collins, 2004; Packer, 2004). We believe this neo-liberal understanding does not fit well with a community development ethos that sees people and their capacity to choose as embedded in social context, and that understands agency and the power to create change in society as a collective, rather than an individual, function.

As Tennant (2007) asserts, community agencies are not immune from these neo-liberal dictates or tropes of hyper-responsibility (Rose, 1999). Agencies

are encouraged by funding structures and compliance requirements to position themselves as able to create their own futures in the marketplace via the adroit use of well-crafted strategic plans and vision statements administered by corporatized management structures.

On a positive note, many authors and practitioners have become wise to the ways the inherent hyper-individuation of the global neo-liberal project fractures community and diminishes belonging and connection. These thinkers and practitioners have proposed many useful approaches to countering neo-liberalism's effect on communities and to increasing democracy and connection at a local level (Ife, 2013; Rose, 1998). However this wise analysis has not, in our opinion, extended sufficiently into the intimate business of examining how well our structures of governance reflect our ideals.

Do not impose solutions; instead ask questions and take the time to listen without attempting to impose too much order and structure on what emerges.

We wonder if the thirty year reign of neo-liberalism and the prevalence of new public management have pushed other options for conducting and governing our own affairs so far to the edge of consideration that they are either simply unheard of, or if faintly remembered, not seen as viable possibilities in today's harsh competitive world. With this possibility in mind, we are strongly of the opinion that the dominance of the Carver model, presented as the only sensible possibility, and the dominance of neo-liberalism as a philosophy for living, reflect a cultural entanglement that the community development world urgently needs to explore. A beginning examination of the influence of neo-liberalism on 'who-we-now-are' as a sector will, we hope, form our next journal paper.

Wider Community Impact

Consistent with its neo-liberal, market-based context, the Carver model has re-shaped the relationship between community organisations and the wider communities in which they are located. We have noticed three aspects to this change. The first is the loss of community influence in the direction and operation of community organisations as they take on a Carver-type governance structure. Second, 'community' has been relegated to the market place, with community organisations framed as providers of services in the market. The third aspect is the consequential impact on the community networks and informal relationships that weave strong communities. We hope to explore these problematic aspects in future journal papers.

Looking Forward and Personal Thoughts

In the first burst of enthusiasm when we decided to write this paper, we naïvely thought that we would simply develop or find an alternative to the Carver governance model: one that would be both democratic and efficient. Seduced by the lure of the silver bullet solution, we imagined structures in which solidarity and democracy might easily flower despite the coldness of the surrounding ground.

We did not find, nor have we invented, an organisational structure to supplant Carver as the premier model for the NGO and community development sector. We no longer think that our task is simply to invent or propose new models. While we started with a premise that the Carver governance model was the unspoken (and unspeakable) problem, we now regard it as a manifestation of a deeper problem: the neo-liberal project and the pervasive, taken-for-granted ways of thinking and acting that it engenders.

As we wrote and dialogued, we grew increasingly aware of how thoroughly we have been swamped by the insidious messages and memes of neo-liberalism. In comparing our current activities with our activist pasts we encountered a painful and sobering recognition of the extent to which our norms, expectations and pace now reflect the neo-liberal world around us.

We became aware that if we had rushed to a solution we would have been obedient to norms of 'efficiency at all costs' rather than expressing our dearly held values. We are now convinced that before action we first need to seek understanding. We have become convinced that as a sector we need to find ways to begin, together, the painful task of exploring the nature of our mutual entanglements with the neo-liberal project. We need to know what paths a thirty-five year history of neo-liberalism has pushed us down before we can chart a new direction effectively.

We argue that we need to re-engage in the process of conscientisation (Friere, 1972), which somehow has fallen out of fashion in these busy, goal-focused times. This would mean beginning together as a broad sector the process of exploring and making visible the oppressive effects of a generation's worth of neo-liberal thinking, certainties and structures on the intimacy of our relationships in the workplace.

We find ourselves returning to some of the central tenets of good community development practice to guide us. Do not impose solutions; instead ask questions and take the time to listen without attempting to impose too much order and structure on what emerges.

In the meantime, let us reclaim the passion and purpose that motivates us as community development practitioners. As we embark on the journey of unpacking our association with neo-liberalism, let us also reclaim ways of working that are congruent with our values. Remember that the work we do is more important than the organisations we work for. Let's work together in real ways, informed by and responsive to our communities.

And, if we revert to a Carver model because it is an easy – or sometimes in the current climate, the only possible – template to apply, at least we will do so consciously and with consideration of its effects.

Kia kaha, Kia manawanui

DAVID KENKEL is a lecturer in the Department of Social Practice at Unitec Institute of Technology. David was born, raised and is still resident in West Auckland on the land of Te Kawerau-a-Maki – he is passionate about the West's landscapes of ecology, culture and history. David is committed to the notion that environmental sustainability, locally empowered community development, and social justice are inextricably linked. David's background is in social practice including community development, social work, family therapy and political advocacy for children's rights. He earns a living teaching social practice at Unitec, and has started a PhD focused on people, sustainability and place.

Contact: **dkenkel@unitec.ac.nz**

PAUL PRESTIDGE, M. Phil., works at Auckland City Council as a community development practitioner, advocate and pontificator. He has worked in both government and community organisations throughout New Zealand over the past thirty years, as a volunteer, board member, community house coordinator, CE of a national family violence prevention network, programme manager, community advisor and policy analyst.

Contact: **prestidge.paul@gmail.com**

REFERENCES

Apple, M. (1991) Ideology, equality and the new right, *Delta,* **1**, 5 –21.

Bradshaw P. Hayday, B. and Armstrong, R. (2007) Non-profit governance models: problems and prospects, *The Public Sector Innovation Journal,* **12**(3), article 5.

Burchell, G. Gordon, C. and Miller, P., eds. (1991) *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, with Two Lectures By and an Interview with Michel Foucault,* Hemel Hempstead, UK, Harvestor Wheatsheaf.

Campbell, B.C. (2011) *Governance in A Collective Context: A Study of Two Approaches*, accessed at: http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/ (1 February 2015).

Carver, J. and Carver, M. (2006) *Reinventing Your Board: A Step-By-Step Guide to Implementing Policy Governance*, San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass.

Duttons, V. and Collins, A. (2004) Subjects of development: the United Nations development programme as technology of neo-liberal imperialism*, Critical Psychology,* **11**, 10–30.

Edwards, B. (2009) *Identity Politics vs. Class Politics – 6: The Transformation of Social Liberalism into Neo-Liberalism,* accessed at: http://liberation.typepad.com/liberation/2009/12/identity-politics-vs-class-politics-6-the-transformation-of-social-liberalism-into-neoliberalism.html (1 February 2015).

Freeman, J. (1970) *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*, accessed at: www.struggle.ws (12 February 2015).

Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, England.

Ife, J. (2013) *Community Development in an Uncertain World*, Kindle Edition, accessed at: Amazon.com.

Kenkel, D. (2005) *Futurority: Narratives of the Future*, Thesis submitted for Master of Arts in Social Policy, Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand.

Marshall, J. (1995) Skills, information and quality for the autonomous chooser, in M. Olsson and K. Morris Matthews, eds, *Education, Democracy and Reform*, NZARE/RUME, Auckland, New Zealand.

Myers, C. (2004) *Human Service as Hegemony*, accessed at: http://www.well.com/user/clmeyers/therapeutics.htm (24 August 2004).

Packer, E. (2004) *The Psychological Requirements of a Free Society*, The Jefferson School of Philosophy, Economics and Psychology, accessed at: http://www.capitalism.net/E_packer//-931089-17-5.pdf (1 February 2004).

Prestidge, P. (2010) *It's a Partnership: Yeah, Right! An Analysis of Discourses of Partnership between Government and Community Organisations in New Zealand (1999-2008)*, Thesis submitted for Master of Arts in Philosophy, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

Rose, N. (1999) *Powers of Freedom*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Tennant, M. (2007) *The Fabric of Welfare: Voluntary Organisations, Government and Welfare in New Zealand, 1840-2005*, Bridget Williams, Wellington, New Zealand.

The Authoritative Website for the Carver Policy Governance® Model (2015), accessed at: http://www.carvergovernance.com/pg-np.htm (30 January 2015).

Tolstoy, L. (2015) *Anna Karenina*, Kindle Edition, accessed at: Amazon.com.

A Report from the International Association for Community Development

by CHARLIE McCONNELL

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand, in 2015

ePress Unitec Institute of Technology

This publication may be cited as:
McConnell, C. (2015) A report from the International Association for Community Development, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, **1**(2), 62-63

ISSN 2423-009X

Conference Update

A Report from the International Association for Community Development

'IACD Glasgow Conference June 2014', by IACD

by CHARLIE McCONNELL

Many readers of *Whanake* will recall the International Association for Community Development (IACD), from its highly successful conference held in Rotorua in 2001. This was the largest gathering of community developers for years in the Oceania region, attracting practitioners from across New Zealand, Australia, Pacific Islands and beyond. In 2009, IACD held a further conference in the region, attracting several hundred community developers in Brisbane. It appeared that community developer networking held a strong presence in the region.

A legacy of these conferences was the strengthening of regional networks for community development (CD) practitioners, building upon existing fora. However in recent years, a weakening of such associations across the region has been noted, reflecting huge cuts in posts across the public and non-governmental sectors. This weakening of networking by community developers has also occurred in other parts of the world.

But despite this weakening, growth in IACD membership since 2012 offers evidence that this trend is on the turn. The IACD conference in 2014 in Glasgow, Scotland attracted several hundred community developers from across the world. This year, the international *Community Development Journal* celebrated its 50th anniversary with a well-attended international conference of academics, trainers and researchers. As well, the Community Development Society (CDS) in the USA held a successful conference in Kentucky in July. CD networks are on the rise once again, through more diligent organisation, which could not be more well-timed.

The challenges and opportunities facing this discipline have perhaps never been greater. Clearly the attack on both public and non-governmental sector posts in many countries since 2008 has had a decimating impact and will take much investment to reverse. However the recently approved United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present huge opportunities for CD agencies and practitioners, to demonstrate their value in mobilising local communities in all countries to engage with and help shape local sustainable development programmes. If this can be demonstrated, it is hoped that financial investment will follow for our work in 'developed and developing' countries alike.

IACD is the only global network for professional community development practitioners. It is accredited with the UN, where it has been involved with others in promoting participative methods of development as part of the SDG agenda. IACD has a global regional structure where seven regions (including Oceania) are represented on its Board. The current regional director for Oceania is Mary Jane Rivers, who is based in Wellington, New Zealand. John Stansfield, Deputy Editor of Whanake has just joined the board.

A key priority over the next four years will be to support the establishment of strong national and regional networks and associations of CD practitioners and for them to have a greater say within IACD. Research recently undertaken by IACD has identified around forty such networks worldwide. IACD is also reaching out to the new generation of students seeking to take up a career in

'IACD Glasgow Conference June 2014,#2', by IACD

community development. We have identified more than one thousand graduate CD education and training programmes globally. Over the coming year the association will be contacting each directly, to encourage students and their trainers to join. IACD is also teaming up with CDS and Unitec in Auckland in 2016, to establish the world's first on-line platform for the sharing of CD teaching and learning resources. IACD publishes a magazine for practitioners called *Practice Insights*, has an active website and e-newsletter, and organises conferences and international continuing professional development programmes.

Individuals and organisations alike are able to join IACD. Those interested in becoming involved in any of these initiatives or generally within the association are encouraged to contact IACD. More information and contact details can be found at www.iacdglobal.org.

CHARLIE McCONNELL is the President of IACD, a political scientist, adult educator and community and organisational development expert.

Contact: **charliesmcconnell@gmail.com**

Announcements

Upcoming Conferences and Events

CDS 2016: Joint International Conference of the Community Development Society and International Association for Community Development

The conference theme, Sustaining Community Change--Building Capacity for Community Development Initiatives, will speak to 17 Sustainable Development Goals recently adopted at the United Nations, and promote principles of good practice in community development. Minnesota is rich in community development culture, environment, and the arts. Come join friends and colleagues involved with community development worldwide for the CDS/IACD Conference 2016 in Minnesota to share challenges, best practices, and opportunities to sustain community change and promote sustainable development locally, and globally.

July 24-27, 2016
Hilton Minneapolis Airport
Bloomington, MN
USA

www.comm-dev.org/

Other

Submission Guidelines

Whanake accepts submissions in the form of papers for peer review, opinion pieces, practice notes from the field, case studies, biographies, articles on emerging trends and research as well as reviews of books, plays, films, poems, songs and contemporary culture with a community development theme.

As an international journal 'Whanake' is using English as a standard language. Submissions will be published primarily in English.

Please note that submission is possible only by e-mail. All submissions should be in Microsoft Word format. All submissions should follow the APA style guide, 6th edition, for citations and referencing. A guide is available here: http://libguides.unitec.ac.nz/apareferencing

Font:	Arial, 12 point	
Tables:	Send tables or figures in .rtf, .gif, .jpg or tiff format	
Images:	Images should be sent seperately in .jpg format with their file names as the relevant figure #, along with a separate Microsoft Word document that lists the figures and codes them back to the .jpg file. In the submission document write 'Insert Figure #'.	
Submission Length:	Referred papers:	4000 to 6000 words
	Opinion pieces:	Provocations which challenge practice and/or theory
	Practice notes:	500 to 6000 words
	Case studies and biographies:	1000 to 1500 words
	Articles on emerging trends and research:	up to 2 pages
	Reviews (books, plays, films, poems, songs or contemporary culture):	1 page or less

Contact: **cdjournal.unitec@gmail.com**

Other

Call for Submissions

Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development invites submissions for the May 2016 issue. The deadline for submissions for refereed papers is **15 January 2015**.

All submissions must adhere to the **submission guidelines.**

Please send submissions and correspondence to **cdjournal.unitec@gmail.com**