
Rural Resilience and Prosperity:
The relevance of government and community
networks

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*A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology,
The Australian National University*

Submitted October 2006

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed

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Date:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I would like to thank the members of the communities, their Council representatives and employees, and the government and organisation members who gave their time to complete surveys and to share their experiences and ideas with me. Without their willing participation, research like this just can not happen.

Although many people have contributed to this thesis, both provoking and introducing me to different perspectives, I must thank Dr Michael Woolcock, for both his inspiration through his initial publication in the field, and more recently as a mentor and for his critiques and constructive comments on my ideas, directions and methods.

Thirdly, the Bureau of Rural Sciences (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia) the work of which put me in the position to discover the critical relevance of researching social capital, and the potential benefits of increasing our understandings of this concept. I also thank them for their confidence in my work, giving me the opportunity to apply the approach of this thesis in three more locations around Australia in April 2006.

I would also like to thank the participants of the symposiums, conferences and congresses at which I presented or discussed this research, including the World Congress on Rural Sociology (Trondheim, Norway, 2004), the International Conference on Engaging Communities (Brisbane, 2005), The Social Capital Foundation Inaugural Conference (Malta, 2005) and, most recently, the Academy of the Social Sciences Australia, Seminar on Social Capital and Social Justice (Brisbane 2006).

I also can not thank enough, my supervisors – Dr Frank Lewins, Dr Ian Gray and Dr Alastair Greig - without whose dedicated and freely given support, confidence and guidance, this thesis would have been abandoned in 2003.

Lastly, and as importantly as any of those who have preceded them, thank you to my 'support crew'. My friends, family and colleagues who have seen me through the inevitable trials, tribulations and self doubt that undertaking a PhD brings, I thank you for your warm good humour, extensive and tireless editing, understanding, friendship and diversions!

ABSTRACT

Dominant 'society centred' interpretations of social capital in Australia are inadequate to explain the economic fortunes and social prosperity of rural Australian communities. Given the continued contention over interpretations and measurement of social capital, this research sought to assess the relationship between different interpretations of social capital and rural communities' resilience and prosperity.

Utilising both quantitative and qualitative techniques to establish the relative levels of social capital in two communities of divergent growth, the primary objective was to test the association asserted between levels of social capital and prosperity and resilience in the rural Australian context.

The research findings highlight three notable issues. Surveying social capital with current instruments is only effective in establishing the well being of rural communities which appears related to their resilience, not their ability to prosper. Secondly, the operational frameworks and responsibilities for social capital adopted by governments dictate the manner in, and degree to which they deem bridging and linking networks necessary and appropriate. This significantly affects the role social capital is perceived to play in communities. Lastly, while interpretations of social capital regard it as a normative factor in social life, rather than being comprised of different and dynamic elements affecting communities' ability to prosper, the concept will remain unable to effectively contribute to the policy domain.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

[There was] a growing sense that traditional welfare – which focused on individuals and treated them as passive receivers of care – was outmoded and needed to be replaced by a social capital approach incorporating mutual obligations and reciprocal responsibilities. Major non government organisations, religious institutions, big business and government began joining together as government contracted out its work, and communities were exhorted to become social entrepreneurs. (Deveson, 2003, 92-3)

The above quotation is from Anne Deveson's *Resilience*. Resilience is an attribute of community that is increasingly concerning all of us in Australia, both in government and on the street and, which it seems, we need in order to 'get by' these days. But can we also use it to be 'social entrepreneurs' and 'get ahead'? Here, Deveson has pointed to the use of social capital and how the Australian government has employed it as the cure for the welfare ills of community and society, indicating that community members' levels of responsibility and obligations to society are changing, and to embrace these changes will help communities be 'resilient' in the face of economic pressures. But what does resilience really mean and what is its role in regenerating communities?

In this age of the internet and the speed of both transport and telecommunications, we take for granted our daily interactions, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally with people dissimilar to ourselves, as a necessity for both personal and business achievement and progress. Despite it being doubtful, however, that

anyone would dispute this, when we use the term social capital¹ as used here by Deveson, the breadth and type of relationship networks considered to be valuable between individuals, communities and governance structures are still, at best, hotly debated, or at worst, are ignored. Accordingly, the dimensions of social capital in the context of current Australian policy use are not at all clear. This is a major issue in light of the evolution and on going use of the concept as illustrated above.

Social capital in itself was not initially the primary objective of this thesis. Rather, it was to examine the role of government networks and actions in enabling the ability of communities to regenerate and be sustainable, given the increasing economic pressures in rural Australia. However, social capital invariably became the primary focus due to both its high profile in the discussions of community capacity and the policy approaches to support 'self sustaining' communities. However, it was first necessary to unravel the multiple interpretations of the concept in order to utilise it in the research.

In the time I spent working for the Bureau of Rural Sciences, a research and policy bureau within the Federal Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, the issue of community renewal and sustainability was always on the agenda. This was due to declines in the economic viability of traditional agricultural operations and rural populations (Kenyon, Black, Cavaye, Duff, O'meara and Palmer, 2001) and consequently the social dimension of policy has been increasingly recognised as a potential factor in rural renewal. This was despite the issues of quantification,

¹ For the purposes of this thesis the term social capital is taken to be a constructed and contestable concept with, as a result, a variety of interpretations in its method of application.

assessment or management being very unclear. The 'buzz' word that emerged from this new focus, and connected with the changing attitudes to welfare, is that of social capital. In the rural renewal context, social capital has been put forward as an element of the social component comprising the third leg of the policy stool, and complementing economic and environmental considerations. Consequently, this thesis asks the question: seen through the lens of social capital, how does the role of government affect the ability of rural communities to regenerate and be sustainable? Further, do the findings have implications for the current dominant paradigms of social capital in Australia?

From the research undertaken, this thesis critiques the broad acceptance of the generic term social capital, which interprets it as a homogenous phenomenon and a normative state of being. This is in contrast to seeing social capital as another conceptual tool for understanding the contributions that relationship networks make to events and outcomes in our environment, the understanding of which is inherently tied to how the concept is interpreted. Additionally, it identifies that there is, in Australia, a general lack of critical assessment of the different elements that comprise the concept of social capital and what they can and cannot contribute to understandings of how we use the concept in government policy. Given the specific context of the implementation of social capital in policy, this research is focused on those elements of the concept that relate to the role government networks and structures might play in generating networks that facilitate cooperation within or among groups, that is, social capital. Consequently, issues of diversity and the ability to negotiate power boundaries are inevitably high on the agenda of issues that must be investigated in the concept of social capital if it is going to be used as means to understand rural resilience and prosperity. In this context, this thesis also identifies that the political paradigms underpinning the use

of social capital have major implications for both how it is interpreted and consequently how useful it is in the policy domain.

1.1 Why another social capital thesis?

The population decline in inland rural Australia and its attendant questions of rural sustainability call upon us to assess all the tools with which we may be able to understand this phenomenon and make realistic judgements about how policy can arrest or ease the decline of these communities. Social capital has been put forward as a component of the 'community capacity' mix and therefore one of the answers to increasing the ability of rural communities to determine their own futures. The policy approach to capacity building has been through such activities as leadership programs and assessing community social capital as an indicator of connectedness and well being. Both tactics have focused on 'society-centred' approaches (Rothstein and Stolle, 2002), which interpret relationships and leadership as existing only in the civic² domain. Our understanding of what the concept of social capital actually incorporates, however, remains extremely contentious (Woolcock and Manderson, 2006). Scrutiny of the lack of clarity surrounding interpretations of the definition of social capital suggest that current homogenous interpretations of the concept contribute largely to its inability to be operationalised in the policy domain. As a result, one of the main objectives of this thesis is to challenge the dominant interpretations of social capital at the policy level. It investigates whether alternative interpretations can shed light on our

² Throughout this thesis, civil and civic are used in the context of a definition of it as the sphere between the state and the family, which includes, what is referred to as, the third sector of society being formal non government, not for profit organisations, exclusive of government bodies or representatives (Misztal, 1996)

understanding of community resilience and prosperity, and what links there may be between the concept of social capital and government activities.

Ultimately, the objective of this research is to ascertain if, in the specific instance of rural communities, the concept of social capital gives us a policy tool to understand what is going on and how to improve circumstances, should that be the chosen course of action by communities and government.

1.2 Negotiating the research question

I say 'negotiating' because that is exactly how it has felt trying to 'get a grip' on this concept and how to operationalise it – it is certainly not a straight forward process! I have however, taken comfort in discussions with other academics and policy developers throughout the course of the last four years, realising that I am not the only one living in a state of on going flux in this regard.

Although the concept of social capital has been explicitly employed since the 1920s, it is only since the 1990s that it has become a popular concept, in sociological and political circles, to assist in explaining the social dimension of community dynamics in the context of decline and renewal. During that time however, the concept has undergone considerable development and an evolution in the understandings of its complexities. Unfortunately, it appears that the policy use of the concept in Australia has run away with the initial, more simplistic, interpretations of the concept, rather than recognising and applying subsequent developments. That initial interpretation of social capital was primarily of bonding relationships and consequently, the policy domain appears to ignore, or give passing recognition to, the subsequent additions of bridging and linking relationships to the dynamics of the concept. These additional two elements add complexity to the interpretation and application of social capital, and appear to be

the basis of a substantial amount of the confusion and flux currently experienced in operationalising the concept.

This thesis invariably commences with a review of the development of the concept of social capital, identifying that while we do know that social capital can be defined as ‘networks together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups’ (OECD, 2001, 4), how it is interpreted varies widely dependent on the objective of its utilisation. This creates a number of problematical issues with the concept and unanswered questions which are highlighted and discussed in the context of the origins and interpretation of the concept in the second chapter. Given this, I then turn to look at just how social capital has been used to date in Australian government circles; the interpretations, objectives in using it and methods of application. This third chapter identifies that, in the main, social capital is employed as a one dimensional concept of ‘bonding ties’ or homogenous networks which give rise to feelings of well being and security. This is an interpretation which is structurally weak when used in the policy context and is inadequate to contribute to policy in the context of community development. The objective of these two chapters (two and three) is to lay the ground work for identifying what steps need to be taken in the interpretation of the concept in order to address those weaknesses, and to see if, with alternative interpretations, social capital can ultimately contribute to, and be operationalised effectively in a policy context.

In chapter four, I turn to the methodology of just how to assess social capital in the context of community renewal and prosperity, the methodology seeks to explore both dominant homogenous interpretations and the alternative ‘synergistic’ interpretation of the concept. This is done drawing largely upon international development and governance theory that has explored the concept’s usefulness

(Cooke, Clifton and Oleaga, 2005; Evans, 1996; Gray, Dunn and Phillips, 1997; McClurg, 2003; Narayan, 1999; Ostrom, 1996; Stoker, 2005c; Woolcock, 2001). This synergistic interpretation of social capital acknowledges that it is a multidimensional (horizontal and vertical) concept comprised of at least three elements – bonding, bridging and linking relationships – which, in combination, have affects on a community's ability to access resources. The objective here is to test for any insights that a broader conceptual interpretation might give us compared to the dominant Australian interpretations of social capital.

I chose to take a case study approach, using two communities in southern New South Wales and employing quantitative and qualitative research techniques to assess their relative elements of social capital. Chosen on the basis that the two communities had the same prosperity profiles in 1991 but had diverged by 2001, the objective was to ascertain whether any of the elements of social capital varied between the two communities in the period. The indicators of population, income and employment growth were used to establish the relative prosperity of each community. Further, I then sought to identify the potential for connections between these elements of social capital and the relative prosperity of the communities. The quantitative research comprised surveys of all resident rate payers of both Shires and was facilitated through the local council in both cases. The qualitative research entailed semi-structured interviews with community members and leaders, council members, government representatives, and a number of individuals who resided outside the communities who had professional contact with them. These were undertaken to identify the calibre of relationship networks within the community, with its local level of government (the Shire Council) and the level of linkages that were perceived to exist between the local level and higher levels (state and federal) of government. The qualitative research

also entailed media reviews of the local newspapers in each case between the years of 1991 and 2001, in an endeavour to identify issues that had motivated the community; areas of conflict; and the level of interaction between different groups both within the community and with external bodies or communities that had an effect on the development or prosperity of the community.

Chapter five discusses the quantitative findings of the research, reviewing and comparing the survey data from the two communities, to identify any differences that may be evident in their levels of social capital. The survey developed and utilised for the research here, derived the majority of the questions from Onyx and Bullen's 'best 36 questions' (1997), which largely focus on bonding and to some extent bridging networks. Questions were, however, added to the survey on the basis of work undertaken by Stone and Hughes (2001; 2003; 2001a; 2001b) and Woolcock (1998). This was because examination of the quality of interactions between community and government agencies was absent in the original work of Onyx and Bullen, which have since been identified as integral to development capacity (Narayan and Cassidy, 2001; Stone and Hughes, 2002; Woolcock, 1998). This omission is crucial when social capital is interpreted and accepted as an inherently relational concept (Cooke, Clifton and Oleaga, 2005; Edwards and Foley, 1998; Narayan, 1999; Woolcock, 2001), and therefore identifying the quality of these relationship networks between community and government was essential to understanding the effects of social capital in the context of the research question.

Chapters six and seven then turn to the qualitative data which suggest, in contrast to the survey data, marked differences between the two communities. These were most notably in the area of bridging and linking networks; those networks which introduce diversity and the ability to negotiate power boundaries. Chapter eight turns to a comparative discussion of the two case studies, identifying the key

points of difference and suggesting explanations for these in the context of the concept of social capital, with some further suggestions for the implications of these in the use and operationalisation of the concept in the policy domain.

Lastly, chapter nine summarises the key issues identified around the concept of social capital and those findings that have arisen from the research in relation to the ability of communities to be resilient and prosperous in the face of economic pressures, when understood through the lens of social capital. It places the findings of the research in the context of the literature and attempts to draw conclusions for future directions of the concept of social capital and community development and prosperity research.

Given that this thesis is focusing on rural resilience, regeneration and prosperity, there are a number of aspects of social capital which are not discussed in detail here, but are invariably elements of any community case study. These include for example, gender and culture amongst others, which can affect research interpretations of this nature. The lack of extensive discussion of these perspectives is not to ignore them, but rather to acknowledge that while they exist, the overriding issues of power and equity are those which preoccupy this research, as they are deemed those most overtly affected by government networks.

1.3 Social capital, resilience and the role of government

First and foremost the findings from the research underscore that to talk about social capital as a homogenous society-centred concept, without recognising and separating its constituent parts and their distinct roles in community interaction, limit the ability of the concept to assist our insights. Further to this and most importantly, such a restricted interpretation adds no understanding nor further dimension to the relationship networks that affect the ability of communities to

develop and 'get ahead'. The consequences of such treatment of the concept will be discussed in light of the dominant criticisms of social capital, and how these may be ameliorated.

The resilience we talk of in communities, in relation to the ability to make meaning of hardship and to improvise 'solutions from thin air' (Coutu, 2002), is indicated by this research to equate only to the element of 'bonding' in the concept of social capital, as it supports the well being of communities. It is also strongly suggested however, that this is a necessary pre requisite in communities to facilitate their ability to develop the bridging and linking relationships that create the type of social capital that leads to growth and development; 'getting ahead'.

Social capital is not wellbeing, nor visa versa. Rather, as put by Portes, social capital is 'the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of memberships in social networks or other social structures' (1998). However, measures of one of the elements of social capital known as bonding relationships – which not only facilitate securing benefits from relationships with other alike individuals, but are also the precursor to the ability to create bridging and linking relationships - may effectively indicate community well being due to the homogenous factor of bonding relationships, which give rise to feelings of well being. Therefore communities that are in decline and unable to 'get ahead' may well still have high levels of social capital when it is interpreted only as bonding relationship ties.

As well as social capital being more than just bonding ties that help us to 'get by' and feel secure in our communities, this research also highlights that if the concept of social capital is to be used in the context of community regeneration and prosperity, its interpretation must be broadened to include those horizontal and vertical bridging and linking ties that facilitate us 'getting ahead'. The findings

here clearly suggest a strong association between the existence of community and government interaction (at all levels), in the form of bridging and linking relationships, with levels of prosperity. The noteworthy aspect of this is that synergistic and third world development approaches, which promote the co-existence of all three elements of social capital, are equally applicable to the circumstances of rural Australia. Although I am not adopting the argument that Australia is a segregated country, in which urban represents the first world and rural and regional the third, I am pointing to the political circumstance that ignores well researched approaches to address current rural circumstances, in favour of an existing and dominant political ideology – namely neo-liberal approaches to economic development.

Given the relationship between those parts of social capital – bridging and linking - which facilitate development and regeneration of communities, it is equally important to acknowledge that these elements also have the potential to erode bonding social capital. This is due to the tension that can arise from constantly having to negotiate horizontal and vertical relationships between homogenous and heterogeneous groups of individuals. This element of the research findings will be discussed from the perspective of policy interpretations of the ideal type of social capital and its encouragement from the point of community development.

Lastly, although from a policy perspective we may want to know how to change communities' situations to increase growth and sustainability, in one of the case study communities this research highlighted both the point and circumstance where some communities do not want to pursue growth and change; nor do they see this as a government responsibility to undertake entirely on their behalf. In the context of social capital being seen as an element in the development process, it must also be recognised that this circumstance existed where the roles of

communities and government in the development of social capital were not well understood. If governments, from local to federal levels, and communities, together, understand their role in the creation of social capital for the purposes of improving prosperity, decisions made by any of these parties may be different. If, however, in spite of this education, communities make a *conscious* choice not to engage, the research also underscores the point that in order not to erode the existing social capital, it is the responsibility of government to respect that right. This highlights the ongoing dilemma of walking the 'social capital tight rope'; of respecting communities' decisions, but governments not using that as an excuse for devolving all responsibility and taking a 'hands off' approach and policy position on community resilience and prosperity.

CHAPTER TWO: The concept of social capital – its origins and development.

The ideas embodied in social capital are not new. In fact when I first came across it, my reaction, was ‘oh yes, the old it’s not what you know but who you know that makes the difference’, because of the connection between relationship networks and achieving objectives that would not be possible otherwise. However, when I investigated the concept further to identify a measure for it in the process of assessing forestry community strengths³, I realised the nuances of its interpretation from the basic concept are quite varied, and these variations differently affect how the concept might be operationalised. Firstly, I intend to review the origins of social capital as a concept and the benefits that are considered to spring from the positive employment of the resources accruing from social capital. I then look at the work of the three ‘fathers’ of social capital; the work of whom has formed the basis for the majority of its current use. The last task of this chapter is to identify the key problematical aspects of the interpretations of social capital since it gained such prominence through Putnam’s work in the mid 1990s, before we move on, in chapter three, to look at the policy use of social capital theory specific to Australia.

The overriding problem with social capital, which is broadly defined as the ‘networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate

³ The Regional Forest Agreement process was a federal program of forestry management that was not only to be reviewed environmentally, economically and socially every five years from the agreement being struck, but there were also endeavours to align it with the ‘Montreal Process’ of agreed Commonwealth environmental, economic and social indicators (http://www.mpci.org/home_e.html). Elements of social capital were incorporated in the sub set of Montreal Indicators (6.5.c(i) – www.daf.gov.au/montrealprocess) which were taken as sustainability indicators for the industry, and highlighted the concept of social capital in this particular area of Australian government policy.

cooperation within or among groups' (OECD, 2001), is that it is a slippery concept which, due to its loose conceptualisation, has been accused of being of dubious value in the sociological research context. However what has become evident is that, although the definition of social capital is not contested, interpretations of it most definitely are, making its operationalisation difficult, as that is dependent upon its interpretation. These variations in interpretations are evident in the review of the work by Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam and subsequent analysis of the problematical aspects of each interpretation. Despite this, the concept continues to be regarded as offering major insights into our understanding of the social aspects of community resilience and prosperity. As a result, the last part of the chapter will look at the developments that have occurred in social capital theory which seek to address the problematical aspects of it, and how the questions that remain have contributed to structuring the approach of this thesis.

2.1 What are the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of social capital?

Social capital has evolved from theories of social structure and action, but as Colman notes, it arose due to the major theoretical obstacle posed by the connection between the purposive actions of individuals and social outcomes (1986, 1321). The concept of social capital is linked foremost to the theory of social action as developed by Tönnies and Durkheim. It was Tönnies who originally coined the terms 'Gemeinschaft', referring to purposive action in traditional organic communities and 'Gesellschaft' which referred to the instrumental actions of individuals that result in societal structures (Cahnman and Heberle, 1971). Durkheim developed these further in seeking to explain the constraining and determining factors in social behaviour and structure by developing the corresponding categories of social solidarity (Thomas, 2003, 29-38). Durkheim

ventured two forms of solidarity – mechanical and organic - to explain the different modes in which society operates. Both forms rely on common states of consciousness, however, although mechanical solidarity refers to habitual unthinking actions of individuals who are alike and operate in harmony and do not act independently, organic solidarity occurs when individuals operate independently but are also aware of that dependency on each other because of their individuality; that is, their specialisation forces reliance on others. Durkheim saw organic solidarity as explaining social interaction in urban industrial society, which facilitated a variety of economic purposes (Field, 2003, 5; Lukes, 1972, 148-9). Consequently, the connection between Durkheim's thesis of solidarity and social capital is one of identifying how individuals work together in communities to improve their individual outcomes, in the context of a notion of moral order or collective conscience which underlies economic transactions. These are elements which are identifiable in all three of the major theorists of social capital; Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam.

Max Weber also pursued the theory of social structure, but through the notion of rational action, forming the basis of the utilitarian approach to social action. Weber developed four notions of rational action to explain social action and structures. Value and instrumental rationality were in the domain of the individual. 'Value rationality' referred to an individual's action based on specific beliefs irrespective of the outcomes. 'Instrumental rationality' referred to the behaviour of an individual, which is motivated by a desired outcome, even though it may compromise specific beliefs. The other two forms of rationality identified by Weber were those in the public domain. Formal and substantive rationality refer to the rational action of institutions which constrain or motivate the interactive behaviour of the individual, but it is not subject to individual favour or capriciousness.

'Formal rationality' is a concept of action that facilitates predictability and calculability in legal, economic and bureaucratic matters, and can be demonstrated in modern day institutions such as the parameters and constraints that the Australian Securities and Investments Commission exert over company transactions. 'Substantive rationality' seeks to achieve a substantive outcome in the form of the specific distribution of income or goods; an example being the manner in which the police force enforces the publicly defined limits of behaviour and conduct to achieve a level of equity and safety in society, regardless of individual wishes or inclinations (Turner, 2000, 21-41).

Weber's theories of the rational actions of individuals were the basis of Coleman's endeavours to develop the notion of social action to explain individual behaviour in the context of the social structures we can observe. Coleman's objective was to explain how individuals could maximise their opportunities, regardless of class (Field, 2003, 20-9). In this process he identified social capital as a resource (or capital) that individuals could access through their social actions and consequent relationships to improve their individual circumstance, consciously or otherwise. Elements of Weberian thought can also be identified in Bourdieu's approach to social capital, in his focus on it as a means to maximise individual opportunity and in the context of power structures and struggles (Ibid, 19-20).

Although I have discussed these specific examples of the broad foundations of social capital, it should not be ignored that the work of many other sociological thinkers can be identified in the elements of social capital from as far back as Aristotle and Plato. More recently, these also include those such as Georg Simmel with his concept of the socialisation process being a web of relationships that form, dissolve and reform between individuals – 'reciprocity transactions' (Wall, Ferrazzi and Schryer, 1998, 305); Goffman who developed a sociological

understanding of structures of individual interaction, and how the social rules, obligations and tacit knowledge involved in these interactions can enable or constrain what individuals can accomplish in the course of social interactions; or Parsons, whose work focused on importance of social norms and values to hold societies together. The work of these theorists either underpins all subsequent work in the area of social capital, or alternatively, as in the case of Alex de Tocqueville's role for Robert Putnam, provides a major source of inspiration for social capital theorists.

Employment of the specific term social capital can first be traced to Hanifan (1920) in relation to the community relationship networks that supported schools and successful educational practices (Putnam, 2000, 19). It was next coined by Jane Jacobs in reference to the benefits that could be found in neighbourliness and the physical structure of neighbourhood communities (1961, 112-40). Glenn Loury also referred to the benefits of utilising the concept of social capital to explain the effects of group processes on the life opportunities of blacks in America (Loury, 1977, 176). Although many other authors implied the concept, they did not use the specific phrase. Similarly, Hanifan, Jacobs and Loury despite coining the term, did not develop the concept of social capital to the extent which Bourdieu, Coleman or Putnam did and have, the work of whom I shall discuss in detail shortly.

2.2 The benefits of social capital

Although the concept of social capital was not developed theoretically prior to Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam, the benefits of it were identified and continue to tantalise communities and governments alike. The pragmatic benefits of social capital affect many aspects of private and civic life and are commonly agreed to be the economic, social and political benefits created through increasing citizens'

participation and access to information, credit and local officials. Additionally, social capital provides a social safety net through the creation of supportive relationship networks which allow individuals to take risks to improve their situation and by extension, that of their communities. Social capital is also seen to expedite communications and economic exchanges through social networks, decreasing the costs of community interaction in terms of both time and money, immediately and in the future (Pretty, 2001; Putnam, 2001). Although social capital is explicitly recognised as benefiting private actions and operations, both orthodox and neo-liberal economists see this as efficient market operation, recognising the benefit in the private domain as the decrease in expenditure and requisite amount of bureaucracy required in the public sphere (Knack and Keefer, 1997; Serageldin and Grootaert, 1997).

Politically, trust – a commonly agreed element and outcome of social capital - is seen by the current federal Australian Coalition government as essential to the smooth operation of society:

Trust facilitates compliance. Trust enhances efficiency. It reduces transaction costs – you do not have to ascertain and negotiate the bribe on each transaction... Trust and tolerance, are sometimes described as social capital (Costello, 2003a).

In the Australian context, social capital has commonly been incorporated as one of the components of 'community capacity', defined by Cavaye as comprising both human and social capital, 'consist[ing] of the networks, organisation, attitudes, leadership and skills that allow communities to manage change and sustain community-led development' (2000, 1). Human capital incorporates the skills and education of individuals, while social capital consists of the relationships between

individuals and with institutions that facilitate the use of human capital. Fundamentally, social capital is seen as the glue of society that holds individuals together and allows resources to be accessed and utilised (Cox, 1995a; Serageldin, 1996). Consequently, the resource of social capital is seen as essential in the mix of capitals to the ability of communities to generate and increase their capacity to be sustainable or develop further.

The concrete elements of community development, which are the infrastructure and employment of a community, are realised through changes in local attitudes and perceptions of the resources available to them and their ability to tap into them. This ability is achieved through improving networks and mobilising existing skills and accessing new ones in order to redefine problems and use of community assets in different ways (Cavaye and Lawrence, 2000, 3). These are the benefits commonly cited in policy documents and proposals for rural community renewal (Cocklin and Alston, 2003; Cocklin, Dibden, Kilpatrick, Higgins, Sass, Snell, Birrell, Falk, Pfueller and Waddell, 2001), however, identifying that it is a change in circumstances that is required does not clarify the potential sources of the social capital that contribute to such changes. Whilst such acknowledgements exert the importance of social capital to the community capacity mix, they do not clarify what creates it.

In summary, although it may be commonly agreed that positive and active social capital is one of the essential elements that produce capacity in a community to be adaptive and innovative in times of stress and changing circumstance, physical or economic; what contributes to the generation of social capital is not a matter of consensus. It is on the basis of the commonly agreed benefits of social capital, and its broad use in discussion of renewal and resilience, however, that further investigation is justified into which interpretation of social capital explains

contributions to improving community capacity and development. The current popularity of social capital indicates that we need a deeper understanding of the causes or antecedents of social capital in order to establish which elements of it explain the benefit in community development. This is necessary in order to verify – or vindicate – that current policy level conceptualisations do not, or do, employ an adequate interpretation of the concept.

2.3 The 'founding fathers' of social capital

Although Farr (2004) offers an extremely comprehensive history of social capital, in its contemporary context, the theorists used as the basis of the majority of social capital discussion are Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam. Given that it was these three theorists who explicitly developed the concept and brought it to the attention of policy makers and communities, the following discussion explores their particular developments of the concept in detail.

2.3.1 Bourdieu

Bourdieu was not primarily concerned with social capital from the level of community and capacity building. Rather, he was interested in how people negotiate and manage relationships in social structures to their best advantage. Consequently, social capital was an element within the group of factors he identified as influencing the behaviour of individuals in their social actions. Bourdieu defined social capital as

. . . the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition.
(Bourdieu, 1990, 119)

His objective was to develop the idea of social action, as he did not support individualistic notions of rational action. In fact he adamantly argued against the necessity that people's behaviour is determined by the conscious and sub-conscious mind abstracted from environment. In contrast to rational action theory, Bourdieu talks of a 'feel for the game' that is created by 'habitus', due to the limitations of time and information available to individuals, and that it is this experiential rather than rational information that dictates and modifies people's behaviour. Bourdieu describes habitus as the historical source of action which

. . . resides neither in consciousness nor in things, but in the relation between the two states of the social, that is between the history objectified in things, in the form of institutions, and the history incarnated in bodies, in the form of that system of enduring depositions which I call habitus. (Ibid)

Bourdieu challenges Weber's ideas of rationality, posing that no human being can, at any point, be a perfectly rational actor,

. . . since they always operate within various forms of bounded reality, it will always be necessary to consider the socially produced means of generating strategies which are open to them and which reflect the organisation of the fields in which they act and their own trajectories through them. (Calhoun, LiPuma and Postone, 1993, 81)

Although Bourdieu did not develop this line of thinking specifically in relation to social capital, it has relevance in the current use of the concept and interpretations of it, which abstracts the concept from the broader environment in which individuals operate.

Bourdieu is noted for developing the idea of multiple forms of capital - economic, cultural, social and symbolic – as a means to explain behaviour and social action. This built on Marx's concept of capital which was linked solely to the ownership of private property (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu did, however, consistently perceive capital as a resource or form of wealth, which yields power (Calhoun, LiPuma and Postone, 1993, 4, 69) and thus focused upon the location of power and how that was affected by other capitals. Capital to Bourdieu was power, in terms of knowledge (cultural capital) physical resources (economic capital) and relationship networks (social capital) that could improve an individual's position. However Bourdieu believed all these were affected by the habitus of individuals, which further affected the symbolic capital – the power created in the realisation of the effects of the specific allocation of economic, cultural or social capital – of a given circumstance (Bourdieu, 1990, 113; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, 119).

Habitus was a significant element of Bourdieu's work and refers to how an individual's life experience, societal traditions and structures affect the way they react and respond to situations and opportunities, consciously or not. Bourdieu believed that the habitus of an individual, created by their experience and social understanding, provides them with the social tools that facilitate their economic and social participation in society (Calhoun, LiPuma and Postone, 1993, 69). He also maintained that an individual's habitus was dictated by the economic organisation of society (Fine, 2001). Therefore, according to Bourdieu, the social processes and resources available to individuals are also dictated by a community's economic organisation. This raises the question of what the government's role is in habitus, to the extent that the government determines the economic organisation of society and therefore the social capital element of social action.

In the context of social capital providing access to power, although criticised for economic utilitarianism (Bourdieu, 1990, 111), Bourdieu did not believe that the interests that drive behaviour were fundamentally economic, but were rather affected by habitus (Shusterman, 1999) and also by their 'field', therefore admitting the cultural element. Bourdieu's idea of field refers to two arenas of social action. The first arena incorporates the structured social spaces that impose specific requirements upon all those who enter, for example, the inherent language required to effectively participate in a particular profession, such as piloting an aircraft. Field also refers to the arena of struggle between social agents either to preserve a status quo, or overturn the basis of social identity or hierarchical order. This is an important point when I later turn to the discussion of agency and structure in relation to the generation of social capital.

Bourdieu defined social capital according to the two elements to which he believed it could be reduced; first, the social relationship itself that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates, and second, the amount and quality of those resources (Portes, 1998). Despite this clear cut definition and use of social capital as being purely for individual benefit alone, the theory of social capital was not Bourdieu's main concern, which was to resolve the relationship between individuals and society. In that process, he deemed that social capital could only be generated in the context of family groups, believing that any external effect on the social capital available to individuals was in the form of the responsibility of the church or the state to support the family unit in its generation of social networks and resources (Bourdieu, 1998, 107-8).

Consequently, although Bourdieu developed the idea of social capital in the context of how it sat in relation to other sociological concepts and its contribution to social action for the advancement of the individual, he did not discuss it

extensively in terms of its construction and destruction in the community environment. Further, I would argue that the ideas of habitus and field conflict with the notion that social capital can only be generated or affected in the domain of the family unit, as these are generated, at least in part, in the broader social domain of the community and government. The significant contributions that he made to the development of the concept which have, however, remained in play to varying degrees are that it is located in the actions of individuals at the very intimate level of the family, and that it is affected by the environment and culture of individuals. Unfortunately, due to the later work of Putnam, it is Bourdieu's notion of the generation of social capital in the family or civic domain alone, which has remained upper most in the majority of the discourse on social capital and interpretations of the concept.

2.3.2 Coleman

In contrast to Bourdieu, Coleman did consider rational action theory relevant to explaining social structures. He felt, however, that individualistic approaches were inadequate to explain social actions and that further analysis of social structure was required. Coleman believed that it was a fiction perpetrated by neoclassical economic theory that individuals act to achieve goals that are independently arrived at and that social systems simply consist of a combination of these individuals. Instead, he saw that social structure and the relationships that constituted that structure were inherently responsible for moulding the goals that individuals pursued and the effectiveness with which that is achieved (Coleman, 1990, 300). As Coleman highlights, the elements of social capital do not incorporate any new processes that have not been identified in previous sociological investigation. What the term does underline are the benefits created from an understanding of the function of these relationship networks. Coleman's

interpretation of social capital is that 'social organisation constitutes social capital, facilitating the achievement of goals that could not be achieved in its absence or could be achieved only at a higher cost' (Coleman, 1990, 304) and that it 'inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors' (Coleman, 1988, 98). He identified three types of social capital; obligations and expectations; information channels and social norms (Ibid).

The interpretation of social capital adopted by Coleman was instrumental in developing a view that both recognised the purposive objective of individuals and the validity of social action theory. His objective was to further social action theory as developed by Weber, and subsequently Parsons, by linking the individual to the broader economic arena within the social action context (Coleman, 1986). He was at pains, however, to note that while he was seeking the link between the micro and macro environments and the social and economic spheres, he did not adhere to the extreme individualistic premises that often accompany the theory of rational action (1988, 95). Rather, he sought to use rational action as a starting point and a method of melding the paradigms of social structure and rational action as it had been used in economics. Coleman recognised that he bridged the school of neo-classical economists (extreme individualists) and that of sociologically defined structure and action.

In Coleman's estimation, the concept of social capital identified the meaningful connection between the two spheres of the economic and the social, explaining the social structures that resulted from rational behaviour and consequently was a tool to aid in the assessment of economic systems and opportunities. His interest in social capital took up from where Hanifan and Loury left off - in the area of education - through looking at the drop out rates at high schools (1988). As a result, his approach evolved from the perspective of the benefits to the individual

(that is the student) and primarily extended only as far as the social structure of the family and their networks. This being said, Coleman pursued a path of combining individual rational action with a consideration of the effect of social context, in order to account for individual actions in the development of social organisation.

Despite praising the developments that had been made by Weber and Parsons in the theory of social action and the rationality of the enforcement of norms, Coleman remained critical of it, believing that it had no 'engine of action' (Bourdieu and Coleman, 1991, 213-14). He did not believe that the actions of individuals could be accounted for entirely as a product of their environment; a proposition that would appear at odds with Bourdieu. Despite co editing work with Bourdieu, Coleman does not appear to have considered Bourdieu's work on capital, and in particular social capital and habitus, in his discussion of the concept. This was possibly because, while he was trying to avoid the pitfalls of extreme individualism, Bourdieu's rejection of rationality was also too extreme for him and he sought to mediate between these two perspectives. Coleman resolved the problem of motivation through recourse to purposeful action, but mediated it with a consideration of environmental factors. He applied methodological individualism to the concept of social capital to explain that social organisation results from an individual's motivation to act. However, he conceded that such motivation is also affected by particular social contexts, which together not only account for the actions of individuals in particular contexts but also for the nature of social organisation development (Coleman, 1988, 596). He focused on explaining how the purposive rational actions of individuals to achieve economic ends can combine to produce social outcomes (1986, 1321). In this process he saw the concept of social capital as a useful tool to explain the outcomes of rational

behaviour and the social relations that emerge from market and authority relations or contractual arrangements.

Coleman was firmly aligned with economic liberals in believing that social relationships result from individual choices arising from rational endeavours to achieve their own objectives. This is significant, as it affects the ability to abstract social relationships, the fabric of social capital, from those of the economic and political domain. This is a problematical point of current dominant interpretations of social capital to which I will return later in this chapter. Coleman excludes economic and political relationships from the dynamics of how social capital is generated and also any consideration of their potential impact on social relationships. However this is where confusion over Coleman's intention emerges. In his earlier work he clearly intends that corporate and institutional structures should be included in the concept of social capital, as he sees organisations as having purposeful actions as well, which affect the purposeful actions of individuals (1988, 598). In this regard Coleman has extended Bourdieu's concept of social capital beyond the influence of the family. This is open to interpretation, however, when he later appears to refocus his interpretation of social capital in his recourse to Loury's use of the term contending that social capital is 'a set of resources which inhere in family relations and in community social organisation and that are useful for the cognitive social development of a child or your person' (1990, 300). It appears that he has subsequently restricted his previous reference to institutions to those which are specifically civically generated. It is this ambiguity, over the breadth of participatory networks considered in Coleman's thesis, which has allowed his consideration of social capital in corporations and politics to be fundamentally ignored in subsequent interpretations of it. This ambiguity in Coleman's position has been enhanced by his focus on social capital as a resource

for individuals, accounting for the differences in educational outcomes between them.

Coleman also furthers Bourdieu's concept of social capital by specifically identifying the different contributions that it makes in social relationships. He identified the types of relations that allow social capital to mobilise human capital, being those which link people with different abilities, resources or knowledge, to create a resource otherwise unavailable (1990, 305). Coleman also identified the different forms in which social capital may be present, being obligations and expectations; information potential; norms and effective sanctions, authority relations; appropriable social organisation and intentional organisation (Ibid, 306-13). He then expands upon these, differing from Bourdieu, by identifying that social capital is largely a public good which can be created, nurtured or destroyed through the level of closure in social structures; their stability, ideology; affluence, government interaction and level of utilisation.

'Obligations and expectations' of reciprocity are created when resources or abilities are possessed by one party (A), but would advance another's (B) interests. Trustworthiness in the social structures that underpin the connecting relationships is essential to the successful creation and maintenance of obligations and expectations. The explanation provided by Coleman is an effective illustration:

If A does something for B and trusts B to reciprocate in the future, this establishes an expectation in A and an obligation on the part of B. This obligation can be conceived as a credit slip held by A for performance by B. (1988, S104).

The completion of this circle of action obviously relies on trust that the credit slips will be honoured, which is where the second component of social capital comes into play – ‘norms and effective sanctions’.

Norms can be described as those shared understandings of behaviour to forgo self interest and act in the interests of the collective where required. As such they provide a very powerful component of social capital in terms of underpinning the expectations created through obligations. To be enforceable, however, norms must be complemented with sanctions. These can be internal or external, but they support the adoption of norms with consequences if they are not adhered to.

Coleman also identifies forms of social capital in ‘appropriable social organisations’, which are those that, although they are created for one purpose, also provide people with access to information and resources through this new social structure of relationships that they may otherwise not have had. An example of such organisations would be concerned citizens who gather to oppose the establishment of an industrial incinerator in their community. These organisations are significant in establishing the common good aspect of social capital to communities, beyond the benefits which accrue to individuals.

A further form of social capital according to Coleman is in the creation of ‘intentional organisations’, such as a school Parent Teacher Association. Such organisations are formed by individuals for the explicit purpose of generating social capital, in that participants have an expectation of some future return on their investment of time and resources (1990, 313). This particular type of social capital, however, also overtly contributes to the public good, as its creation of social capital by one group of persons also makes its benefits available to others, whether they participate directly or not. Another form of intentional organisation

that Coleman uses as an illustrator which, given the objectives of this thesis, is particularly important to highlight, is that of business organisations. Where business organisations are set up for the conversion of financial capital into physical capital in the form of products, human capital in the form of persons occupying positions and social capital in the structure of positions required to form the organisation, are also both generated. It is in the creation of this new social structure, with its attendant expectations and obligations in the form of the relationship structure of a business, which provides individuals access to new avenues of social capital. It is, however, pertinent to note that government institutions create these effects in the same manner as private or civic institutions. This is a factor which Coleman does not explore, but is critical in terms of how social capital can be operationalised from a policy perspective.

It was the contribution to the public good which Colman saw as the main benefit of social capital, noting that this contribution was indirect, as it was a by-product of other purposive actions. Further, its value lies in the fact that it is inalienable and cannot be appropriated by any one person, but rather resides in the social structure in which people are embedded. However because of this fact and that individuals cannot invest in it for their direct benefit alone, social capital often suffers from underinvestment (1990, 315-17). This highlights the circular nature of social capital. As Coleman identifies, social structures lead to the creation, maintenance or depletion of social capital, but equally social capital – or connections between people – creates the social structure. This is a confounding and problematical element of the concept, if social capital is defined as trust and reciprocity alone. Is trust the cause, or is it the outcome, of social capital? This highlights the tensions in interpreting something as complex as social capital in terms of static indicators.

Specific to sustaining or developing social capital, Coleman is particularly focused on the 'closure of social networks' to allow the development of trust and effective norms. Although Coleman discusses at length the need for closure in order to allow reputations and trust to develop, he does not discuss the overlapping of these networks to allow the introduction of new ideas or mediation of excessive exclusive tendencies in networks. He further identifies that 'stability' in social structures is essential to the creation and maintenance of social capital. Particularly, he points to the benefits derived from the development of organisations which have positions rather than persons as elements of the social structure, as this provides stability in the event of unstable or migratory nature of individuals.

The 'ideology' possessed by individuals is also an element that Coleman identifies as affecting levels of social capital. Where individuals share common ideologies, it will assist in strengthening social ties and therefore the willingness to create and participate in reciprocal relationships. However, where individuals adopt an ideology of self sufficiency, it will erode the tendency to participate in social structures and therefore fail to generate the capital that could stem from that participation.

Finally, and almost in passing in terms of the discussion that he allocates to it, Coleman identifies a category of factors affecting social capital, only one of which he believes to be especially important. These are the factors which make people less dependent upon each other. In this category he briefly covers the elements of affluence and government aid, both of which he identifies as reducing the need of individuals to call upon one another, and therefore through disuse, erode and fail to renew relations between people and therefore the sources of social capital (1990, 321).

Coleman's focus on social capital theory was to develop the aspect of the transition from micro to macro environment; to understand the connection between the social contexts of the individual and the broader context of the economy and their interaction. It was this development in the interpretation of social capital by Coleman that broadened Bourdieu's approach, by identifying the beneficial outcomes of social capital to communities through individual actions. There are however, criticisms of such functionalism in the application of social capital; it being seen as one of the main weaknesses in dominant interpretations of the concept in policy domains. Coleman does not discuss social capital in the context of assessing community strengths, apart from identifying that the benefits of social capital extend beyond the individual to also be a communal resource. Instead, Coleman was interested in how social capital assisted individuals to gain human capital and therefore increase their economic opportunities. Consequently, Coleman's interpretation of social capital lends itself well to neo-liberal perspectives of the concept, locating responsibility for action and change entirely with the individual.

As a result, analysis of the contemporary use of the concept identifies that Coleman's thesis of social capital has contributed to an interpretation of it, in the context of community renewal, as an endogenous process which considers only the relationships between individuals within a community. This is a functionalist perspective which ignores issues of power in community relations. In spite of the reference to corporate and institutional structures in his discussion of social capital, Coleman's concept of social capital is largely interpreted as incorporating only civic social structures, rather than the relationship structures of the meso or macro social environment, and how these may affect civic relationship networks. Building on Tocqueville's ideas of civic networks underpinning effective

democracy, it is this civically bounded (or society-centred) interpretation of social capital that Putnam sought to apply when he brought the concept of social capital and its contribution to public life to prominence in his work in Italy (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993) and even more so in his assessment of the decline of American social interaction (1995). It was Putnam's extension of his Italian research to explain American societal disengagement that drew political attention to the potential use of the concept in the development of responsive policies. This effect of Putnam's research makes it crucial to discussions of the policy use of social capital in the context of rural development and regeneration.

2.3.3 Putnam

Although Putnam is cited in the social capital literature as the 'follow on' to Coleman in his development of the concept of social capital, it was his pursuit of De Tocqueville's approach to social structure and action that led Putnam to Coleman and the concept of social capital. De Tocqueville motivated Putnam's approach to civic and democratic structures when he commenced his work in Italy, attempting to explain the circumstances that lead to strong, responsive and effective representative institutions (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993, 6). The notions of the requirement for sovereignty of the individual for good democracy and the beneficial effects of voluntary association on democracy were those that grabbed Putnam's attention in De Tocqueville's work. He adopted De Tocqueville's belief that it was an individual's sovereignty and choice to voluntarily associate that affected the polity and also had effects on participants themselves (Putnam, 2000, 338-44). Putnam developed Coleman's perspective on social capital further with his work on the effect of the decline in trust and social capital in America (1995; 2000; 2001; 2002a; 2003). Although Putnam did elucidate certain dimensions of Coleman's interpretation of social capital, ultimately his

perspective on the concept did not differ greatly in that he asserted social capital was the '[f]eatures of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam, 1995, 67). Rather, Putnam's major contribution was through the application of the concept of social capital which altered the academic and political perceptions of it.

Putnam's work has, in response to critical reviews of his work, a budding recognition of a role for the broader social environment in social capital. His original work (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993) is devoid of any consideration that political or other environmental factors may have an effect upon social networks. By contrast, in his work ten years later he explicitly acknowledges the role that institutions and governments may play in the ability of people to commune, when employing the concept to explain how communities are fragmenting or managing to 'reweave' their fabric (2003, 273). However, this being said, Putnam still maintains a society-centred stance on the concept, especially concerning the elements which constitute it or its sources.

Putnam is the most well known discussant of social capital and his work largely assumes that individual behaviour and choice to associate is irrespective of social context. He identifies that the networks of civic engagement are represented by intense horizontal interaction and that it is these relationship networks that represent social capital, as vertical relationships are less reliable, because norms of reciprocity and sanctions can not be employed across power boundaries (Ibid, 174). Putnam explicitly and exclusively associates social capital with civic networks alone, a connection that, to date, has proved enduring in the dominant paradigms of the concept. The most strident criticism of Putnam's research relates to his assertion that

Membership in horizontally ordered groups should be positively associated with good government ... [and that because] Good government in Italy is a by product of singing groups and soccer clubs, [it supports the theory that] social capital as embodied in horizontal networks of civic engagement, bolsters the performance of the polity and the economy, rather than the reverse (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993, 175-6).

The link between strong civic horizontal⁴ association and good government is not causal as he would assert, but rather co-incidental given the evidence (Harriss and Renzio, 1998, 920; Levi, 1996, 50-2; Offe and Fuchs, 2002, 230; Wallis and Dollery, 2002, 81; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000, 233). However Putnam deduces from his research that the findings of his Italian research support De Tocqueville's idea that democratic government is strengthened, not weakened by vigorous civil society or, in Putnam's words, strong horizontal ties of civic engagement (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993, 182). Although Putnam did not develop the ideas of vertical ties or include in his early work the notion of bridging social capital (which he did in 'Bowling Alone' (2000) and subsequent work in response to criticisms of weaknesses in his interpretation of social capital) he did acknowledge that not all aspects of social capital were necessarily good, and that wariness was warranted when encouraging its development. Putnam noted in his earliest works on social capital that

⁴ Horizontal and vertical ties refer to the relative power in a relationship. Horizontal ties refer to those relationships between individuals similarly situated in the power structures of a community. By contrast, vertical ties refer to relationship between individuals at different levels in that power structure. Bridging ties are horizontal relationships between heterogeneous groups or individuals, which facilitate the exchange of new ideas and methods of problem solving.

social inequalities may be embedded in social capital. Norms and networks that serve some groups may obstruct others, particularly if the norms are discriminatory or the networks socially segregated. Recognizing the importance of social capital in sustaining community life does not exempt us from the need to worry about how that community is defined – who is inside and thus benefits from social capital, and who is outside and does not. (1993, 38)

Bourdieu and Coleman both touched upon this 'dark side' of social capital, but only from the perspective of the individual. Putnam raised the bar by extending this concern to the level of social structures of overall communities and the groups that may be excluded, perpetuating or even accentuating existing social problems. What he did not do in this early work was to examine how the negative elements of social capital can be ameliorated within his interpretation of social capital. Rather, he concluded that without the necessary social capital, communities are in a viscous cycle with no way out (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993, 177). This is an aspect of his work that has invited extensive analysis and critique (Harriss and Renzio, 1998; Levi, 1996; Portes and Landolt, 1996; Rothstein, 2005; Woolcock, 1998).

Putman discusses both the positive and negative aspects of horizontal civic networks of social relationships, acknowledging (in passing) that consideration must be given to the impacts that government may have on social capital (2000; 2001; 2003). However, his work is predominantly cited and discussed to highlight only the positive aspects of horizontal ties between homogenous groups in the elements constituting social capital. In journalistic discussions of Putnam's work, the focus has been on the benefits he ascribes to individuals arising from relationships and the ability to optimise individual outcomes through mutual

action. This has resulted in a great appeal in some areas of applied sociology – particularly in relation to government policy – however, it has also been criticised for eroding the useful relational aspects of the interpretation of the concept, as it was developed by Bourdieu and Coleman (Foley and Edwards, 1998) .

Putnam's means of assessing social capital also differentiates him from previous, and many subsequent social capital theorists. His use of trust in communities, and the level of adoption of norms and generalised reciprocity as proxies for social capital, has resulted in the identification of trust and reciprocity as the social capital, rather than differentiating between the source of social capital and its outcome. This is a further aspect of his work which has received criticism (Levi, 1996, 47; Sobel, 2002; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000, 231). Putnam uses relationship networks, and trust and reciprocity, as interchangeable labels for social capital (2000, 21) rather than clarifying from where the trust arises, creating a tension in his interpretation, as to whether factors such as trust and reciprocity are the source, or the outcome of social capital. In other words, do relationship networks give rise to trust, or does trust facilitate the establishment of those networks? This is not an issue for Putnam however, as it is inherent in his approach that trust and reciprocity are naturally occurring phenomena in society, existing prior to, and facilitating the social interactions driven by individual objectives. Putnam also hypothesises that dense horizontal bonding civic relationship networks encourage trust and reciprocity, and as a result create positive normative behaviour; 'Dense social ties facilitate gossip and other valuable ways of cultivating reputation – an essential foundation for trust in a complex society' (ibid). However he also acknowledges that such dense networks can allow 'power elites to exploit social capital to achieve ends that are antisocial from a wider perspective' (Ibid, 22), but he accepts this as the unavoidable nature of his perspective of social capital. This is

discussed extensively by critics of Putnam's work in terms of the creation of both social (inclusive and socially enhancing) and anti-social (exclusionary) capital through dense networks, (Cox, 1995c; Levi, 1996; McLean, Schultz and Steger, 2002; Perez-Diaz, 2002; Portes and Landolt, 1996). Specifically, these authors identify that within Putnam's perspective of dense networks being fundamental to the creation of social capital, there are no means by which to mediate them to ensure the generation of a majority of positive social capital which benefits all sectors of society. Putnam does go on in later work to recognise the inadequacy of his original perspective and subsequently focuses on the need for bridging networks to offset negative effects of dense bonding networks (2000; 2003; 2002c). However this has not prevented the evolution of a school of thought that regards social capital as only arising from dense civic relationship networks characterised by trust and reciprocity - Putnam's original interpretation of the concept - a perspective which has affected policy in Australia as discussed in chapter three.

2.4 The problematical aspects of different interpretations of social capital

In attempting to critically evaluate the interpretations of social capital as put forward by each of its proponents, it is evident that to deal with problematical aspects by each theorist would result in many duplications. Also, given the contextual nature of social capital and the extensive literature which has dedicated itself to critiquing and trying to enhance our understandings of the concept, it is far easier to deal with the problematical aspects pertinent to the research question rather than issues raised by particular authors. These issues range from generally discussed ones pertaining to the positive or negative benefits and measurement, to the more slippery ones of power. Those issues of power are largely ignored in the

discussions of social capital subsequent to Bourdieu and Coleman, but are directly related to policy objectives in employing the concept.

The most fundamental and problematical issue with the concept of social capital is the contestability of its definition, with the consequence of an inconsistency in policy use and applications, evident in its many different interpretations. Although I have discussed the way in which the three main protagonists of social capital each defined and developed their interpretations of the concept, their work and critiques of it have resulted in an evolution of our understandings, but unfortunately a commonly agreed interpretation has remained contentious. Despite this lack of a common interpretation being a limitation, the consequent debate about the elements of social capital and how these relate to its use, do assist in highlighting the various faults and limitations with different interpretations and, as such, is a positive aspect in the development of how we think about social capital. As stated previously, the benefits of positive social capital in a community are commonly agreed, but what constitutes that positive social capital is not. This is largely because, depending upon the objective of utilising the concept, the interpretation of it will change. For example, from the perspective of the individual and their health, any and all social capital (being the existence of a social relationship, that is not harmful) is good as it creates a feeling of connectedness and well being. From the perspective of community however, some social capital of densely connected groups can be exclusionary and therefore negative to the healthy interaction and benefit of the overall community.

2.4.1 Adding the dimensions of bridging and linking ties to bonding ties

Putnam would say that positive social capital, or that which will create benefit for the community, can be identified by the strong normative horizontal ties in a community. These he sees as consisting largely of bonding networks,

complemented by the existence of some mediating bridging networks. By contrast, others argue that, from a development perspective, positive social capital comprises not only bonding and bridging relationships, but also linking relationships (relational vertical ties across power boundaries) to mediate the effects and flow of power in a community (Evans, 1996; Ostrom, 1999; Sirianni and Friedland, 1995; Szreter, 2002; Szreter and Woolcock, 2004a; Tarrow, 1996; Woolcock, 1998; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). This underlines that the descriptors of bonding, bridging and linking have been introduced to the dialogue of social capital in order to describe the types and purpose of relationships that exist in communities which give rise to social capital. Clarifications of the different types of relationships to describe the various aspects of social capital have been introduced progressively, in concept if not by name, by a number of authors (Cavaye, 2004; Edwards, Cheers and Graham, 2003; Evans, 1996; Everingham, 2004; Granovetter, 1972; Leigh, 2005; Lin, 2001; Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen, 2003; Rothstein and Stolle, 2002; Sobel, 2002; Stoker, 2005c; Stolle, 2004; Stone and Hughes, 2001b; Streeten, 2002; Szreter, 2002; Szreter and Woolcock, 2004a; Tarrow, 1994; Woolcock, 2001) to address the problematical aspects of social capital in regard to the sources of trust and reciprocity in different circumstances. Due to the critiques of Putnam's original proposition, that trust and reciprocity were naturally occurring in communities, the social capital debate has identified that it is in fact the relationship networks of individuals that are the source of social capital and the development of trust and reciprocity are facilitated as outcomes of those relationships. However the nature of those relationship networks continues to be debated, and the categories of bonding, bridging and linking have emerged and are used to varying degrees and combinations, to explain not only from where trust and reciprocity arise, but also how communities solve communal problems.

Bonding relationships are those inclusive ties between homogenous individuals or groups within the community, where everyone feels that they hold the same values and the norms of behaviour are maintained by sanctions which guarantee reciprocity and allow trust. It is these dense networks of social relationships that are deemed basic to the generation of social capital. Notably, bonding relationship networks in communities are attributed with giving individuals a sense of belonging and for holding communities together in times of stress - the social 'glue' of communities.

Bridging ties are those relationships between individuals, groups or communities of differing beliefs and values who come together to share ideas or achieve common objectives, and as such, provide an opportunity to mitigate the negative exclusionary effects of strong bonding ties. Bridging ties introduce new ideas, information and problem solving techniques to individuals within communities that are otherwise unavailable. Granovetter introduced these in his discussion of the worth and strength of 'weak ties', as a factor in the ability of a community to develop productive social networks (1972; 1985). Bridging relationship networks also constitute an important element in community development by providing sources of new problem solving techniques. It was the element of bridging networks in social capital that allows social groups to break out of vicious cycles and create virtuous cycles of behaviour (Cavaye, 2004; Harriss and Renzio, 1998; Lin, 2001, 67-70)

Although bridging and linking relationships might often appear the same, a bridging relationship (a horizontal relationship) becomes a linking relationship when an element of power is present. This is delineated by it being a vertical relationship (between an agency and community or individual), where one party has greater access to resources than another (Gray, 1991). The relationships

between unlike individuals or groups who have different degrees of power, in regard to decision making or resource allocation, but choose for the purposes of achieving common goals come together with mutual respect and trust, to share or take equal degrees of that power, constitute linking relationships (Szreter, 2002). Successful linking relationships require active participation from both parties, and require that the party without power be prepared to demand or accept a power role in the relationship. Equally, the party with the power must be prepared to actively offer and share that power, by facilitating access to resources (Grootaert, Narayan, Jones and Woolcock, 2004).

2.4.2 'Un-social' social capital

Although the presence of bonding ties can be equated with a community's sense of well being, in that it is often trust, feelings of security, reciprocity and belonging that are measured to assess the level of well being in a community (Cummins, Woener, Tomy, Gibson and Knapp, 2004; Manderson, 2005; Zubrick, Williams, Silburn and Vimpani, 2000), a dominance of such ties in a community is recognised as being potentially negative for the overall benefit of the community. Where social groups are strongly bonded with enforced norms of behaviour and reciprocity, they become exclusionary to those outside the group, eroding feelings of well being for the latter. Strong bonding can become exclusionary to the extent that it prevents the group from accessing new ideas or problem solving techniques, as through the strong norms of behaviour it disallows access to anyone unlike them who may hold different values, belief systems or knowledge and experiences. In order to avoid the 'un-social' or dark side of social capital (Levi, 1996; Portes and Landolt, 1996; Woolcock, 1998) it has been put forward that strongly bonded groups also need to develop bridging relationships with individuals both inside

and outside their community who are unlike themselves, to mediate the negative effect of bonding social capital.

2.4.3 Community level agency and structure

The introduction of bridging networks resolved some of the elements of the dark side of social capital, however they do not resolve the issues around a community's ability to have agency over their future in the context of the structure within which they operate (Alston, 2002c; Cox, 2002; Ostrom, 1999). The discussion of agency and structure can be applied equally to communities as individuals, given that individuals within a community must have the agency not only to cooperate for mutual benefit, but also to negotiate power structures to their communal advantage. Without a factor that accounts for the level of individuals' agency to affect the structure within which they operate, the issue of Putnam's vicious cycles remain. Woolcock introduced this in his discussion of the elements of autonomy and embeddedness in social capital (Woolcock, 1998, 164-7). The level to which group behaviour of individuals is modified by structure, is inalienable to understanding the benefits that can be derived from social capital in the policy context of community development and renewal. Although others had discussed the need for social capital, as a factor in a community's development, to be embedded in and linked with formal political institutions (Berman, 1997; Evans, 1996; Foley and Edwards, 1998; Levi, 1996; Stolle, 2004; Tarrow, 1996), it was subsequent development work undertaken by Woolcock with colleagues from the World Bank, that introduced the term 'linking relationships' to address the issue of access to power networks. Linking relationships provide a means to recognise the need for communities to have the agency to change their circumstances through utilising social networks and to effect the structure within which they exist (Manderson, 2005). This has the effect of extending the element of power from

relations within communities, to the power that exists in those relations between communities, or with other organisations/agents who can affect communities' wellbeing or activities.

2.4.4 Assessing and measuring social capital

The introduction of linking relationships to the mix of elements considered in assessing social capital is relatively new and is still subject to much debate (Kawachi, Kim, Coutts and Subramanian, 2004; Muntaner, 2004; Navarro, 2004; Putnam, 2004; Smith and Lynch, 2004; Szreter and Woolcock, 2004a; 2004b). The problematical factor that the idea of linkages compounds is just how social capital is assessed. This is in terms of issues such as the extent of influencing relationship networks; inclusions in the definition of social capital⁵; connections with positive outcomes alone, and how the state interacts in community social relations - the extent of state intervention and the tension this creates between neo-liberal and welfare state perspectives.

Prior to the introduction of linking networks to the concept of social capital, how it was assessed was already an area of debate. When the assessment of social capital is taken as bonding relationship networks alone it was criticised for being a normative concept – that more social capital was always good – and that it could be applied to the meso as well as the micro levels of social interaction (Edwards, Cheers and Graham, 2003) regardless of negative effects of excessive bonding or externalities. Such quantitative assessments included Putnam's, who measures the features of society such as group memberships, based on the assumption that

⁵ As raised by Szreter and Woolcock in their rejoinder, they do not consider 'the state' as part of the definition of social capital, but rather that it is a potential player in the relationship networks which comprise the definition of social capital (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004b)

greater levels of membership equates to greater degrees of trust and reciprocity. This has led to the various criticisms raised by Cox and Caldwell (2000), Mayer (2003) and Spies-Butcher (2002; 2003) amongst others. These criticisms range from a lack of focus on the quality of those relationships and therefore an inability to address any fundamental problems identified, to the cultural applicability of the concept and the argument against a rationalist interpretation of social capital which calls for the state to be seen as a third party enforcer abstracted from social processes. Consequently, techniques that assess the social capital in a community by measuring the number of networks that represent bonding relationships alone, are inadequate.

The move to include bridging networks (internal and/or external to a community) does assist in explaining how communities use social capital to develop their capacity to adjust. However, it does not necessarily move the assessment of the concept beyond a normative one of the immediate civic networks in a community that assumes 'more' is better. Further, even the addition of linking networks does not necessarily address the normative aspect of quantitatively measuring social capital; relationally bonding, bridging and linking can all have negative or neutral effects on community interaction. Therefore while a quantitative component of social capital measurement may be helpful, to elucidate the relative benefits of social capital, it appears necessary to mediate it with a qualitative perspective to elicit an understanding of the relational nature of those connections. To use the concept of social capital without that qualification leaves the concept open to abuse.

2.4.5 Responsibility for community decline and social capital generation

The issue of allocating blame, locating the cause of community decline, or of a community's ability to associate effectively for mutual benefit, is the most

contentious one to arise out of the inclusion or exclusion of external and government elements in community relationship networks. For example, according to Putnam the community is both the seat of the problem and therefore also the source of the solution, and that while he does not necessarily accept that government involvement in social processes 'crowds out' private initiative, he does believe that it is up to individuals to choose to associate to create community social capital (Putnam, 2000, 414). While Putnam modified this position in later work (2003, 271 - 5) to acknowledge the effect of government and external agents on the social capital (or capacity for it) in a community, it is his earlier work of the 1990s brought together in *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000), which focuses on the agency of the individual without regard for structural factors, that remains the dominant understanding of social capital. Therefore, in regard to social capital, if a community is in 'decline'⁶ it is, according to adherents to Putnam's early work, the individuals of that community alone that are responsible for that demise; an idea that is very appealing to neo-liberals. The use of the term 'community' in Putnam's interpretation of social capital is the civic community alone; enforcing a society-centred interpretation of social capital (Rothstein and Stolle, 2002). It does not account for the political or economic structure within which communities operate, and ignores the potential effects of a disempowering, obstructive or corrupt polity which may be blocking or impeding community actions, or removing incentives to associate through bonding and bridging networks.

To interpret social capital in a society centred manner prompts the question as to why governments around the world have expressed so much interest in a concept

⁶ 'Decline' is used in this thesis in the context of common measures of community resilience and growth as discussed in chapter four, such as

which, by such an interpretation, they cannot affect, build or contribute to through policy mechanisms. By contrast, to include linking networks in the interpretation of social capital immediately casts all levels of government with a role to play in the generation of a community's social capital – a distinct shift from Putnam's perspective of social capital which has been so enthusiastically embraced by governments in the USA, Britain (Blair and the Third Way (Giddens, 1998)) and Australia – the last of which will be examined explicitly in the following chapter.

2.4.6 Choosing the parameters of social capital

Breaking social capital down into its constituent parts of bonding, bridging and linking of community relationships raises issues in regard to the boundaries of the community assessment. Bourdieu and Coleman's perspectives were that the concept of social capital should be applied to understanding an individual's resources to change their circumstance within the community, and although Putnam expanded this to how communities could use the same concept to change their group circumstance, in all cases the concept was interpreted to apply only in the civic domain, exclusive of government and regulatory bodies. Spies Butcher (2002; 2003) and Fine (2001) take umbrage with the notion that social capital can be interpreted exclusive of institutional and government networks as also put by Fukuyama (1995; 2000; 2001). Fine notes that interpretations such as Putnam's and Fukuyama's neglect issues of the economy, power or conflict (2001). Introducing power relationships through the inclusion of linking networks, however, demands the inclusion of government, institutions and regulatory bodies in the relationship networks considered in the generation of trust, reciprocity, information flows and

population growth, median age, and employment.

co-operation, as these are part of the social context in which individuals exist. Although there is an obvious disinclination to broaden the definition of social capital to include linking relationships due to the difficulties of developing robust measurement techniques for yet another element that must be interpreted qualitatively as well as quantitatively, the implications of not including linking networks are much deeper in the political context of what is being measured and for what purpose.

This interplay between government and community in the context of social capital is an element that is brought to the fore in considering the style of regional planning that the Federal and also many State governments have engaged in since the 1970s (Bellamy, Meppem, Gorddard and Dawson, 2003, 106-12; Dollery and Marshall, 1997; Edgar, 2001; Everingham, 2004; Gray and Lawrence, 2001b, 113-4; Lawrence, 2003; Tonts, 2000, 66-8). The objective according to economic rationalist thinking was to place regions in competition with each other to maximise outcomes from regional and community development funds; this was instead of, the alternative of, encouraging regional communities to collaborate on development projects. This approach saw the demise of some communities which, without the resources and bridging networks to obtain funds or initiate regional collaborations were sent on a speedy road to nowhere. 'In short, it takes an articulated effort of both top down and bottom up to help overcome this exclusion but it can be and is being done with positive and lasting results' (Woolcock, 2001, 14). Although discussions of community renewal and sustainability do incorporate the role of local government (Dollery and Marshall, 1997, 125-50), discussions of social capital in Australia largely do not (with some notable exceptions)(Dollery and Marshall, 1997; Lowndes and Wilson, 2001; Saggars, Carter, Boyd, Cooper and Sonn, 2003). Without the recognition of the active role that government plays in

community social interactions and networks from the level of local government upwards, the issue of how the benefits of social capital can be optimised are destined for continued confusion and disappointment.

2.4.7 Remaining questions and defining parameters

The preceding discussion raises the further issue of the purpose for which social capital is being employed - the very question which initiated my own research into the concept. The interpretation of social capital adopted by government dictates who and what is assessed, how broadly boundaries are placed and who potentially has a role in the responsibility for shortcomings and successes. With the use of a civically bounded or society-centred approach, utilising only bonding and bridging networks, the potential to 'blame the victim' and lock them in a self-perpetuating prison of circumstance is high. By considering external bridging and linking relationships along with the level of effective sharing of power or facilitating access to it, the responsibility for the positive and negative effects is both more broadly spread, but as a result is perhaps also more difficult to assess.

Consequently, the questions which arise for any analysis of a community's social capital are:

- Which elements of social capital are being included – bonding, bridging and/or linking?
- What are the boundaries of the assessment – civic alone or do they also include government and institutional?
- What are the boundaries of the relationships being considered - internal community networks or also those external interactive networks of a specified community?

- If linking relationships are being considered - to what level are they being taken into account – only within the community being civic and local government networks, or broader, higher levels of regulatory interaction; the state and federal government networks as well?

The answers to these questions will invariably relate to who is assessing the social capital of a community and to what end.

For the purposes of this thesis and the policy link to the question of how social capital interacts with community development, resilience and renewal, I concur with the general proposition that the concept of social capital is defined as, trust; a concern for those with whom an individual associates with its attendant inclination toward reciprocity; and the willingness of individuals to live by the norms of a specified community. In this thesis I am also taking the underlying basis for the development of these belief structures to be the relationship networks that exist in the community, both civically and governmentally, therefore taking into account all three network types outlined here – bonding, bridging and linking relationships – both in the community and with those external to the community that members deal with on a regular basis.

2.5 Summary

Although the definition of social capital is agreed, it remains clouded by contention about the fundamental types of relationships that give rise to trust, reciprocity and the willingness to abide by norms of behaviour which are, in aggregate, positive for both individuals and the community within which they operate.

Although social capital is being examined in this thesis for its association with prosperity, and may seem disconnected from discussions of the sources of it, the

sources of social capital which are adopted, affect how we assess the concept. Therefore we must understand these debates and decide the interpretation that is the most robust when used in this particular context. From this problematical base arise the specific issues of; is it to be considered a normative, quantifiable asset of communities? Which elements of community interaction give rise to that which we consider social capital; bonding, bridging and/or linking networks in a community? As importantly, how broadly we are constructing the idea of community affects both its interpretation and measurement; does it comprise civic relationships alone, or are those of government institutions included? It is evident that social capital is rife with issues in regard to its clarity, how we interpret the concept and the extent to which we conceive it to cover. How broadly we construct it however, may also affect the explanatory power of the concept in regard to understanding community prosperity and its relationship with policy issues and elements. If the concept is constructed entirely as an endogenous process abstracted from the structure of government interaction with communities, logically it cannot therefore be affected by policy, and consequently is a concept that should not be pursued in the policy domain. If, however, it is interpreted more broadly, whereby structure is regarded as an equally relevant factor as that of agency in the generation of social capital, then government policy may well prove to be a very useful tool in assisting social capital development, for the purpose of contributing to the prosperity of communities.

Social capital comes in for further derision due to its use in some quarters as a justification for 'blaming the victim'. Such an approach is seen as counter productive by sociologists and some economists, as it fails effectively to seek the root cause of the problem of community decline; community members may be

failing or refusing to associate, but *why*? This same approach is seen however, as politically appropriate by some in right wing or neo-liberal politics.

Despite the numerous problems with social capital, it has managed to attain a level of popularity in the dialogues of community renewal and policy, as is evident in a number of government departments in Australia (discussed in the following chapter), for its ability to offer insights into the intangible dynamics of successful communities that cannot otherwise be 'gotten hold of'. The theoretical indications are that the concept of social capital must be interpreted holistically, including government in addition to civic bonding, bridging and linking networks, in order to make it useful from a policy perspective. Therefore this thesis proposes to test this broader interpretation of social capital, along with the dominant society centred interpretations of it, in order to identify which sheds more light on factors that lead to community resilience and prosperity in rural Australian communities. Given this focus on the use of social capital in the Australian political context, the following chapter is devoted specifically to understanding just how the concept has been applied to date in the Australian policy domain.

CHAPTER THREE: Social capital in the Australian context.

The current use of social capital in Australia, academically, empirically and politically, illustrates the necessity to re-assess the connection of social capital theory with levels of community prosperity and resilience. This chapter reviews the Australian policy use of social capital since the mid 1990s, when it emerged as a popular concept in Australia's political dialogue. It has been identified as one explanatory factor in the fortunes of many communities, and thus has been gaining prominence in government policy development (Productivity Commission, 2003; Stone and Hughes, 2001b).

In the last six years, mentioning social capital in a government department has elicited a response of either recoiling in horror at this enigmatic term, or alternatively, as if the elusive answer to all policy questions and unresolved problems had just been found. More recently however, there have been questions raised and intellectual debate about the relevance of social capital, as attempts to incorporate it into the assessment of policy have proven problematical.

Consequently, this chapter explores the dominant paradigms which underpin the use of social capital in Australia, and the way it is being interpreted and therefore applied. The chapter argues that in the majority of cases, despite an association made between the civic domain and government, through the use of such terms as 'social coalitions', 'community partnerships' and 'mutual obligation', there has largely been no empirical investigation in Australia into the synergistic interpretation of social capital which incorporates vertical power relationships (Evans, 1996; Szreter and Woolcock, 2004a; Woolcock, 1998; Woolcock and

Narayan, 2000). Additionally, this chapter highlights that there have been no direct attempts in Australia to establish an empirical link between levels of social capital and community prosperity in regard to rural community resilience, despite the association asserted between community sustainability and social capital (Productivity Commission, 2003).

Initially, the chapter will identify why and how the concept of social capital commonly features in the policy domain and the benefits considered to flow from it for policy effectiveness. It will examine the term's rise to popular recognition in Australia commencing with Eva Cox's, Boyer Lectures⁷ and the subsequent use of social capital as a policy concept by government agencies and departments to address various social and developmental issues. Such departments include the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS⁸), the Productivity Commission, the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTaRS), the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The discussion will also cover the use of social capital by non government agencies, such as the Centre for Australian Community Organisations & Management (CACOM), Australian Council for Social Services (ACOSS), and the Benevolent Society, and the styles of research that have been initiated by them. The chapter then turns to the empirical applications of social capital in Australia to identify trends in research and objectives and the methodologies employed by the most well referenced research; Onyx and Bullen (1997) and Stone Hughes (2001b).

⁷ Eva Cox presented five lectures for ABC Radio National in November and December 1995, covering the topics of multidimensional aspects of social capital and the role that government might play in the process of strengthening communities and increasing social capital (Cox, 1995b; 1995e; 1995d; 1995c; 1995a)

⁸ FaCs is now known as the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA)

The conclusions of this chapter are that the manner in which social capital is being employed in policy domains affecting rural communities has not been adequately explored empirically, nor has the specific relationship between the level(s) of social capital in a community and its prosperity been established. In particular, it identifies that the research to date has not sought to understand the effects of the different types of relationship networks that exist between a community and government. That is, the elements of bridging and linking relationship networks in creating social capital have not been explored in the context of community development and prosperity and its association with social capital. This chapter is used as the basis for framing the empirical research of this thesis, which aims to identify the relevance of the way social capital is currently interpreted and assessed and its use as one indicator of economic growth, prosperity and community sustainability.

3.1 Evolution of social capital in Australia

There is broad agreement that social capital is an integral component of the success of communities, including those in rural Australia. The focus of this research, and therefore of this thesis, is on exploring the link between social capital and the economic development of communities and their consequent prosperity and sustainability. Although there is a large body of evidence and work that support conclusions that elements of social capital, as it is currently embraced, reliably correlate to fluctuations of a community's wellbeing in the area of education (Coleman, 1988; 1990; Loury, 1977), health (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004a) and general wellbeing (Cuthill, 2003), the empirical connection between these factors and economic outcomes are still hazy, despite being relied upon by Australia's politicians (Abbott, 2000a; 2000b; Costello, 2003c; 2003b; Howard, 1999; Latham, 2000; Tanner, 2004).

The element of social capital that captures the most attention in debates about the concept is 'trust' – how does it work and how can we get more of it? This was evidenced in the speech delivered by the Deputy Prime Minister for Australia in August 2003 when he stated that 'If you want to run a successful modern liberal economy then trust and tolerance between citizens gives you a long head start' (Costello, 2003a). Beliefs such as this have linked the political intent of policy with developing community trust and social capital. Eva Cox initiated the debate on the importance of social connections in the mid 1990s, focusing Australian politics on social capital as a means to improve policy effectiveness and to re-humanise perceptions of economic policy and politicians.

In November and December 1995 in her Boyer Lectures, Eva Cox stressed the elements of civic society that positively contribute to community well being (1995b; 1995e; 1995d; 1995c; 1995a). These lectures followed the Industry Commission Report on social welfare organisations, which focused on the economic benefits achieved from maximising community networks (1995). This report identified that 'Patterns of social co-operation based on tolerance, trust, and widespread norms of citizen participation in civic community lead to the successful implementation of government and indeed economic programs' (Ibid, 5). This was the perfect lead in for Cox's attempts to refocus the policy agenda away from economic indicators, competition, the deregulation of markets and the redistributive role of government to one of a broader agenda of social inclusion with a collective approach (1995b). The Industry Commission report had called for greater support and use of existing community operated and driven welfare organisations to meet social needs; a call that was used to justify moves to increase withdrawal of direct state support of social services (Alston, 2002a). Simultaneously, Cox (1995d) was calling for a shift in focus from the best methods of redistribution, to one of a productive interplay of

state and community, maintaining that used correctly, an increase in the functions and visibility of governments was necessary for healthy communities. However, this coincided with the Howard government coming to power in 1996; a regime committed to 'small government', minimisation of taxes and therefore government service. Despite the neo liberal position of this Coalition government, they did recognise the attractiveness to the electorate of a socially inclusive approach which was believed may appease concerns about the dehumanising impacts of economic rationalism. This was initially reflected in the reform of welfare policy and changes recommended by the McClure report (Reference Group on Welfare Reform, 2000). The Prime Minister, John Howard, outlined this new approach of relying on elements of social capital to mediate the market in his speech delivered to the Australia Unlimited Roundtable, when he called for Australians to recognise the interplay between successful economic management and social concerns:

A nation's economic progress depends ultimately on the condition of its society – its stability, its cohesiveness, its fairness and its avenues for individual self fulfilment and equality of opportunity... [it] cannot function effectively or fairly without habits of trust, transparency, responsibility, self reliance, co-operation and respect for individual dignity. (Howard, 1999)

Despite policy and speeches from 1999 onwards including terms such as 'mutual obligation' and 'social contracts', these were seen in some sectors as being largely about shifting social responsibilities back onto the community with the attendant destructive effects on social capital, rather than changing the method of government and service delivery by government departments (Alston, 2002a; Herbert-Cheshire, 2000; 2003). On the one hand, the negative effects on both social capital and the sustainability of communities of this withdrawal of services has been extensively discussed (Cocklin et al., 2001; Everingham, 2004; Gray and

Lawrence, 2001b; Lawrence, 2005; O'Toole and Burdess, 2004; Productivity Commission, 2003; Rudd, 2000; Stayner, 2005; Stone and Hughes, 2001b), yet the neo-liberal policy of the current Australian federal government continues to call for rural communities to pull together to find solutions to economically and environmentally generated (often intertwined) problems. This is at odds with the individualistic approaches that the government continues to identify in its policy structures (Everingham, 2001; Gray and Lawrence, 2001b; Gray and Lawrence, 2001a; Nye, 2001). Prime Minister Howard highlights this individualistic focus in the unproven but assumed assertion of extension from individual trust to community spirit, in the new modern conservatism in social policy, which is to

. . . support [. . .] the social institutions, such as family, which uphold . . . values that include independence, personal responsibility, tolerance, respect for individual dignity, self reliance, maximising individual potential and upholding an obligation to other members of the community. (Howard, 1999)

Putnam outlined that there was a relationship between levels of social capital and the strength of regional growth (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993, 167). Both the Federal and New South Wales governments have used Putnam's approach to social capital to justify policies focusing on the sovereignty of the individual. They have maintained that trust and community spirit evolve from community members getting together and participating in community activities which develop the strong bonding characteristics of communities. If this is adopted as the case, change and community resilience can only be generated from a grass roots level. Government policies which devolve responsibility to the local level and focus on developing community capacity in the name of building social capital through developing strong bonding networks, (O'Toole and Burdess, 2004; The World

Bank, 1998) have the effect of distancing government from the grass roots level of communities. As proposed by Stone and Hughes (2001b), rather than strong bonding ties, it appears that it is the presence of cross cutting bridging and linking ties not only between different resource networks, but also sectors of power, that are central to community success. This is also the contention of members of the World Bank (Bebbington, Woolcock, Guggenheim and Olson, 2006; Szreter and Woolcock, 2004a; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

In an effort to address the debate about the attributes and benefits of social capital from the policy perspective, the Productivity Commission undertook research into the concept and its potential policy implications in 2003 (2003). This was prompted by matters relating to social capital that had arisen in previous Productivity Commission reports into gambling, competition and job networks, and the subsequent recognition that social capital can affect the environment in which policy reforms are developed (*ibid*, iii). The Commission's report took social capital to be the 'social norms, well-developed networks and associated levels of trust' in a community and concluded that it could generate healthier, happier communities. It also found that those communities with good social capital would experience a reduction in the day to day costs of conducting business through agreed norms rather than time and cost inefficient contractual arrangements. Additionally, it found that these communities would not only enjoy the benefits of sharing of knowledge and innovation, but would also experience lower health and welfare expenditures and higher tax receipts (*ibid*, xi). In its analysis, the Productivity Commission relied on Putnam's interpretation of social capital and the proposition that dense social networks are necessary for effective government (Putnam, 1993). The report also recognised the discussion by both the OECD (2001) and the Australian Institute of Family Studies (Stone and Hughes, 2002) of the

relevance of the context in which networks exist. Despite discussing both the range of limitations on existing studies and the benefits that can be ascribed to increasing social capital directly in the civil domain and indirectly through the government domain however, the Commission made no recommendation as to how policy could incorporate the concept of social capital. Rather, the report recognised that further research was required in order to devise more robust and theoretically grounded measurement techniques, and that there were arguments in favour of government involvement in the process of building social capital. The manner in which the report discusses the role of government in social capital is that of a dissociated observer, who can choose to influence or redirect another party's course, but who is not an integral participant in the journey. It deems that it is 'difficult for policy analysts to know the extent to which a particular policy may provide beneficial increases in social capital' and therefore it is difficult to generate policy which develops new social capital (Productivity Commission, 2003, 67). The report only went as far as recognising that the development of policy must take into account its ability both to erode as well as increase positive social capital and that government should consider the scope for modifying policies to harness existing social capital to deliver policy programs more effectively (Ibid, 67-8). The Treasurer in 2003, Peter Costello, promptly picked up the Productivity Commission's position on social capital and asserted that the government's only role in the process was to 'do no harm' and on this basis, 'a government should be careful not to usurp the voluntary sector' (Costello, 2003b). The source of this particular position by Costello can be seen in his 2001 speech at the Inaugural Sir Henry Bolte Lecture where he also claimed that 'government can deliver services ... But Governments can't deliver friendly relationships, harmony between parents and children, happy marriages' (Costello, 2001). What these comments fail to recognise, a failure further compounded in the Productivity Commission report,

was that despite governments only delivering services, it is the *manner* in which those services are delivered that may be integral to the development, or otherwise, of social capital (Alston, 2001; Cavaye, 2000; Clark and Wiseman, 2004; Cox, 2002; Cuthill, 2001; Foley and Martin, 2000; Fox, 1996; Giddens, 2000; Gray and Lawrence, 2000; Stoker, 2005c).

It is the lack of recognition by the Australian government of their potential role in contributing to the nature of social relationships that is integral in the process of network development, which also sets up the either/or dichotomy that bedevils the concept of social capital⁹. The dilemma is that government either has to reduce its involvement with community and cannot be at all involved with either measuring or affecting social capital; or that the reach of government should be increased to a point of determining relationship networks of community – an approach that is often equated with social engineering. It is the very fact that government departments continue to see themselves as separate from the processes of social capital development that sets up this dichotomy. As Walzer notes, the state is crucial to framing the environment (civic and market) in which social initiatives take place (1992, 104). When the processes of social capital are seen as inclusive of all parts of society – including government – it is possible to identify a third option. This option, avoiding the dichotomy, sees government processes as integral to the social capital of communities, thereby increasing the options available to government in policy development (Cox, 1995b).

⁹ This can be traced back to the notion of civil society and that government and civil society are at odds with one another and cannot, therefore, be equal participants in the one process (Foley and Edwards, 1996).

3.1.1 Interest in the social perspective of community resilience

Globalisation and economic rationalism have created concerns about the integrity of contemporary life (Edwards, Cheers and Graham, 2003) and a crisis of the welfare state (Ife, 2002). The particular interest in the effects of these on the rural environment in Australia, however, has come about from the downturn in rural population (Hugo, 2000; 2005) since the corporatisation of farming practices, trade pressures and technological changes (Cahill, 1995). Referred to as the 'crises in the bush' (Cocklin and Alston, 2003), this has been further exacerbated by the state withdrawal of services from regional and rural areas, predicated on neo-liberal policies of rationalisation and centralisation (Cheers, 1998; Gray and Lawrence, 2001b; Lawrence, 2003; Lawrence, Gray and Stehlick, 1999).

There is an immense body of work that discusses the political shift in response to these social effects of globalisation, which is well summarised in the description of the rise of localism in Australia in the 1990s (Everingham, Herbert-Cheshire and Lawrence, 2003; Lowndes and Wilson, 2001; Siggers, Carter, Boyd, Cooper and Sonn, 2003). This move towards centring the solutions for rural sustainability on community individuals who are empowered to initiate their own strategies for self help had proponents (Cavaye and Lawrence, 2000) whose ideas were picked up by the policy domain but only partially implemented, unfortunately in many cases effecting the opposite of the original intention. Where the original idea of utilising market driven solutions had been to devolve power to communities so they could develop their own visions and futures, commonly it was only the *responsibility* to undertake change that was devolved and not the authority or power to take the necessary decisions for change within the existing structural constraints (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000). Alternatively, communities were unable or unwilling to change the network of social relationships that affect power relationships within the

community (Herbert-Cheshire, 2003). Research undertaken by Wild River (2005) into factors which enhance the sustainability efforts of local governments revealed elements of social and human capital as crucial to their success. It found that a paradox exists which constrains the relationships between local and state government and also that sustainability information from outside is useful only when tailored to local circumstances. The relationship between this research and discussions of social capital, is the acknowledgement that there are both internal and external perspectives of sustainability in a community which require facilitating (or bridging and linking) connections to create beneficial outcomes (Ibid, 52).

Despite a policy reversion to the market failing to arrest the rural decline, the transference of responsibility to communities for their own revitalisation was reinforced with the shift in government policy to a focus on the family and community as the drivers of development (Smith, 1998; Stone and Hughes, 2001b). Federally, this approach was initiated with the government's 'Stronger Families and Communities Strategy' launched in 2000 (Department of Family and Community Services), which aimed at empowering communities to develop local solutions to local problems. It was used particularly in the rural context to focus on the development of leadership in the community, noting that it was only strong local leadership that could provide the answers (The Hon John Anderson MP, 2000). In this departmental response, the contribution of volunteerism was also raised as instrumental in the success of regional communities. In New South Wales this was heralded with the 'Community Builders Program', aimed at developing community capacity through placing a greater emphasis on qualities such as trust and social networks to facilitate problem solving versus an over-reliance on infrastructure planning and skills development, that is, a shift of focus from

community building to social capital (as illustrated in figure 3.1). Such measures have, however, still failed to arrest the rural decline in many centres.

3.2 The Australian Government's interpretation of social capital.

The targeted use of social capital in government policy varies between being either for the purposes of augmenting the effectiveness of policy or, alternatively, increasing the capacity of a community to adapt to changes in the policy environment, both of which can be seen as one and the same depending on the perspective adopted. In the main, Australian federal government departments perceive social capital as a community generated and managed resource only, which the community can be encouraged to utilise to increase the effectiveness of policy, as explicitly outlined by the Federal Minister for Family Services in 1998: 'while governments can very easily destroy social capital, they cannot create it [but they can] foster the conditions whereby social capital can flourish' (1998, 9). Therefore the necessary step as understood by government is to be able to measure social capital as one indicator of the ability of the positive benefits of policy to be realised, and secondly as per the Commission's recommendation and Costello's position referred to earlier, ensure that existing and new policy directions do as little damage to social capital in our communities as possible. That being said, there are programs and pockets of activity in federal government, akin to partnership activities, that have pursued a change in policy style and service delivery in an effort to maximise the positive and productive relationship networks between departments and community¹⁰. To this end, the Victorian,

¹⁰ The Department of Family and Community Services (Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and the Community Portal) and the Department of Transport and Regional Affairs (Regional Partnerships & Sustainable Regions Programs) both have specific community

Queensland and Tasmanian governments have established a profile of actively altering policy processes to increase their engagement and interaction with their communities¹¹. The New South Wales government has acknowledged its cross cutting role in the networks of the community and set up an information based website¹² to encourage the exchange of ideas and information, which, despite not explicitly acknowledging their role in building social capital, is developing bridging ties between communities and increasing access to resources perceived to be essential to sustainability, despite this being untested as a specific association.

Most recently a Social Capital Index© has been developed by Dr Janice Dillon. This index was used in research undertaken by the Queensland Department of Health into the social determinants of health (Queensland Department of Health, 2003) and the Western Australia Government in the determination of indicators of regional development in Western Australia (URS Australia Pty Ltd, 2003). Although limited information is available on this index, it is described as a multi dimensional instrument that reflects seven dimensions of social capital, which are further aggregated into the three core dimensions of 'social cohesion and generalised reciprocity', 'generalised trust' and 'community identity' (Ibid,2003, 140). On the information available, the approach developed by Dillon is based on a

engagement programs, based on the principles of social capital which encompasses government institutional as well as civic relationship networks.

11 The Victorian State Government set up the 'Department for Victorian Communities' and the Queensland Government has also established the 'Department of Communities', both of which are designed to build and strengthen communication and interaction between communities and government. The Tasmanian Government has developed 'Tasmania Together' which is a social, environmental and economic plan developed in conjunction with the Tasmanian community, making it a community-owned vision for the state.

12 The New South Wales Government has established the NSW Community Builders website which is a state government initiative, designed to be a central information point of community, government and volunteer organisation activities and initiatives, for both community and institutional use (<http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/>)

society centred interpretation of social capital, incorporating only civic bonding and bridging ties. It makes no reference to, fails to account for or incorporate the effects of linking relationships on community resilience and sustainability.

In line with the policy interest in the relationship between social capital and outcomes in areas such as health, education, work, and income, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has also actively undertaken research into social capital. The ABS has adopted the OECD definition of social capital with a view to developing national and state measures of social capital for future inclusion in its survey and census program. Initially the ABS was also prompted by the policy drive to understand the mechanisms of social capital in order to be able to foster it and develop stronger communities, but it has since stepped back from this position and is now seeking to establish more modest and robust indicators of elements of social capital within its General Social Survey (GSS). This survey examines the community aspects of health and disability, housing, education, labour force, transport, crime, and indicators of family and community involvement, and, with regard to social capital, also specifically looks at social cohesion through the inter-relationships between different aspects of people's lives (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). Within this survey, elements of social capital are included through proxies of feelings of safety, education, community participation and inclusiveness, taking a society centred approach to social capital. The Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics (within the federal government Department of Transport and Regional Services) released a report in January 2006 on the regional spread of social capital and its relationship to the economic and social well being of Australia (2005) utilising data collected in the ABS' GSS and Population and Housing

Census, and the Department of Family and Community Services HILDA¹³ survey, in an endeavour to identify a measure of social capital. The research identified two summary measures for Australia's regions, being 'community involvement' and 'general support'. The measure of community involvement incorporated volunteering, active group membership, neighbours helping each other out and integration into the community. The measure of general support used the indicators of feelings of loneliness, health barriers to social participation, and the availability of emotional and financial support (Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, 2005, v). The report found that there was a distinct difference between levels of community involvement in regional and urban regions of Australia, with regional areas having higher levels of community involvement. There was no significant association, however, between a region's rate of economic growth and the identified core elements of social capital. The interesting aspect of this last finding is that although there is no association identified between those elements of social capital assessed and economic growth, the interpretation of social capital utilised was society centred, excluding external structures and agents which may affect the economic opportunities of these communities/regions. In this case, social capital is not interpreted as the relationship networks which provide access to resources, but rather as the outcomes such as volunteering, group membership and a sense of security. If it had been interpreted as relationship networks which give rise to these outcomes, including access to resources, the parameters of the research would have varied and the outcomes may well have been different. This

¹³ The HILDA survey is the 'Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia' survey which began in 2001 and managed by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and is designed and managed by the Melbourne institute of Applied

underlines the potential effect of different interpretations of social capital on research findings and its relevancy to community growth and prosperity. Consequently, I would question the validity of an assertion in the case of this research, between social capital and regional economic growth or prosperity.

Social capital appears regularly in the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) documentation from 2000 onwards. The Department picked up Cox's definition of social capital, most notably with the inclusion of democratic processes which are based on the involvement of citizens (Cox, 1995b). The Department recognised the debate over the causal direction of economic benefits and social capital, deeming that regardless of the direction of the flow of benefits, social capital is an integral component of healthy communities, and that building bonds and bridges within and between communities should be analogous with strategies of prevention and early intervention programs (Department of Family and Community Services, 2000, 1-4). Further, FaCS was also cognisant of the rural decline in Australia, focusing its attention on the allocation of limited resources and the inability of the Department to assist all regional areas. The result was a decision to develop measures of assessment (including social capital) that could be used to justify policy decisions and directions (Department of Family and Community Services, 2005, 15-6). What the FaCS reports do not clarify in the discussion of social capital measurement was what action would be taken in response to the evidence of high or low social capital.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) has been a primary researcher in the area of social capital and public policy, most prominently with the publication of the collaborative book, *Social capital and Public Policy in Australia* (Winter, 2000). Despite being a statutory authority, the Institute is located within the Family, Communities and Indigenous Affairs portfolio, with the objective of providing research and information on family wellbeing. Stone and Hughes conducted the majority of their research under the auspices of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, (Hughes and Stone, 2002; Stone, 2001; Stone and Hughes, 2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2002), which centred on the family within the community. The AIFS focused strongly on social capital between 2000 and 2003, but more recently have turned their focus to issues of childhood and marriage in the community.

Concerning the attention given by local government to social capital as a specific factor in development considerations, only one council can be identified for publishing its explicit endeavours in this field. The Wyong Shire Council (NSW) has shown particular interest in the concept as a means to help manage and mediate the conflicting demands of a rapidly growing community, as an extension to the requirement to include a social component in their annual management plan. Initiated in 2000, the 'Building Social Capital in New Communities' project had the objective of examining the relationship between social capital and community development. As active research, in addition to the civically confined objectives of increasing trust, reciprocity and networking in the community, the project also had the aim of developing partnerships between the community, local government, non government and State government institutions which were seen as vital to achieving integrated and synergistic social outcomes. The project was funded for two years and the findings of the research and recommendations were incorporated into the Wyong Shire Community Plan of 2002 (Forest, 2002), as it

was considered to be successful. There is, however, no evidence of this work being actively adopted by other New South Wales, or State, local governments.

3.3 Social Capital in the non Government and academic research domain

Four centres have been prominent in recent years in non government research into social capital in Australia. The Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), Centre for Australian Community Organisations & Management (CACOM), the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, and the Benevolent Society have all supported research into social capital with variations in their specific focus.

In 1976, the CIS was founded as Australia's first neo-liberal think tank, whose mission in the domain of social policy is to influence the social reform process both in Australia and New Zealand in line with their political foundations (The Centre for Independent Studies, 2006). The CIS funded work into social capital that adopted Putnam's earlier approaches of focusing on the necessity for dense bonding networks and has been utilised by neo-liberal proponents to justify an increased reliance on the voluntary sector to provide social infrastructure as a means to build social capital (Norton, 1997; 1998; 1997; Stewart-Weeks and Richardson, 1998; Sturgess, 1997).

By contrast, CACOM is located within the University of Technology, Sydney, but is independent of any teaching program. Established in 1990, its goal is to enhance the Australian civil sector and its management through research, training, publications, seminars and conferences. In relation to social capital, its objective is to assist the third (volunteer) sector and government agencies to address policy issues. CACOM incorporates a variety of volunteer, corporate and educational institutions with an interest in the nexus between community and the benefits of a strong civil society. It was a request from CACOM's Advisory Board for a measure

of community development, that led to the Onyx and Bullen report (1997) that has since gained international recognition for its measurement of community social capital (Dakhli and De Clercq, 2004; Davenport and Snyder, 2005; Ferguson, 2006; Harpham, Grant and Thomas, 2002; Kim, 2005; Kritsotakis and Gamarnikow, 2004; O'Brien, Burdsal and Molgaard, 2004; Peredo and Chrisman, 2006; Ville, 2005).

The Academy of Social Sciences in Australia has also supported two research projects into social capital, the first being in 2002, *Investing in Social Capital* (Marginson), and the second which comprised two reports, the first of which was published in 2003, *Community Sustainability in Rural Australia. A Question of Capital?* (Cocklin and Alston), and the second in 2005, *Sustainability and Change in Rural Australia* (Cocklin and Dibden). The last two reports were aimed at increasing the understanding of social capital in the multifaceted context of sustainability which had developed since Onyx and Bullen's initial measurement research. The first report concluded that, although there were still limitations to understanding sustainability through the framework of the five different capitals, social capital and capability were essential pre requisites to sustainability (Cocklin and Alston, 2003, 207), and that sustainability was inextricably linked to the broader economic, environmental and political context within which any community operates. The 2005 report endeavoured to extend the previous work, reviewing both tried and proposed interventions to improve community sustainability, incorporating the concept of social capital as one of a number of capitals integral to rural sustainability. It concluded that, amongst other considerations, moves toward genuinely integrated government policy approaches will be required to address issues of sustainability (Cocklin and Dibden, 2005, 251).

The Benevolent Society has also had a keen interest in social capital since 1999 to increase the Society's understanding of the social dynamics affecting poverty and

stress in the community. They have undertaken extensive research during that time, incorporating some thirty reports¹⁴, focusing on the civic networks of community interaction and its effect on community cohesion and resilience. Specifically, the work of the society notes the lack of effective engagement of policy with the social capital debate (Healy and Hampshire, 2003; 2004).

There are a number of other Australian academics who have written extensively on the issue of rural sustainability, incorporating social capital as one of the elements essential to positive outcomes¹⁵. Although a number of these authors have identified government actions as an integral factor in community sustainability, they have not specifically addressed the question of how the interpretation and measurement of social capital affects beliefs regarding the causes of communities' ability to reinvent themselves and prosper.

3.4 Sustainability and building community capacity in rural communities

Social capital is seen as an essential element of community capacity - a component of sustainability - and therefore needs to be emphasised in efforts to build community capacity and the resilience of communities in the face of changing circumstances. These terms are all contested and there are a range of definitions ascribed to them, but it is recognised here that although sustainability can be

¹⁴ http://www.bensoc.org.au/research/subject_index#Socialcapitalsocialenterprisecommunitybuilding

¹⁵ Such authors include (Alston, 2001; 2002b; Alston and Kent, 2004; Bray, 2000; Bullen, 2003; Cary and Webb, 2001; Cavaye, 1999; 2000; 2004; Cavaye and Lawrence, 2000; Cocklin et al., 2001; Cuthill, 2001; Dibden and Cheshire, 2005; Everingham, 2004; Everingham, Herbert-Cheshire and Lawrence, 2003; Gray, 1989; Gray, Dunn and Phillips, 1997; Gray and Lawrence, 2000; Gray and Lawrence, 2001b; Gray and Lawrence, 2001a; Healy and Hampshire, 2003; Healy, Hampshire and Ayres, 2004; Herbert-Cheshire, 2000; 2003; Herbert-Cheshire and Lawrence, 2001; Lawrence, 2003; 2005; Mowbray, 2000; 2004; O'Toole, 2000; O'Toole and Burdess, 2004; Pepperdine, 2000; Reddel and Woolcock, 2004; Saggars, Carter, Boyd, Cooper and Sonn, 2003; Stayner, 2005; Stone and Hughes, 2001b; Tonts, 2000; 2005).

linked specifically to the economy, the environment or society, it must also be acknowledged that they are all interlinked and mutually affect one another.

The term sustainability indicates an awareness that resources, being the natural, human, social, institutional and produced capital of a community, are subject to being depleted or damaged, dependent upon their use (Cocklin and Alston, 2003). Such resources are interdependent in their use and facilitation, and this builds on the idea that no one part of the community, its governance or its environment, can be considered in isolation. Cocklin and Alston (2003), Foley and Martin (2000) and Dibden (2005) have identified frameworks through which to understand the interdependence and use of resources and their consequent impact on the sustainability of communities. As discussed by Black and Hughes, a sustainable community features community members who

feel empowered and take responsibility based on a shared vision, equal opportunity, ability to access expertise and knowledge for their own needs, and a capacity to affect the outcome of decisions which affect them. (2001, 15)

The addition of the element of 'the capacity' of a community to affect the outcome of decisions which affect them is significant. Therefore, in order to develop or ensure a community's sustainable existence or further development, it is necessary to build a community's capacity to achieve empowerment, expertise and

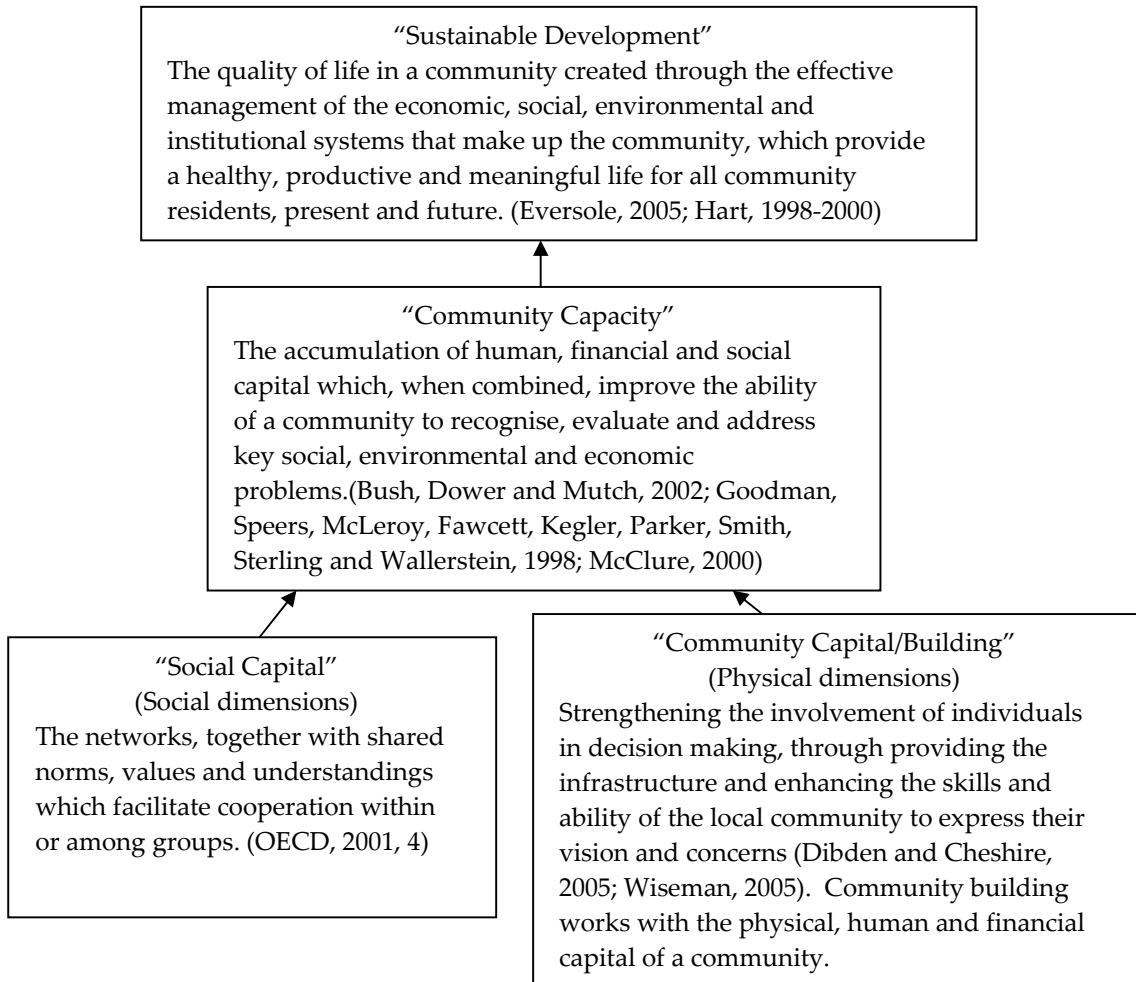
knowledge to develop, nurture and manage its store of the five different forms of capital¹⁶.

Consequently, community capacity is viewed as one of the keys to the renewal and sustainability of Australian rural communities and essential for the maintenance of agricultural industries (Eversole, 2005; Robison and Schmid, 1996; Selman, 2001). A focus on raising levels of community capacity to augment industry and government policies is also seen as integral to the process of rural community renewal and sustainability (Alston, 2002a; Macadam, Drinan, Inall and McKenzie, 2004). The various aspects of capacity are, however, affected differently by different activities, both internal and external to the community. As discussed by Gray and Lawrence (2001b), capacity building and community building are two different activities which are often blended in the one term 'community capacity building'. Strengthening different elements of the capitals require different processes. Physical and human capital can be externally affected *directly*, for example, through increased financial assistance and educational processes, whereas social capital may be only *indirectly* assisted through external physical assistance. Given the dominant interpretation of social capital, which sees government as external to the processes of community relationships, a community's social capital can only be encouraged through the creation of facilitating environments for people to come together to develop shared norms,

¹⁶ The five capitals identified were identified and defined as natural capital (resources in the environment), produced or economic capital (the built environment and financial resources), human capital (being the capacity of individuals to contribute to production), institutional capital (being the public, private enterprise and third (or NGO voluntary) sector of society and the structures they provide which allow effective functioning of society) and social capital (bonding and bridging relationships between people of a community or other entity.) They note that often social and institutional capitals become blurred because of the reliance on elements of social capital to have effective functioning social institutions to create institutional capital. (Cocklin and Dibden, 2005).

values and understandings. Governments have a tendency, naively, to construe that their only effect on social capital comes from intentional efforts to build capacity, ignoring their constant relationship with communities which also affect social capital. The term 'community capacity' inherently requires an interpretation of social capital which empowers members of a community to interact across social and power divides, allowing access and utilisation of knowledge and resources for the mutual benefit of the community (Cote, 2001; Woolcock, 1998), ignoring the exclusion of non civic community relationship networks from Australian policy paradigms. Discussions of institutional capital in relation to community capacity and sustainability refer to civic institutions (such as Chambers of Commerce) not institutions of government (such as local government or public health services). The links between these elements, social capital and sustainability might be conceptualised as presented in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Elements of Sustainability



As an extension of the existing interpretations of institution, the definition of 'community' is equally important. Ideas of community affect our understandings of what is community capacity building in the context of social capital, and is therefore critical to the processes employed to build community capacity. Butler Flora defines community as being 'the interactions among individuals for mutual

support' (1997). Further, and in the context of the discussions here, community is regarded to be that of 'place' - a bounded community of geographic delineation, such as represented by a local government area¹⁷ in which interactions can and do happen. People residing in a community, including those representing local and state government functions, are commonly affected by environmental, economic, cultural, political and social decision making processes by community members, businesses and government. Therefore, while a sense of commonality may occur through chance, in order to ensure all members of community share a common vision, values and have agreed norms of behaviour, individuals, community groups, businesses and local government members must be equally involved in the community capacity building process. This need for all sectors of the community to have both the will and the skills to collaborate across sectors is explicitly raised by Edgar (2001) and Everingham (2001) in their discussions of creating synergistic relations between communities and their governing bodies to facilitate development and sustainability, within both the local and regional context. The effect of extending the interpretation of community used by government is that the characteristics of local government bureaucracy also come under pressure to adapt and up-skill their approaches. Thus they must undertake consultative and collaborative government, rather than simply the delivery of infrastructure and services to regional locations based on either metropolitan perceptions and objectives (state driven) or local political demands (Everingham, Herbert-Cheshire and Lawrence, 2003, 5).

¹⁷ This recognises that communities can also be of 'interest' or 'technology' for example, irrespective of physical location.

Recent academic debate is inclined to include government in the term community, recognising the role that power plays in affecting the social position of individuals or groups (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004a, 81). Despite this, and government policy being designed around co-operative partnerships within the civic community (Howard, 1999), the majority of social capital research underpinning community building in Australia, however, excludes government interaction with its civic community, or only includes it in passing. This results in the contribution that the linking relationships of social capital may make to understanding policy effectiveness, may be being missed (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002b; Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, 2005; Onyx and Bullen, 1997; Stone and Hughes, 2001b).

The most cited empirical work on social capital has been by Onyx and Bullen (1997), and Stone and Hughes (2002), the work of which both largely adopted Putnam's approach (2000; Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993), focusing on the civic relationships within communities which generate norms, trust and reciprocity. To varying degrees, this research has compared urban with rural communities and one community against another to determine their relative levels of social capital.

Previous Australian research has not focused on the validity of using the concept of social capital in a comparative and sustainability context. Although the use of findings in this context was not necessarily the objective of this previous research, extrapolations have been made from the research for policy and community development. In Onyx and Bullen and Stone and Hughes' work, the level of social capital in a community was not related to community capacity nor did the research investigate the impact of changes in social capital on a community's capacity to increase their prosperity or resilience. The dominant approaches employed in

Australia to date have focused on the civic relationship networks alone within a community, inadvertently or not, legitimating the location by policy of responsibility for community capacity and sustainability with the individuals within that community. Importantly, this approach assumes, but does not clearly identify, a connection between social capital, community capacity, community sustainability and prosperity; it is seen as inherent, but evidence of such a connection is not clear from the research undertaken to date. Due to the focus on this particular interpretation of social capital in Australia, the validity of alternative models such as proposed by Bebbington et al (2006) and Evans (1996) have not been explored, nor how they may shed further light upon community prosperity and resilience.

3.5 Australian empirical research into the assessment of social capital

As detailed by Winter (2000), up until 2000 the most comprehensive investigation into the empirical assessment of social capital had been undertaken by Onyx and Bullen (1997). Baum et. al.(1999) had also undertaken empirical research, but they focused on the specific connection of volunteerism with social capital, as did Lyons and Fabiansson (1998). Hughes, Bellamy and Black (1998) also took a narrower perspective on social capital, looking at the aspect of trust in relation to social capital in religion. Up until 2004, extensive further empirical work has been done in the areas of trust and volunteerism which supersedes this research, however in terms of a measure of social capital as an indicator of the general vitality and resilience of communities, the research is restricted to Onyx and Bullen, and Stone and Hughes.

Onyx and Bullen have gone on, both together and separately, to expand upon their initial research in five communities in New South Wales (Bullen, ; 2003; Bullen and

Onyx, 1998; Onyx and Bullen, 2000b; 2000a). Stone and Hughes focused on the role of family in the community using the lens of social capital, publishing on the methodology they implemented to investigate general social capital¹⁸ (Hughes and Stone, 2002; Stone, 2001; 2003; Stone and Hughes, 2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2002).

What is significant about these two bodies of work, and which is particularly relevant to the research being undertaken here, is that the work of these four authors forms the most influential basis for the popular use of social capital in the policy domain and discussions of community sustainability, rural resilience and regeneration in Australia. These civically bounded empirical approaches to social capital, which do not include linking relationships that allow access to resources across power boundaries¹⁹ (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004a; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000), notably affect policy interpretations both of what is represented by social capital and the factors that influence its development or decline. Interestingly, such an interpretation fits well with the research undertaken by the Centre for Independent Studies and the liberal politics of the last ten years. That is, such an interpretation of social capital places the responsibility for the success or otherwise of a community, solely with the individuals in a community and the choices they make about their relationship networks.

18 In saying this, I recognise the work being undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics during this same period, but which has not been reported upon as a single comprehensive measure. Rather, components of social capital measures have been included in surveys such as the General Social Survey, which had other objectives in addition to assessing elements of social capital. Further to this, the work undertaken by the BTRS (Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, 2005) was building on the work of the ABS and due to limitations of resources was endeavouring to create as comprehensive measure as possible from the existing secondary data, rather than developing the optimum measure for primary data collection.

19 'Power boundaries' are used here in reference to the administrative or other barriers that are put in place to allow or block the participation of individuals and organisations in decision making processes.

The only consideration given to governmental influences in Onyx and Bullen's original questionnaire were four questions from a survey of 85, which were:

'Q. 49: Do you feel powerless to influence Local Government (Council) action?

Q. 51: Generally, do you feel that Australians are well served by their government institutions?

Q.52. Do you think that the government (State or Commonwealth) provides too many services and subsidies?

Q.53. Do you think that our government institutions have too much power and authority?' (Onyx and Bullen, 1997, 36-7)

Not surprisingly, these questions were not included in the best 36 questions that Onyx and Bullen identified from the survey, given the generality of the last three, and the emotional skewness of the first question. The bulk of the questions were focused on informal relations with friends, neighbours and the web of local community organisations (Ibid, 8), finding that social capital was generally higher in rural compared with urban communities. This was particularly the case in regard to community connections, feelings of trust, safety and neighbourhood ties (2001). The best thirty six questions to measure social capital identified from the research focused on bonding and bridging between individuals within the community, with the exception of one question which looked at bridging ties to individuals or groups outside the immediate community. The questionnaire did not assess the source or purpose of relationship networks in terms of the framework of bonding, bridging and linking types of social capital.

It is important to recognise that the framework developed by Onyx and Bullen has persisted as the basis for subsequent Australian research and policy use of the concept and therefore is very significant work. Most importantly, they did succeed in setting two 'standards'. The first was to conclude that social capital was a concept that could be measured with an instrument consisting of a series of data items from questions which formed a scale, setting the expectation that quantitative assessments of social capital were able to offer definitive understandings about community status and development. The second was firmly to ground Australian understandings of social capital only in the domain of relationships between civic individuals and *non* government groups or organisations.

By contrast, the work undertaken by Hughes and Stone (Hughes and Stone, 2002 and reported on in; Stone, 2001; 2003; Stone and Hughes, 2001a; 2001b; 2002) had multiple objectives. In the process of their research they identified that social capital exists within different sorts of networks at different social scales, ranging from household and family networks, to those between individuals within the community, and lastly between individuals and institutions (2002, 3). They identified these three levels as the 'informal realm', the 'generalised realm' and the 'institutional realm'. Rather than investigating social capital according to the type of relationship networks that develop norms, trust, and reciprocity, Stone and Hughes investigated the existence of shared values, trust and reciprocity within each of these three identified 'realms'. As a result, the work further developed that undertaken by Onyx and Bullen by locating the source of the proxies for social capital, rather than pre ordaining which networks would produce the outcomes of social capital – norms, trust and reciprocity. The research design focused within each of the realms on the nature and extent of social networks, and also their level

of diversity. The research had two main objectives; firstly, to examine how norms, and network nature and size, interact to create social capital; and secondly, if the outcome can be effectively summarised in one scale or measure. These objectives were based on the need to address two issues, one being to develop a measurement to understand the nature of social capital and the second to address the tension between the multidimensional nature of it and the policy need for a simple, cost and time efficient measure of social capital (Ibid, 5 - 8). The conclusions that Stone and Hughes came to were that it is possible to measure reliably the norms, and extent and density of networks within each realm of investigation, but that the validity of measuring social capital using one index was not supported. Rather, a composite measure of key indices that incorporated the spheres of informal, generalised and institutional networks was a possibility. Lastly, they concluded that in order to understand social capital as a positive factor in community capacity, it is essential to understand the different types of relationship networks people have in the different spheres of their lives.

What is interesting about Stone and Hughes' work is the focus on institutional relationship networks; it is an extension of the scope of work undertaken by Onyx and Bullen. Stone and Hughes recognised that this aspect of social capital had been under developed particularly in connection to linking relationship networks between those in positions of power or in influential organisations and those who are not. They recognised that connections across these boundaries facilitate the garnering of resources through social relationships otherwise unavailable (Stone and Hughes, 2001b), a perspective that marries with those who have developed a synergistic interpretation of social capital (Evans, 1996; Szreter and Woolcock,

2004a; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). Unfortunately, Stone and Hughes conflated decision making and enforcing²⁰ institutions in their network assessment, mainly as they regarded institutions as sources of information, rather than as facilitating relationships that may give access to either information *or* power. Relationship networks incorporating institutions which provide information are regarded as bridging networks, but networks which give access to institutions that hold decision making power or influence are regarded as linking networks. Stone and Hughes did not explore issues of trust, shared values or the location of power with these institutions, as respondents were only asked if they personally knew someone in the institution that they could contact for information (Ibid, 10). They did not assess the relational nature of the vertical relationship networks – the delineator of a linking relationship. They did identify however, that connections with government in rural communities were higher (44.9%) than in urban areas (41.0%). This is not surprising given that Onyx and Bullen had established the existence of denser networks in rural communities, when combined with the ambiguity of the question which did not establish the level of government that respondents were referring to. Coleman (1988) discussed social capital in the context of education as being one of the keys to power, through both the knowledge and the expanded social networks to which it gave access. Stone and Hughes found rural communities to have low levels of connections with educational and business institutions, recognising these as important for investment, industry and finance, presenting parallels with Coleman's work. The research, however, makes neither a connection between community perceptions of

²⁰ 'Decision making' refers to legislative institutions (local, state and federal government and the courts) whereas 'enforcing' institutions refers to those who enforce legislation such as the police, judiciary system, and environmental regulators.

local government efficacy, nor trust in their ability to achieve positive outcomes, (such as attracting and maintaining schools or hospitals,) with the level of industry activity. Consequently, although Stone and Hughes have drawn the connection between rural communities and low levels of networking with education and the constraining effects this may have on development, they did not explore the facilitating government networks that could lead to a change in that situation.

Stone and Hughes' work has expanded on our understanding of social capital in the Australian context. It acknowledged the effect of power relationships on community welfare, but the scope of the work did not allow them to uncover how social capital could be changed, beyond the entrenched interpretation of it as related to individually motivated action. Their research added to the depth of knowledge in Australia, demonstrating it was not possible to identify a single measure of social capital, but potentially a composite measure of the different relationship categories was a possibility. Their work also identified that further investigation into the nature of connections in Australian communities, including the relationships between community members; those with other communities; and with institutions of power, is necessary in order for the concept of social capital to contribute effectively to policy development (Stone and Hughes, 2001b; 2002).

3.6 Summary

The idea of social capital is well established in the Australian academic and policy dialogue in connection with community capacity and sustainability. It is however a use that is not entirely justified by the nature of the empirical research undertaken to date.

Despite the theoretical evolution of social capital in the context of community development, Australian paradigms of the concept have not evolved in parallel. Australian approaches and discussions of the concept do not comprehensively incorporate the three aspects of social capital – bonding, bridging and linking – that are now proposed as equally necessary to the effective connection of social capital to development outcomes (Bebbington, Woolcock, Guggenheim and Olson, 2006).

The measurement approaches to social capital being used by Australian government departments are aligned with interpretations of the concept which see it as a civically bounded / society-centred notion, exclusive of government interaction. This is despite government attempts through policy to affect levels of social capital, indirectly asserting a link between government actions and levels of social capital.

The lack of a theoretical recognition of a participative role (as compared to a ‘minimiser of damage’) that can be played by government in the social capital of communities has the effect of placing the responsibility of a community’s future entirely within the community’s own control – a potentially fallacious surmise. This is particularly pertinent to rural communities throughout Australia who are coming under increasing social and economic pressures due to changes in climate, trade, production methods and finance options.

The current use of social capital in Australia assumes a nexus between social capital and prosperity (mediated through understandings of sustainability) that are not empirically justified in the rural context. Given the current locus of control to change circumstances entirely with individuals in communities, vulnerable rural communities are placed in the position of having to save themselves, without

recourse to external and government resources, assistance or equitable partnerships.

The foundation work undertaken by Onyx and Bullen and Stone and Hughes, highlights the need to expand further upon their work, and endeavour to understand social capital in the context of all three relationship network categories (bonding, bridging and linking). Further, to also understand their relationship to the exercising of power and decision making structures in communities which affect prosperity, incorporating government actions.

As a result, the task of this thesis is to expand upon previous studies, and explore the connection between the concept of social capital and community prosperity and resilience. In the first instance, the endeavour is to assess social capital in a manner that recognises the three styles of relationship networks, but both in the civic *and* government domains, taking a particular note of linking relationships. This process will be used to identify differences in the level of social capital in a prosperous community compared with one of average prosperity, using a quantitative measure of social capital as is sought by government departments.

The secondary objective is to investigate the qualitative features of the relationship networks producing social capital in communities of differing prosperity. The goal being to understand this aspect of any link between the manner in which social capital is being interpreted and assessed, and its use as an indicator of economic growth, prosperity and community sustainability.

CHAPTER FOUR: Gathering the Empirical Evidence

Chapter two established that the reasons for the employment of the concept of social capital affect the interpretation and that the interpretation affects what will be empirically assessed. Chapter three went on to explore the dominant paradigms being used in Australia and in policy domains, identifying them to be a 'society-centred' interpretation of the concept, focusing only on civic bonding and bridging networks. Further, it also identified that social capital is being used in this context to assist in explaining sustainability, resilience and prosperity with minimal empirical verification (restricted to Woodhouse, 2006). Consequently, this chapter discusses the methodology developed to test the validity of both the society centred approaches (Onyx and Bullen, 2000b; 2000; Putnam, 2001; Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993) and synergistic approaches (Bebbington, Woolcock, Guggenheim and Olson, 2006; Szreter and Woolcock, 2004a; Woolcock, 1998; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000) to social capital in two comparable communities in relation to their different levels of prosperity. The objective is to test the assertion that social capital is directly related to the prosperity of rural Australian communities. The research question being addressed is: seen through the lens of social capital, how does the role of government affect the ability of communities to regenerate and be prosperous? Additionally, does this have implications for the current dominant paradigms of social capital in Australia?

The research undertaken here is refocused to include the assessment of legislative relationship networks within the civic domain in relation to social capital. The aim is to discover if the nature of the formal or informal associational activity between community and local government, and between local and other levels of

government and regional organisations, explains differences between communities of differing prosperity. In order to incorporate different interpretations of social capital, in each of the case studies the different interpretations were separately identified. Consequently, society centred can be identified separately from synergistic social capital, the latter being that between civic and government, and between government domains.

To answer the research question, the approach utilised previously employed techniques of assessing social capital, but with specific reference to its relationship with the relative prosperity of a community. It went further to be able to explain the results in relation to rural resilience and prosperity, and the different interpretations of social capital. Although quantitative assessments of social capital are the preferred approach sought by government departments, in this case qualitative data were also considered beneficial either to substantiate or explain the quantitative findings.

Previously tested measures of social capital as developed by Onyx and Bullen (2000b) were used to identify civically bounded social capital, which were expanded to incorporate a synergistic perspective as developed by Evans (1996) and Woolcock and Narayan (2000). The qualitative data were collected using both semi structured interviews and a media review of the local newspapers to gain further perspectives on the nature and impacts of the relationship networks in the selected case studies.

4.1 Common properties of social capital

In undertaking this research a number of common elements which arise in all discussions of social capital are recognised. Given the development of the concept of social capital since its rise to prominence in the early 1990s, the following are

taken as givens for the purposes of this research on the basis that they apply to all interpretations of social capital and the manner in which it has been used in Australia.

1. Social capital is a group resource that comes into being through the relationships between people and, although it is not stored or owned by people (Winter, 2000, 49), its positive realisation relies on continued exercising and re energising of such relationships (Ostrom, 1999; Portes, 1998).
2. Social capital exists in a society where the elements of it are evident in features, such as trust, reciprocity, and a sense of civic responsibility. This has been established through extensive theoretical development (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990; Coleman, 1990; Fukuyama, 2000; Portes, 1998; Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993), and is the underpinning assumption of all social capital research.
3. Social capital can manifest itself positively and/or negatively dependent on the bonding and/or bridging relationships incorporated into its definition. Therefore both types of relationships are considered essential for the establishment of social capital which is inclusive of all social groups and results in positive outcomes (Aldridge, Halpern and Fitzpatrick, 2002; Paxton, 2002; Portes and Landolt, 1996; Woolcock, 1998). It is also assumed that there is the potential for social capital to be used positively in the distribution of power within and among communities and, therefore, linking relationships may also be considered an integral component of the social capital of a community (Everingham, 2004; Healy and Hampshire, 2004; Levi, 1996; Szreter, 2002; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000)

4. Although individuals' perceptions of the level of social capital may differ within a community, these differences can for the purposes of group assessment, be aggregated to identify a general level of the measurable indications of social capital (and therefore social capital itself) across a community (Baum and Ziersch, 2003; Knack and Keefer, 1997; Krishna and Shrader, 1999; Narayan and Cassidy, 2001; Onyx and Bullen, 1997; Rice, 2001; Stone and Hughes, 2002; Western, Stimson, Baum and Gellecum, 2005).
5. The existence of social capital facilitates and proportionally increases the ability of a community to adapt to change and the conflicting demands of democratic processes (Stoker, 2005a; 2005c). As a consequence, higher levels of community social capital increase the resilience of a community in the face of changing circumstances (Coleman, 1990; Cox and Caldwell, 2000, 59; DeFilippis, 2001; Putnam, 2002b; Rothstein and Stolle, 2002).
6. Social capital is an integral factor when combined with other forms of capital to create prosperity. Prosperity is seen to be created through the organisation of social structures in such a way as to achieve goals that would otherwise be inaccessible, or accessible only at a higher cost (Coleman, 1990; Hooghe and Stolle, 2003; Knack and Keefer, 1997; Woodhouse, 2006; Woolcock, 2001)
7. 'Community' is a highly contested concept and will continue to be, as pointed out by a number of authors (Cocklin and Alston, 2003; Ife, 2002; Liepins, 2000; Winter, 2000). At a broad scale however, communities are largely considered to be either 'of place' or 'of interest'. For the purposes here, 'community' is considered to be of place, and consists of the structures and on going systems of interaction which provide a sense of community within a defined geographic locality that has a degree of permanence (Bell and Newby, 1971, 55; Scott, Park and Cocklin, 2000, 437).

4.2 The analytical framework

Given the objectives of this research, the methodological approach focuses on identifying and assessing the proxies or building blocks of trust, reciprocity and agreed norms within networks and the scope of those networks, across and between community, government and external resources. A range of methods were employed to understand how these relationship networks affected the relative prosperity of two communities in the period from 1991 to 2000, which was the period used to establish relative levels of community prosperity.

The first of the two different interpretations tested here was that which considers civic community bonding and bridging – society centred social capital. The second includes this first interpretation but adds external bridging, as well as internal and external linking relationships, between the civic and government domains. This was achieved by separating their measurement into the categories of civic community relationships and those of government related to the community. These were then further separated into bonding, bridging and linking aspects of the two categories, as detailed in figure 4.1.

Table 4.1: Relationship networks

Individual and informal organisational community relationship networks		Government/ institutional relationship networks	
INTERNAL	EXTERNAL	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
<p>Bonding and Bridging relationships between individuals & informal organisations within the community, exclusive of government institutions. These incorporate norms, trust and feelings of reciprocity.</p>	<p>Bridging and Linking relationships between individuals and informal organisations of the community with external resources and communities, exclusive of any government relationships, that can develop diversity, trust and introduce new ideas.</p>	<p>Bonding and Linking relationships between individuals and informal organisations of the community with their local government staff and representatives, which develop common visions and expectations, and that also provide access to decision making processes</p>	<p>Bridging & linking relationships between a community's local governments, other levels of government, and other regional, state and federal resources, that develops & introduces tolerance, diversity of ideas, and access to resources and decision making processes that impact the community.</p>

Bonding = horizontal relations between homogenous groups of people with common values, norms and established understandings of reciprocity.

Bridging = horizontal relations between heterogeneous individuals or groups, that provide access to resources, problem solving initiatives or ideas, that assist group action.

Linking = vertical relational networks across power divides, that provide access to resources and involvement in decision making processes (Woolcock, 1998; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000), creating the ability to affect social structures.

To establish the relevance of these relationships to community prosperity, standard indicators of sustainability and growth were used to identify the relative prosperity of the two case study communities. These included the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (SEIFA²¹), and the Population and Housing

21 The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines SEIFA as being: 'derived from attributes such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, jobs in relatively unskilled occupations and variables that reflect disadvantage rather than measure specific aspects of disadvantage (e.g., Indigenous and Separated/Divorced.) High scores on the Index of Relative Socio Economic Disadvantage occur when the

Census data from the period 1991 to 2001 as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The empirical research collected both quantitative and qualitative data from two communities located in the same geographic region, with similar historical backgrounds and socio-economic profiles. Quantitatively, it sought to assess social capital to identify any differences between the two communities. The qualitative component of the research aimed to provide an increased understanding of these relationships in the communities, identifying thoughts, feelings and tonalities to corroborate and expand upon the picture provided by the quantitative data.

The subject areas in table 4.1 are a synthesis of the work undertaken by Onyx and Bullen, Stone and Hughes (Stone, 2001; 2003; Stone and Hughes, 2002) and Woolcock and Narayan (Woolcock, 1998; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000) and was the framework upon which the research was undertaken. The quantitative and qualitative data sought to engage each of these areas in the research. The qualitative data were essential to delve into those areas that could not be adequately addressed through any quantitative instrument. The rationale for incorporating previously tested quantitative instruments into the theory framework utilised here was twofold. Firstly and most importantly, the basis of the instrument used here replicates the often quoted body of research into social capital in Australia (Bullen, 2003; Bullen and Onyx, 1998; Onyx and Bullen, 1997; Onyx and Bullen, 2000b; 2000a), allowing a basic level of comparison with

area has few families of low income and few people with little training and in unskilled occupations. Low scores on the index occur when the areas has many low income families and people with little training and unskilled occupations. It is important to understand that a high score here reflects lack of disadvantage rather than a high advantage, a subtly different concept.' (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001a, 3).

previous research in regard to the asserted link between prosperity and levels of social capital. Secondly, it avoided the necessity to develop and test techniques that would not be comparable to previous research. In this way, the research seeks to assess the validity of previously utilised interpretations and measurements of social capital in the context of community sustainability, or what qualifications may be required upon its use.

4.3 Community case study selection

In selecting case study locations the priority was to identify two communities that had previously had comparable profiles in relation to key social indicators, but had since diverged. The rationale was that as social capital is assumed to lead to stronger communities, both socially and economically, the more prosperous community would have higher levels of social capital.

The decision to utilise the Shires of Corowa and Murray was prompted by suggestions from the Murray Darling Association (MDA) which works closely with Shires through out the Murray Darling Basin, and covers New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. The MDA was approached for advice on locality selection as the research had originally been envisaged to be contextualised by water allocation adjustments which affect industry, tourism and the environment. This objective was revised and subsequently dropped, however, given the enormity of the data and issues associated with water usage in the Murray Darling Basin. The MDA suggestion of the communities of Corowa and Murray Shires on the basis of the selection criteria was retained though, and subsequently investigated through ABS census data. Although the framing of the research in the context of water access was abandoned, the recommendations provided by the MDA remained useful, as the communities were located in the

same geographic region and therefore had similar histories and industries; were in the same state; and were subject to the same economic opportunities, constraints and legislative parameters.

Corowa and Murray Shires, on the Victorian border of New South Wales, are both of similar size, incorporating a large component of broad acre farming. As Murray Shire is more marginal country for dry land production, it has a greater component of irrigation farming. Figure 4.1 demonstrates the location of the case study communities in the context of New South Wales, signified by red circles, with the more westerly location being Murray Shire and the easterly one being Corowa Shire.

For comparative purposes, the communities were considered as being defined by their Shire boundaries which also conformed to the Statistical Local Area (SLA) boundaries as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the purpose of census data collection. Consequently, this made not only comparison of statistical data reasonable, but also the comparison of statistical data with the qualitative research of activities within the Shire. Although Statistical Local Areas can reflect local government areas, or parts thereof, they can also represent any unincorporated area, and cover, in aggregate, the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004b, 6). Corowa and Murray SLAs and Shires are separated by only one other Shire and statistical area, being that of Berrigan Local Government Area/Shire.

While much of the following discussion may be seen as background to the case study communities, it was investigated in the first instance to verify the case study selection. Population growth and industry activity are two key areas referred to in determining growth trends for communities and were therefore integral to

establishing both the original comparability of the communities, and subsequent divergence in growth patterns. Combined with the examination of population density and education, this base line examination underpins the analysis of an association between levels of social capital and growth.

Figure 4.1: Case study locations



4.4 Community similarities

Given that the two communities had similar geographic and historical profiles, both being settled at approximately the same time (1830s) and subject to the same development and economic factors, it was then prudent to compare the two

communities for similarity of size and population density, as a means of establishing their current comparability. Table 4.2 provides a summary of the key features of the two communities in 2001. Although the two communities are of differing sizes, the population density for the main population centre (by postcode) is the same.

Table 4.2: Headline community features

	2001 ABS Census Data	
	Corowa Shire	Murray Shire
Population	8, 574	6, 129
Main post code population**	6, 575 persons Corowa P/Code: 2646	4, 183 persons Moama P/code: 2731
Area of Shire	1911.2 sq. km	1239.7 sq. km
No. Persons per Sq. km in main p/code	3.4*	3.4*

Note: * Figures rounded to one decimal place

** The main postcode covers the economically dominant which, in both Shires, is also the township of greatest population.

4.4.1 Education profiles

In terms of education, both Shires reflect very similar statistics in the areas of post school qualifications. Education has been accorded a high profile in generating community social capital (Coleman, 1988; Hughes, Bellamy and Black, 2000; Loury, 1977), and on this basis, the two communities are quite comparable. Consequently, one would expect to see the communities developing at the same rate if that development is directly linked to social capital, and education was a single and reliable indicator of it. The figures for 2001 for the educational levels of the two communities are outlined in table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Education in 2001

	Corowa SLA %	Murray SLA %
Post graduate qualification	1.3	1.2
BA Degree	4.6	5.1
Diploma/Certificate	21.8	21.8

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001b; 2001c)

Although the proportion of the population with an undergraduate degree of education is only marginally higher (0.5%) higher in Murray Shire community, those with diploma/certificate category of education is the same in both communities. On balance, there is not enough variation between the two communities (0.4%) to indicate that the level of social capital and, therefore, prosperity should be notably different between the two communities.

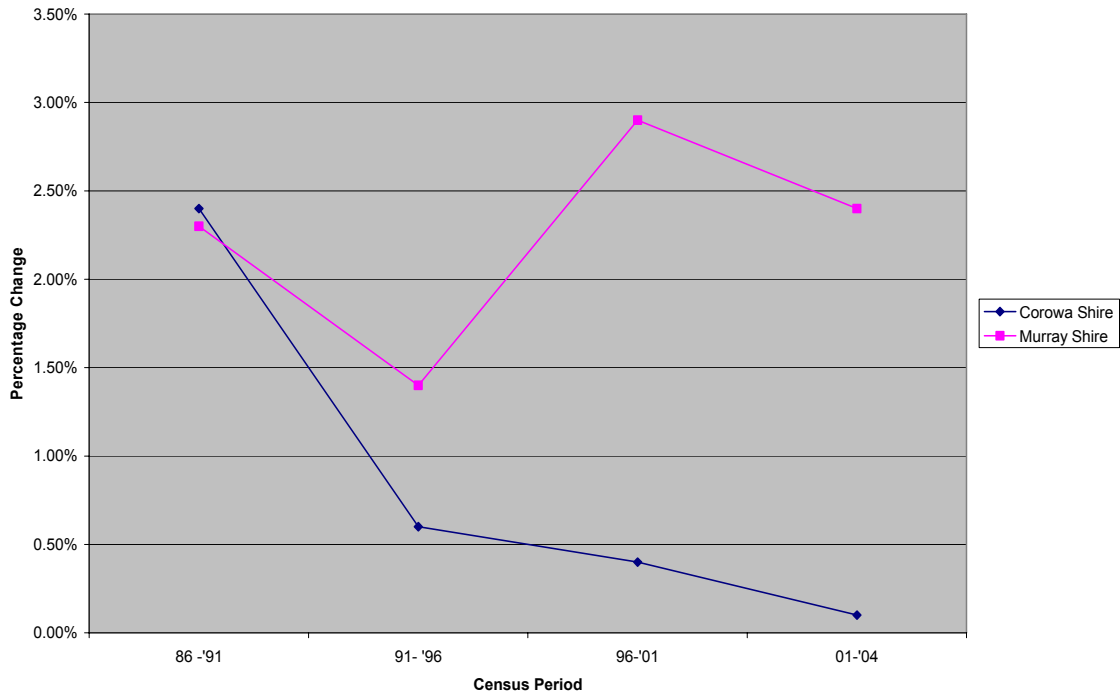
4.5 Point of departure in likeness

Given that the two communities are comparable on the basis of population density and education at the most recent census, it was then necessary to establish whether or not they had diverged over the census period from 1991 to 2001, through investigating population dynamics and industry growth. This period was the most recent census data collection period, and allowed adequate time for changes to be evident in community demographics. A headline indicator of rural community prosperity and sustainability has commonly been identified as the annual average population growth, because of the population drift away from rural areas to coastal and metropolitan centres (Alston, 2001; Gray and Lawrence, 2001b, 95-8; Hugo, 2000; 2005).

4.5.1 Population growth, age and diversity

The divergence in population growth for the two communities is demonstrated clearly in figure 4.2, in the two SLAs. Both areas suffered a downturn in growth between 1991 and 1996, from 2.4% down to between 1.4% and 0.6%. But while Corowa SLA/Shire continued a linear decline between 1996 and 2004, albeit less dramatically (0.6% to 0.1% in 2001), in 1996 Murray SLA/Shire reversed their population trend and increased their annual rate of growth from 1.4% to 2.9% in 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002d), beginning a growth phase over the next six years. Despite this trend reversing in the period from 2001 to 2004 with a reduction in annual population growth of 0.5%, Murray's annual population growth is still higher than it was in 1991 by 0.1%, while Corowa's is 2.3% lower than their 1991 levels of annual population growth. Since 1991, Corowa Shire's average annual growth rate has been lower than that of rural New South Wales (1.3%), and Murray Shire has been amongst the fastest growing rural Shires in the State. In 2001 Murray Shire was ranked 10th in the state. At the same time, Corowa Shire continued to decline, despite experiencing the same economic fortunes and circumstances as that of Murray Shire. The most important of these was the change in gaming laws to introduce poker machines into Victoria in 1992, resulting in a large reduction in gambling based tourism in both these border Shires.

Figure 4.2 Annual population growth 1986 - 2004



(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002d)

Although population growth is a strong indicator of the relative fortunes of communities, there are other proxies available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics that are often used for the assessment of community development and prosperity (in addition to the employment rates previously discussed), such as rates of ageing in the population (Cocklin and Alston, 2003, 3-4).

Rates of community ageing are used as an indicator of the relative flows in and out of a community of people, as rural communities are often faced with the movement of young people out of the community to pursue education or work opportunities. In some cases these young people will return with qualifications to re-establish themselves in the community. The trend in rural Australia is, however, that they do not. Consequently, ageing is a good proxy for the relative movement of population and opportunities for younger persons in the community; the faster

the community is ageing, as a generalisation, the less opportunity there is deemed to be for younger persons. Consequently, a population which is ageing at a greater rate than surrounding centres, or in comparison to state and national averages, could be considered as a community possibly under stress or in decline.

Additionally, the percentage of Australian born members of the community is reviewed here given that higher levels of diversity are generally accepted to have a positive effect on community tolerance, through increasing opportunities to develop bridging relationships, resulting in higher levels of positive social capital. This aspect has recently, however, become more contentious due to the increased potential for social exclusion of groups within communities of greater ethnic diversity.

Table 4.4 provides a summary of the positions of these three indicators (population growth, diversity and ageing) in 1991 and 2001 to shed further light on the relative progress of the two communities over the period.

Table 4.4: Population growth, nationality and median age

ABS Census Data	1991		2001	
	Corowa	Murray	Corowa	Murray
Av. Annual Population growth	2.4%	2.3%	0.1%	2.4%
Australian Born	91.0%	92.9%	88.8%	86.1%
Median Age	37 yrs	35 yrs	43 yrs	40 yrs
Age Change from 1991			6 yr increase.	5 yr increase.

Of these three indicators, Murray Shire has, in 2001, a greater population growth, higher ethnic diversity in the community and a lower median age.

Perhaps the most widely accepted benchmark indicator of the ‘health’ of a community is the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicator of SEIFA. Although this is not a peer reviewed indicator, it is commonly used in government and consultancy assessments of the relative disadvantage of a community in comparison to the Australian standard of 1000, or with other communities, such as in this case. In addition to the status of unemployment and education, the SEIFA index also incorporates low income earners, low fluency in English and the number of residents in rental accommodation, resulting in a comprehensive index of relative disadvantage that can be used to compare two equivalent collection areas in relation to the standard (1000). It is also useful to track the evolution of a community over a period of time where a time series is available. Due to changes in census district boundaries between 1991 and 1996 the SEIFA data for these two periods are not comparable. The SEIFA index for 1996 and 2001 are, however, comparable (as shown in table 4.5). The higher scores indicate relatively *less* disadvantage. Consequently the SEIFA scores demonstrate the shift that has occurred in Murray Shire in the five year period between 1996 and 2001 to a position of less disadvantage and greater ability to achieve prosperity. Most notably, in 1996 both communities were below the Australian standard for SEIFA but by 2001, despite Corowa Shire remaining below that standard, Murray Shire has moved above it.

Table 4.5: SEIFA Index

	SEIFA Score		
	Australian Standard	Corowa Shire	Murray Shire
1996	1000	989	988
2001	1000	994	1013

The data from the ABS census provides a clear picture of two communities who were similar in 1991 in terms of growth, diversity (given the lower % of Australian Born residents) ageing, education and unemployment. This picture altered by 2001 however, with Murray Shire experiencing greater levels of population growth, more diversity, and lower levels of ageing in their community; indicators that are traditionally taken for positive growth and prosperity in a community.

4.5.2 Employment profiles

Employment provides opportunities for networks and social collaboration, and is another economic indicator of a community’s prosperity (Coleman, 1990). Despite the levels of employment appearing comparable in 2001, when *unemployment* is compared over time, Murray Shire exhibits a reduction between 1991 and 2001 of 5.0% while Corowa Shire shows a reduction of only 2.1% in the same period. An increase (5%) in ‘total employment’ in the ten year period for Murray Shire Council is represented in the figures of 89.4% in 1991 compared to 94.7% in 2001. This compares to a total increase of only 2.1% in the same period for Corowa Shire (92.4% in 1991 to 94.5% in 2001) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001b; 2001c). Consequently, as shown in table 4.6, Murray Shire has been far more successful in growing its employment in the period than has Corowa Shire.

Table 4.6: Employment statistics - 1991 to 2001

ABS Census Data	1991		2001	
Shire/SLA	Corowa	Murray	Corowa	Murray
Total employment	92.4%	89.4%	94.5%	94.7%
% Unemployed	7.6	10.3	5.5	5.3

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001b; 2001c)

These employment rates may reflect an increase in the labour force participation rate²² in Murray Shire either from those already in the region or an increase in the people attracted to the region to work. Either interpretation indicates that opportunities for employment have increased and that these have been taken up either by new or existing residents who have re-entered the workforce. Overall, the labour force participation rates of Corowa at 94.5% and Murray Shire at 94.7% both represent higher participation rates than the state average of 92.8%. Similarly unemployment rates for Corowa (5.5%) and Murray Shires (5.3%) in 2001 compare favourably with the NSW state mean of 7.2%.

Concerning the type of industry that is occupying the population, table 4.7 provides a comparison of the two communities. Notably, Murray Shire is predominantly a primary agricultural industry employer, with retail and tourism being the next greatest employers in the Shire, while in comparison Corowa Shire is dominated by manufacturing as their greatest employer, with agriculture being the second placed industry. It is important to note that manufacturing in Corowa Shire is dependent upon agricultural production, both in the Shire and from those surrounding it, for its inputs.

Table 4.7: Employment by industry sector

Ranking of Employment by Industry Sector	Corowa Shire	Murray Shire
First	Manufacturing 19.4%	Ag., Fish & Forestry 23.1%

²² 'Labour Force Participation rate' refers to the total number of those in the labour force (15 years or older who are either employed (actively or on leave) or who are registered as unemployed but actively looking for work) compared to the total number of persons in the population of the same age and sex characteristics. (Haberhorn, Hugo, Fisher and Aylward, 1999, 99).

Second	Ag., Fish & Forestry 15.4%	Retail Trade 11.9%
Third	Retail Trade 11.8%	Accom., Cafes & Restaurants 11.1%
Fourth	Accom., Cafes & Restaurants 9.5%	Manufacturing 10.4%

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001b Section 29; 2001c Section 29)

Although ABS figures are not available for a comparison of industries of employment between 1991 and 2001, a media review of Murray Shire’s Riverine Herald indicates that there has been an increasing focus on manufacturing as an alternative and new source of employment and income for the region (The Riverine Herald, 1991-2000). The media review also underscores the importance of tourism and the hospitality sector to the region, explaining the higher level of importance that this sector plays in regional employment. This trend may be an indication that Murray Shire is slightly better placed in the globalised, restructured, post industrial economy, through its movement of employment out of secondary industry and into services. This is achieved through its increased focus on tourism, potentially tying it into the metropolitan/global system in a way that Corowa is not, and further underscores is increasing divergence from the economic situation of Corowa Shire.

4.6 Assessing social capital: the surveys

There are two main issues to consider in regard to the quantitative component of the research. As earlier mentioned, the objective here was, firstly, to assess the relationship of social capital to the prosperity and resilience of rural communities. Consequently, although others have assessed community social capital in a range of environments, both rural and urban, here it was necessary to adhere to two pre-conditions. The first was to find two communities that were comparable in terms of history, industry and demographic factors, but also demonstrated substantiated

divergent prosperity and resilience in the period 1991 to 2001. As the preceding discussion has established, the Shires/SLAs of Murray and Corowa met this condition, and were consequently selected as the two case study locations for the research. The second pre-condition relates to the way in which the social capital of these two communities should be assessed. In order to make a connection between the interpretation of social capital, as it has generally been employed to assess communities and their relative success in Australia, it was important to use the same or most effective instruments and measures that had previously been developed and applied in the Australian context, as far as possible. In this way it is reasonable to make comment on the Australian use of social capital generally and how the findings in this research relate to that use.

4.6.1 Survey Selection and Further Development

As discussed in chapter three, there have been three main protagonists in the area of developing instruments for the measurement of social capital in Australia since the mid 1990s, - Bullen and Onyx (Bullen, ; 2003; Bullen and Onyx, 1998; Onyx and Bullen, 2000b; 2000a), Stone and Hughes (Stone, 2001; 2003; Stone and Hughes, 2000; 2001a; 2002), and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000; 2002a; 2002b; 2004a). Although other organisations and authors have commented on social capital extensively, these three have done the most work in the field of developing measurements and assessment instruments in the Australian context.

On the back of Eva Cox's Boyer Lectures (1995b; 1995e; 1995d; 1995c; 1995a), it was the work of Bullen and Onyx in assessing the social capital of five communities in New South Wales (Bullen and Onyx, 1998; Onyx and Bullen, 1997) that raised the profile of social capital as a means of both assessing community resilience and also as an approach for communities to engage in their own regeneration. The objective

behind that research was to identify if such a thing as empirically meaningful social capital did exist and then, if that were the case, to develop a practical measure for it. The theoretical objectives behind the instrument that Onyx and Bullen developed were to:

- Identify the elements of social capital (factors) based on the abstract interpretations of Putnam (1993) and Cox (1995a);
- Identify which sets of attitudes, behaviours and knowledge were related to social capital and which ones were not;
- Identify a good set of questions for future use in measuring social capital in other communities; and
- Identify whether or not social capital was associated with gender and other demographic variables, assessing if it was a characteristic of individuals rather than communities; (Onyx and Bullen, 1997)

They based their assessment on the proposition that social capital was a concept with empirical reality that could be measured using definitions as developed by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) and Putnam (1993; 1995). The assessment method focused on the features of networks represented by participation, reciprocity, trust, norms, ideas of the public commons, and pro-activity. The instrument developed in conjunction with the Centre for Australian Community Organisations and Management (CACOM) was based on assessing these six aspects of community bonding and bridging networks. The objective was empirically to test the validity of their particular interpretation of the concept. As discussed in chapter three, although it did include four questions (of the original total of 85) about government, only one of those was in relation to local, or the closest level of

government to the respondents, with the other three questions being relatively disconnected to local circumstance²³. It was noted that the questions relating to government institutions were not represented in any of the social capital factors relating to either participation and connections or the elements which constitute the building blocks of social capital, most likely due to the adoption of Coleman's and Putnam's earlier interpretations of the concept. They did note that social capital appeared to be related to immediate and personal connections between people and events, and was more disconnected from formal relationships with government institutions and policy that did not affect their daily lives (Onyx and Bullen, 1997, 14,22-3).

From the survey implemented by Onyx and Bullen, they identified thirty six of the questions from the survey that best represented the factors of both participation and connections, or the building blocks of social capital (Onyx and Bullen, 1997). These were identified out of the total 85 questions using hierarchical factor analysis and identifying general (secondary) factors. Of the thirty six questions identified, all 'correlated positively with the general social capital factors' (Ibid, 11). These general social capital factors were identified by correlating each of the questions with each other to identify clusters of related questions, which were then subjected to factor analysis to identify those question clusters which were related to social capital and which were not. The process identified eight factors indicating social capital, which were further categorised into two groups: a) participation and connections in various arenas, and b) the 'building blocks' of social capital. In

23 The other three questions were: no.51 "Generally, do you feel that Australians are well served by their government institutions?"; no.52. "Do you think that the government (State or Commonwealth) provides too many services and subsidies?" no.53. "Do you think that our government institutions have too much power and authority?" (Onyx and Bullen, 1997).

Onyx and Bullen's work they do not outline the definition of, and why they have termed the second group of four factors, the 'building blocks' of social capital. On the basis of their discussion of the literature and definitions of social capital it would appear however, that Onyx and Bullen interpret these items as the 'building blocks' due to these being the commonly agreed elements evident in all communities deemed to have high social capital, and therefore seen as the basis for its development. The four factors which represented participation and connections were 1) participation in the local community; 2) neighbourhood connections; 3) connections with family and friends; and 4) work connections. The four factors representing the 'building blocks' of social capital included pro-activity in a social context; feelings of trust and safety; tolerance of diversity, and value of life. They found that gender, age or other demographic variables did not correlate with levels of social capital (Ibid, 11,4).

The survey developed for the research undertaken here drew upon surveys developed by Onyx and Bullen (1997) with reference to Stone (2001) and Stone and Hughes (2002), as these had already been pre-tested. Further questions were then added to ensure the aspects that had been subsequently developed and deemed important to social capital, such as external bridging and linking relationships, were covered in addition to internal bonding and bridging, in accordance with the discussion in chapter two. In 2004 the Australian Bureau of Statistics published an 'Information Paper' (Edwards, 2004), the aim of which was to provide a framework for the assessment of social capital. The survey for this research was designed and implemented before the ABS paper was published, however the data collection groupings can be classified into the same categories as those identified and tested by the ABS. Broadly, the survey in this research aimed to collect information in the categories of bonding, bridging and linking within the community ('Your

Community’ and ‘Local Government’) categorised as ‘Community’; and bridging and linking relationships with those resources external to the community (‘Inter-Community’ and ‘Inter Government’) categorised as ‘Institutional’.

The factors of social capital within each scale that were being examined are detailed in table 4.8 (a complete list of the survey questions is provided in Appendix 1).

Table 4.8: Questionnaire elements of social capital survey

COMMUNITY				INSTITUTIONAL			
Internal Bonding & Bridging		Bridging to external groups		Bonding & Linking with government internally		Bridging & Linking between local govt & other levels of govt.	
‘Your Community’ Q.1- 26 (Onyx & Bullen)		‘Inter Community’ Q.27- 33 (Onyx & Bullen)		‘Local Government’ (within community) Q.34 - 42		‘Inter Government’ Q. 43 - 48	
Factors	Q’s	Factors	Q’s	Factors	Q’s	Factors	Q’s
Reciprocity	2,7, 10,	Networks	27, 28, 32	Knowledge	34, 36	Negotiation	45,
Civic Participation	11, 12, 13, 21	Resources	29, 30	Efficacy	38	Knowledge	46,48
Networks	14, 16	Civic participation	33	Resources	37	Efficacy	43,44
Generalised trust	5	Knowledge sharing	31	Trust	39, 42	Civic participation	47
Sense of Efficacy	15			Comunic- ation	35, 41		
Feelings of safety,	4,9			Negotiation	40		
Community Support	3,20 22						
Friendship	6,8, 18, 19						
Acceptance	1, 17,						

	23						
Diversity	24, 25						
Inclusiveness	26						

The survey employed twenty five of the thirty six ‘best questions’ identified by Bullen and Onyx (1998; 1997) to assess social capital, five of which were in the employment section which was not subsequently used due to the high number of respondents who were retirees and self employed farmers. The development of the proposed questions cross referenced to methodological developments of Stone and Hughes (2002) to identify the additional questions, particularly those related to different levels of government activity that contribute to the success and prosperity of communities using the social capital framework (table 4.1). As noted in the assumptions, in order to address the developments in the interpretations of social capital since 1997, questions to cover bonding, bridging and linking relationships were incorporated into the survey. These were added in an effort to ensure that the linkages between community and government and different levels of government were also assessed along with the relative levels and balance of different relationship types within and between communities. This was in order to determine the type of social capital that most affects communities’ ability to prosper. Where it was necessary to add questions which have not been previously tested in the groupings for relevance to social capital, these were based on the phrasing of relevant previously validated surveys (Onyx and Bullen, 1997; Stone and Hughes, 2001a). The survey was also piloted in December 2003 with three different individuals from varying educational backgrounds in the community of the researcher (Canberra, ACT) and, in doing so, was considered a valid instrument for the objectives of the research.

The term 'likert score' is usually used in relation to scaling qualitative answers such as 'strongly agree', 'agree' or 'disagree'. In this case the likert approach was used such that '1' was used to answer 'disagree', 'not frequently' or 'no' and was indicative of low social capital, while '4' was used to answer 'strongly agree', 'frequently' or 'yes' being indicative of high social capital. The number of respondents who refused to answer questions was never more than 10%, a figure which related to only one question (income) and was not an unexpected event given the age profile of the respondents. The average non response for individual questions within the first four sections of the survey was 3%. The results were subjected to analysis (detailed in chapter five) to assess contextual dependency of the results to demographic factors. None was found, which corresponds to the results of Onyx and Bullen (1997).

4.7 Data collection

4.7.1 Quantitative data collection:

In order to obtain residents with knowledge of the community, avoid itinerant agricultural workers and meet the budgetary constraints of the study it was decided to utilise Shire Council data bases to obtain addresses for a mail survey, and the regular Council mailing schedule to distribute it. Consequently, resident rate payers formed the population to be sampled. The approach also incorporated a degree of quota sampling by establishing parameters of the person in each household who should respond to the survey (see the introductory section of the survey 'Are you the right person to be filling out the questionnaire?' in Appendix 1). This sample structure, utilising Council data bases, was also considered reasonable given that the population sample would be directly comparable to the

ABS data utilised to establish the validity of the case study location²⁴. In addition, the survey was advertised in the local paper asking people to complete it when they received it or, alternatively, if they had not received a copy and would like to be involved, to contact the researcher. No enquiries to participate in the research were received.

In both communities, presentations were made either to the Council as a whole or through the Council's General Manger, seeking the support of the Council for the survey and its distribution. After relevant questions and concerns were discussed, this support was given in both cases. In the case of Corowa, the Corowa Free Press was used to promote participation in the survey in the week of January 27th, 2004 with a follow up piece on March 3rd, 2004 thanking those who had responded and requesting the return of any outstanding surveys. The survey for Murray Shire was promoted through an article in the Council's 'Enterprise Newsletter' in the week of March 29th, 2004 with a follow up piece in the Riverine Herald in the first week of May, 2004, thanking those who had returned the survey and asking any who had not to please return it as soon as possible. The survey was also distributed with an addressed and prepaid return envelope to encourage its return.

The questionnaires were divided into six sections. The first four sections were aimed at assessing levels of bonding, bridging and linking relationships at the community and institutional levels. The fifth section was focused on identifying bonding and bridging within work relationships, and the last section sought

²⁴ It is noteworthy that Council boundaries of Corowa Shire did change in mid 2004 after the survey was conducted. At the time the survey was conducted, however, the Council boundaries reflected the same SLA boundaries employed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics between 1991 and 2001.

demographic information allowing a comparison between communities and with average Australian Bureau of Statistics data (see Appendix 1). The data were collated on a community basis so that both communities could be assessed independently and comparatively.

The questionnaire response scores from both data sets were averaged to represent a community score for each question and also for each of the four scales. The respondents were older than the 2001 Census average in both Shires²⁵. Consequently, there was potentially a high representation of retired respondents and there was also a high representation of those who were not currently employed²⁶. As a result, the five questions included in the section on 'paid employment' proved relatively uninformative. Although the sample attained did not reflect the standard community profiles of the SLA as released by the ABS from the 2001 Population Housing and Census Data (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002c) they were comparable with each other. In both cases the survey samples reflect an older, more educated population, of average to slightly lower than average income levels than the ABS statistical profile, as will be detailed in the survey responses in the following chapter. Given that the respondent profiles of the samples were similar in both communities and age did not appear to be related to key variables²⁷, there was no need to weight for purposes of comparison.

25 The median age for Corowa Shire respondents was 58 years compared to 43 years in the 2001 ABS Census, and the Murray Shire respondents reflected a median age of 60 years, compared to 40 years in the ABS 2001 Census.

26 In Corowa Shire 48% of respondents noted that they were not employed in question 55, as did 53% of Murray Shire respondents. The question did not clarify whether this meant that they were self employed or were unemployed.

27 Examination of the data identified no statistically significant variation between either the responses by demographic groups (age, education, employment, longevity in the community) within, or between shires, indicating that any weighting was unlikely to provide different results, even if generalisations were to be made across the entirety of each community from these samples, which are not being made.

4.7.1.1. Questionnaire response rates

The questionnaires were mailed to all resident rate payers in Corowa Shire in the week commencing the 27th of January in 2004, with rates notices through the Council direct mail system. In Murray Shire, they were mailed with the regular Council mailing of the 'Enterprise Newsletter' in the week commencing the 29th of March 2004. Given the method of distribution, it was not received by non home owners in both Shires and this limitation of the survey's socio-economic method of sampling must be acknowledged in the data interpretation. In Corowa Shire a total of 2,635 questionnaires were distributed, from which 535 responses were received, representing a response rate of 20.3%. A lower number of surveys were distributed in Murray Shire according to their rate payer data base, with 2,165 surveys being mailed, from which 270 responses were received, representing a response rate of 12.5%. The questionnaires were anonymous, and offered no inducement to respond, eliciting a total of 805 responses over the two communities.

The response rates for the survey were not what could be considered high in either community, but were also not unreasonably low. The most recent survey that provides a level of comparison in Australia for a similar survey type is that undertaken by Stone and Hughes in 2001 (2004), which had a response rate of 33.3% and was conducted by telephone interview, a more interactive and response generating survey method. Therefore the response rate for Corowa (20.3%) can be considered within the normal range, but Murray Shire at (12.5%) might be considered below it. Goyder (1982) also noted that, although an average response rate was 48%, there was a standard deviation of 19.9%, which indicates that Corowa's results are definitely within an acceptable range. It was also identified by Keeter et al (2000) that low response rates and the level of randomness in the

selection of respondents did not alter the outcomes of surveys, a finding which was duplicated for surveys related to social integration and elements of social capital such as trust and civic participation. Therefore, a higher response rate in Murray Shire would have been unlikely to alter the findings. Additionally, the response rate for the research here has been calculated on the basis of the total number of questionnaires delivered and has not deducted incorrect addresses or deceased estates, so is providing a slightly lower response rate than if these were subtracted from the calculations. Therefore the response rates of this research are in fact higher than indicated, according to other standard measures of calculating response rates (Keeter, Miller, Kohut, Groves and Presser, 2000).

The councils supported the initial distribution of the questionnaire with their standard mailing at no cost to the research, providing an increased level of credibility to the questionnaire. Despite it being well documented that a follow up mailing to remind respondents to return the survey positively affects response rates, funds were not available for this and consequently this option was not employed. Advertisements were employed however, in both communities' newspapers to encourage resident rate payers to complete and return the surveys by the end of April in the case of Corowa, and May in the case of Murray Shire. The last survey was received from a Moama resident in mid June 2004. Factors which have been demonstrated to reduce survey response rates relate to the perceived level of salience to the community; it being a survey of the general population, or that a number of the questions may have been considered particularly private in nature (Groves, Presser and Dipko, 2004; Heberlein and Baumgartner, 1978). It is also noteworthy that in Murray Shire a survey undertaken by the council to its ratepayers in 1994 on rate levies and other issues

directly affecting them received only a 16% response rate (The Riverine Herald, April 4, 1994).

4.7.2 Qualitative Data Collection

Given the variation in population and economic growth in the two communities, and to ensure that as many aspects as possible of social capital networks that may be contributing to this were uncovered, qualitative data collection was also undertaken in both communities. This consisted of a review of the predominant newspapers in both communities for the period of economic divergence between 1991 and 2001. The qualitative research also incorporated interviews with a number of community residents and leaders, as well as those associated, but outside the community, to gain a variety of perspectives on each community's relationship networks.

4.7.2.1 Media Review

In order to gain an insight to the recent history of the community, the issues of most concern and the subtleties of community group interactions, I decided to review the communities' major newspapers for the ten year period that coincided with that of the ABS census period. Consequently, the period from 1991 to 2000 inclusive, was reviewed for both the Corowa Free Press (Corowa Shire) and the Riverine Herald (Murray Shire). In the case of Corowa Free Press, this involved two issues a week on Wednesdays and Friday. By contrast, the Riverine Herald is published three times a week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with the exception in both cases of public holidays.

Both newspapers were reviewed within the framework set out by the surveys in that the focus was on issues and events that illustrated community, inter community, or community and local government relationships that were bonding,

bridging and linking in nature. The nature of those (bonding, bridging and linking) relationships was decided using the parameters as described by Szreter (2002) and others, as discussed in chapter two. In addition, the review also sought to identify any instances or issues involving government interaction between local and higher levels of government, or with other local government or regional bodies. The data were then coded according to these themes and then each of these further thematically assessed to identify major and minor issues within these themes, utilising Nvivo software. From the analysis emerged a time line of major events affecting the communities and their social behaviour, along with evidence of the nature of community interaction, factions and co-operation, which are discussed for each community in chapters six and seven.

4.7.2.2 Community Interviews

In addition to the surveys and the media review, the research also incorporated semi structured interviews with community members who appeared to be, or were recommended as the knowledgeable ‘movers and shakers’ in each case study location. These interview subjects were identified through reviewing community group contact lists, speaking with members of the Council, Chamber of Commerce and tourism organisations. Additionally, identified interview subjects were also asked if there were any members of the community whom they deemed very well informed of the community’s networks and modes of operation that should be included; a research technique known as ‘snowballing’. This technique was used both in terms of ensuring that I had identified all the key players in the community, and also to continue the process until the information received was verified by quite different people both in, and outside, but also associated with, the community. None of the interviewees was paid for his/her time or contributions, or was offered any other means of inducement to participate in the research. All

potential interviewees were approached initially by telephone and with a follow up written request and confirmation of their co-operation (see Appendix 3). Interviewees were offered the option of receiving the report on their community at the conclusion of the research and this was taken up in the majority of cases. Of all interviewees approached none refused to be interviewed, and as a result no bias was detected in terms of interview respondents. In both communities senior administrative members of the Council were interviewed along with the mayors of both Shires, tourism representatives, school council representatives, a comparable range of community groups including Country Women's Association, Landcare, Neighbourhood Watch, Apex and Lions Clubs, and key community employers. In neither case were the senior representatives of the Clubs interviewed as, although Clubs in both locations were approached and neither refused to be interviewed, they were unable to make themselves available at a time that was mutually possible. The clubs were extensively reviewed however through the media analysis, and consequently the absence of their representation in the interviewee schedule was considered adequately compensated for. Additionally, key members of government development agencies and consultants who had undertaken strategic development and planning work with the Shires were also interviewed to obtain external perspectives of the communities' relationship networks with external organisations and government departments.

The interviews consisted of initially twenty in Corowa in February 2004, and seventeen in Murray Shire in May the same year. A further five follow up interviews were conducted in Corowa to clarify issues, verify findings, implicit meanings and the circumstances of events gleaned from the media review and first interviews. The initial interviews were semi structured, again on the basis of the four groupings of internal and external community and government bonding,

bridging and linking networks (see Appendix Two (2) for full list of interview questions). Not all questions were applicable to all interview candidates, but all interviewees were required to submit a Consent Form (Appendix 3) for their participation in the interview process, regardless of the scope of the interview. The interviews were semi-structured to allow alignment of the interview data with the categories examined in the survey, however participants were allowed to take the interview in directions they felt appropriate given the scope of the research. As such, the questions were utilised to provide direction or initiate discussion, rather than to provide a strict regime, resulting in many insights that were not often foreseen. The interviews were conducted at a location specified by the interviewee to maximise their comfort levels and ease of attendance. A number of interviews with community members in Murray Shire were conducted at the Shire Council offices at the suggestion of the interviewee. By contrast, Corowa Shire interviewees appeared to prefer the interviews to be conducted in their own homes. The choice of interview location was given to the interviewee to minimise bias that may have been induced by forcing a particular location on respondents.

In the majority of cases the interviews were taped with the permission of the interviewee and were then transcribed for accurate review of the discussion. The transcribed interviews were then coded in the same manner as the media reviews and thematically analysed within the coding categories of community, inter community, community and local government, and inter government bonding, bridging and linking to identify key issues, events and community characteristics.

4.8 Methodological considerations

4.8.1 Theory testing and/or generation

The objectives of this research were twofold. It was both to test the hypotheses that the level of social capital in a community as it is currently generally measured in

Australia, is related a community's prosperity and vitality; and that using the synergistic interpretation of social capital can provide useful insights to the local government relationships with community members over local issues such as planning and development, which affect the economic and social success of a community.

The first hypothesis is testing of the widely held assumption that social capital is directly related to successful communities (Putnam, 2002b). The second hypothesis is designed to extend the existing research to explore how government policy initiatives and actions might influence social capital. The role of social capital in effecting change in government policy was not studied. The findings from this research led to exploring the further objective of establishing how social capital is linked with community prosperity and the manner in which government policy might affect both community prosperity and social capital.

4.8.2 Data generation approaches, limitations and concerns

Due to the financial constraints on the research, the ethnographic component of the investigations was limited to a number of initial short visits (usually of two days duration) to each community, in order to discuss the research with each Council and investigate how the communities were structured, followed by a period of a fortnight in each community during which the majority of the interviews were conducted.

The choice of survey, interview and media review approaches was adopted in order to be able to compare this particular work with previous research into social capital in Australian communities and, as far as possible, to elucidate the circumstances surrounding the success or otherwise of the two case study communities under review. Importantly, by using a combination of research

approaches the aim was to encompass the broader dimensions of social capital which have been put forward more recently (Cocklin and Alston, 2003; Cocklin and Dibden, 2005; Cox and Caldwell, 2000; Quiggin, 2002; Stimson, Baum, Mullins and O'Connor, 1999; Stoker, 2003; Szreter, 2002; Szreter and Woolcock, 2004a; Wallis and Dollery, 2002; Worthington and Dollery, 2000) and then assess the validity of these dimensions through the addition of qualitative research.

This inclusion of the qualitative research is helpful in understanding social capital in relation to Australian rural community prosperity and to illuminate the specific elements of social capital contributing to it. The objective here was to either reaffirm the proxies for social capital, or identify alternative factors which may be instrumental in a community's success profile.

Through using survey, media and interview data it was possible to verify the findings of the research on the basis of identifying evidence of the same elements of social capital across all three data sources. The validity of the data obtained in this research relies on the plausibility and credibility of the evidence established by comparing the data from the three sources of information. It was imperative that, in the process of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting the social capital of these communities, the data collection was based on established theoretical interpretations of social capital and used methods that gave an account of community structure in the context of those interpretations. Although the context dependent aspects of different techniques is a consideration of high importance to researchers – particularly in previous Australian research where urban and rural communities were simultaneously being studied and compared – in this case it was of much lower concern, given the relative homogeneity of the two case study communities selected.

The survey component of the research was limited by the nature of the survey questions which had been developed at least in part for urban communities. Consequently questions such as 'Do you feel safe walking down the street at night?' gained a surprisingly negative response in both communities, which on further investigation proved to be as a result of a combination of lack of, or minimal, street lighting combined with no footpaths. The negative response was not due to a fear for the respondent's personal safety in regard to criminal activities (assumed in the standard use of this question), but rather was about poorly lit, rough or non-existent footpaths. Additionally, given the high number of self-employed farmers in the communities, responses to the work and income questions (questions 49- 53 in the survey - Appendix 1) were skewed, making it relatively difficult to attribute meaning to them.

4.8.3 Validity and interpretation

In regard to the validity of the instrument used to assess this interpretation of the concept of social capital— that is, actually measuring what we think we are measuring (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994, 25) - this was considered acceptable. This was due to the high level of dependence on the previous works of Onyx and Bullen (Bullen, 2003; Bullen and Onyx, 1998; Onyx and Bullen, 1997; Onyx and Bullen, 2000b; 2000a) and Stone (2001; 2003; Stone and Hughes, 2001a; 2002) and Hughes and Stone (2002), which had subjected results of their initial work to extensive factor analysis in order to establish those questions which most accurately indicated the concept and phenomena of social capital in a community. Given this, it is reasonable to regard the survey instrument used here, constructed from questions drawn from Onyx and Bullen (1997), and Stone and Hughes' (2002) work, to be a valid method of measuring the elements of social capital. Further, the validity of the questions, to be interpreted as intended, were piloted by the

researcher with three random respondents, returning the results which corresponded with the intention of the questionnaire, validating its ability to secure meaningful responses.

The objective of the methodology is to test the existence of an association between the government and community relationship networks, their nature, along with the nature of the relationships between community and the different levels of government. Additionally, it also attempted to identify any associations between these relationship networks and improved economic and social outcomes for communities.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the analytical framework used to assess social capital in this case, drawing both on methods previously used in Australia and the subsequent developments in interpretations of the concept (Narayan and Cassidy, 2001), with a view to understanding its relation to rural community prosperity.

I have also detailed the rationale for the choice of case study location and the reasons for that choice, according to commonly employed benchmarks of prosperity, and in terms of the veracity of comparing the two communities.

This chapter has also examined the basis of choosing a pre-tested measurement instrument, and how this was enhanced to ensure that more recent interpretations were also incorporated. It is noteworthy that, although more in-depth statistical analysis was not included in this research, the inclusion of the media review and interview data deemed it unnecessary. The statistical data were not designed, nor envisaged, to provide a single answer to the question of the relationship between social capital and rural prosperity. Rather, the idea being tested was: can the

complex phenomena of social capital be assessed with a single instrument? The methods employed also aimed to understand the dynamic factors involved in both social capital and community prosperity in these two communities, to shed light on the nexus between social capital and prosperity.

The following three chapters reveal the findings of the research. Chapter five is devoted to the statistical analysis of the survey data for both communities. Chapters six and seven then go on to cover the findings from the media and interview data in relation to the bonding, bridging and linking relationship networks in Corowa and Murray Shire communities' respectively.

CHAPTER FIVE: Surveying the social capital of two communities

As discussed in the preceding chapters, the approaches to social capital largely adopted by governments and institutions are those of quantitative measurements, in a bid to 'get a handle' on the nature of community interactions. They do however, only go as far as recognising the bonding and limited bridging elements of social capital and, as a result, it is only these components of social capital that have been focused upon in the development of the quantitative indicators and procedures accepted as valid by researchers and policy makers. Consequently, a quantitative survey was not only deemed appropriate here, given the objective of relating social capital to policy use, but also as discussed in chapter four, necessary to be able to relate previous research to the social capital / prosperity nexus. As a result, the survey conducted in the two case study communities formed the quantitative component of the research, designed to investigate community interaction and that of government with communities in the context of social capital, and their economic and social well being.

As discussed in the previous chapter, a pre-tested social capital instrument was extended to include assessment of community/government relationships in the context of a synergistic view of social capital. This chapter reviews the findings of that survey, with the objective of identifying any differences in levels of social capital between the Shires, in each scale or in their manner of responding. The survey was divided into four scales, the first of which contained questions aimed at assessing internal community bonding and bridging (a 'society-centred' or Putnam's interpretation); the second scale related to inter community bridging

networks; the third, community and local government bonding and linking networks (the synergy of a community (Woolcock, 1998)) and the fourth scale, community perceptions of inter government bridging and linking networks (organisational integrity (Ibid)). In this way, both original interpretations of social capital (Coleman's and Putnam's) were covered in the first and the second scales, while the extended synergy and organisational integrity aspects of social capital, as theorised by Woolcock and Narayan (2000), were covered in the third and fourth scales. By keeping the different interpretations separate through separate scales, the survey also sought to identify if there were variations between the communities in these different areas of community relationship networks.

The data reveal no statistically significant difference between the two communities, either overall or between scales, even when controlled for the difference in demographics of the respondents within each community. These results are in spite of the differences in relative prosperity of the two communities according to census data, between 1991 and 2001.

5.1 Overview of community respondent profiles

Although the survey was intended to be distributed only to resident ratepayers (as discussed in chapter four, given the use of council rate payer data bases) a small percentage of the respondents ('other') came from outside the Shire (as detailed in table 5.1). The response rate was higher in Corowa Shire (20%) than the Murray Shire (12%), with a total of 805 (16.7%) surveys returned over both locations, out of a total of 4,820 surveys distributed. The reasons for the variation in the rate of survey return are not evident, but are noteworthy considering a Corowa Council employee's reaction to my endeavours to secure support for the survey. The Council's perception was that it was a waste of time as, in their experience, people

never returned the surveys²⁸. Anecdotally, in situations where respondents are dissatisfied and perceive an opportunity to have a say in issues that are of concern to them, they are more likely to respond to surveys and overtures for information.

The sample attained cannot be regarded as reflecting the standard community profiles of the Local Government Area as released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the 2001 Population Housing and Census Data (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002c). The survey respondents reflect an older, more educated population, who are largely retired or living on farms, compared to the ABS statistical profile. Given the rural context of the respondents, the employment data also may well be skewed by those who work on farms and therefore do not categorise themselves as in formal employment.

There is, however, sufficient similarity between the respondents in each location to allow comparison. The following table (5.1) provides the survey respondent data in relation to the 2001 Census data for the average population profiles of the Shires.

Table 5.1: Community respondent comparison

	Corowa Respondent Average		2001 ABS Census Data	Murray Shire Respondent Average		2001 ABS Census Data
% of respondents	20.3%			12.5%		
Males	47.4%		50.3%	37.9%		51.0%
Females	51.3%		49.7%	62.1%		49.0%
Median Age	58		43	60		40
Length of resid.	23.2 yrs			17.7 yrs		
Location of residence	Corowa & rest of Shire	74%	100%	Moama	68.4%	100%
				Mathoura		

²⁸ Comment made during a Council meeting at which the author presented the research proposal for approval and the support of the Council in distributing the survey (19th January 2004, Corowa Shire Offices).

Rural Resilience and Prosperity

	Mulwala	21.9 %		& rest of Shire	25.1%	
	Other	4.1%		Other	6.6%	
Year 12 or less	55.8%		21.2%	58.5		17.5%
Diploma/ Cert.	19.7%		21.8%	22.6%		21.8%
Bachelor Degree	9.4%		1.3%	5.6%		1.2%
Post Grad. Qual's	7.5%			7.8%		
Employed	53.2%		94.5%	47%		94.7%
Children < 18yrs	25.6%		19.8% of the pop. 0-14 yrs	20.5%		20.6% of the pop. 0-14yrs

The employment questions (questions 49 to 53), which focused on the geographic location of the respondents' work and relationships in the work environment, were taken directly from Onyx and Bullen's 'best thirty six questions', which were applied in urban environments in three out of the five communities assessed. The questions did not elucidate the nature of the industry or occupation that respondents were employed in, nor did they identify if the respondent was self employed or not. Given the rural application of this instrument, many of the respondents may have been self employed on farms, but the structure of the questionnaire did not facilitate that clarification. Consequently, some respondents may have answered the question – 'Are you currently employed' – in the negative, interpreting it as employment in the form of receiving formal wage payments, although they were self employed or still working on farm with a partner. This is suggested by the 48% of Corowa Shire and 53% of Murray Shire respondents who registered themselves as 'not currently employed' in question 55. This factor also has ramifications in the area of recording the income levels of respondents, given that farm incomes can range widely from one year to the next. The potential for this to be the case is indicated by the percentage of respondents who recorded their income source as 'other' than wages, salary, pension or benefit; which was 18.6% for Corowa Shire and 20.7% for Murray Shire.

Given that a difference does exist in the respondent profiles in the areas of graduate qualifications, length of residence and employment, the data were also analysed to ascertain if there was a difference between the communities, when the responses were controlled for these factors. Analysis based on either 'question scale' or the control factors referred to above still showed no statistical differences in the response profiles of respondents, or when they were compared to the other case study community.

The 'question scale' relates to the groupings of questions in the survey. Question scale one referred to questions one to twenty six and was entitled 'Your Community', which aimed at assessing the levels of bonding and bridging within the community. The second question scale related to questions about 'Inter Community' relations being questions twenty seven to thirty three, aimed at assessing community bridging and linking to resources external to the community. Question scales three and four related to perceptions of government bonding, bridging and linking. Question scale three, 'Local Government' was reflected in questions thirty four to forty two, focussing on the community's bonding and linking relationships with their local government representatives, while question scale four ('Inter Government') sought to assess the respondents' perceptions of their local governments' bridging and linking networks with other levels of government. The responses to all questions were rated by the respondent from one to four or five, based on their negative or positive feelings, or participation in activities, as discussed in chapter four. The analysis identified that, despite small variations in the profile of respondents between the two communities; the surveys were responded to in the same manner in both communities and were therefore deemed comparable.

5.2 Data analysis

The scales, as noted previously, were, as far as possible, drawn from previously tested instruments. No factor analysis was undertaken given that the questions or the basis of them had already been subjected to factor analysis to establish their relevance as indicators of social capital in previous work (Onyx and Bullen, 1997). As additions had however, been made to the scales in order to assess the different elements of social capital that have been subsequently theoretically developed, each scale was tested for reliability to ensure that all questions within each scale still tested the same basic concepts. The results for the two communities in table 5.2 indicate that there was an ‘acceptable’ (0.6) to ‘higher than acceptable’ (0.8) level of reliability in the subject being assessed in both communities, for each scale.

Table 5.2: Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability scores

	‘Your Community’ Q.1- 26	‘Inter Community’ Q.27- 33	‘Local Government’ Q.34 - 42	‘Inter Government’ Q. 43 – 48
Corowa Shire	α .7396	α .6365	α .7841	α .7863
Murray Shire	α .6762	α .6687	α .7483	α .8163

The data that were obtained from the surveys were unbalanced in both the number of responses received in each community and also in terms of the number of questions in each of the four scales. Due to this, the analysis of variance and the associated ‘F statistic’ could not be used to analyse the data and instead a Residual Maximum Likelihood (REML) analysis was performed. In the first instance the model fitted to the data was as follows:

Response variable: Average Score per scale
 Fixed Terms: Scale + Shire + Topic* Shire
 Random Terms: Person

The significance of the fixed terms in the model is given in table 5.3. The Wald statistics are distributed as Chi squared statistics with the degrees of freedom given in the table.

Table 5.3 Statistical significance of differences in mean scores

Fixed Term	Wald statistic	d. f.	Probability
Between Scales	124.47	3	p<0.001
Between SHIRE	0.17	1	p=0.679
Within Scale Between Shires	2.06	3	p=0.561

As this analysis indicated, given that there were no statistically significant differences in the scores between Shires or within the scales between the Shires, possible co-variates were also examined for their affect on the responses in each scale and/or Shire. REML analysis was again used to examine the potential affect of the co-variates of employment, age group, length of residence in the Shire and family circumstance, on the responses, by both shire and scale, to explore if these demographic variables affected the scores for each scale or Shire. The model for this analysis was as follows:

Response variable: Average Score per scale
 Fixed Terms: Covariates + Scale + Shire + Topic* Shire +
 Covariates*Scale + Covariates*Shire +
 Covariates*Scale*Shire
 Random Terms: Person

This statistical analysis is discussed in the following sections of this chapter in regard to the findings revealed and the depth it lends to our understanding of the social capital in these two communities.

5.3 Data interpretation

The questionnaires were implemented in both communities in the same six month period from February to July 2004. When the mean values of the responses in each category were compared, there was no statistically significant difference between the two communities. A small difference appeared between Corowa and Murray Shire in the first category, which indicated that Corowa had a higher level of society centred bonding and bridging social capital than Murray Shire; however this was not statistically significant. When the categories were controlled for demographic variation, there was still no difference between the two communities in their mean response to the question categories, as outlined in table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Averaged (Mean) scores across all questions in each scale

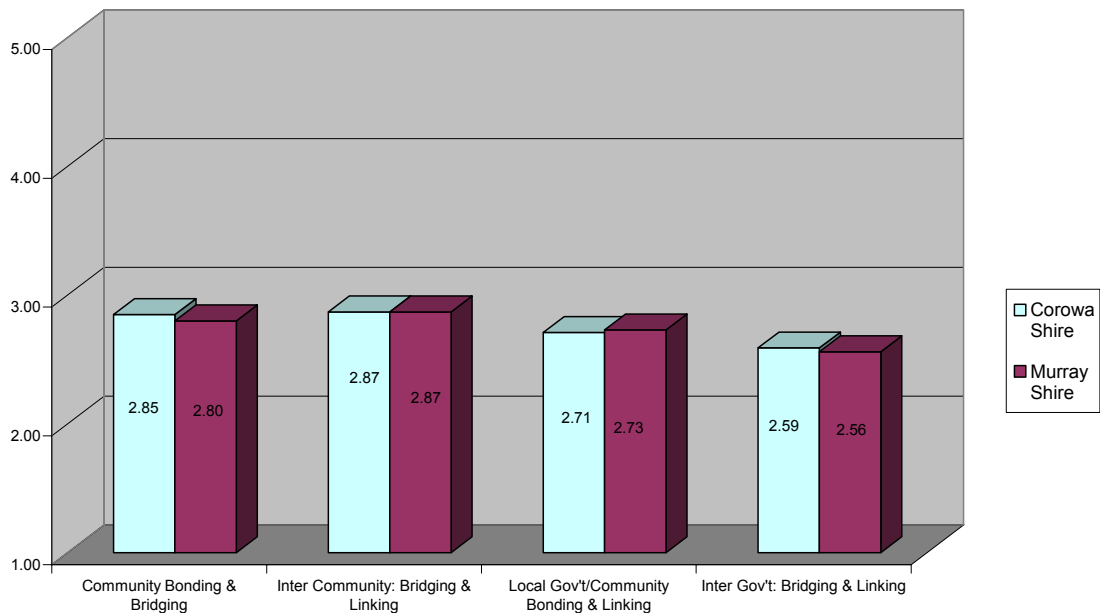
	SHIRE	
Question Scale	Corowa	Murray
1: Your community	2.854	2.796
2: Inter Community	2.866	2.868
3: Local Government	2.708	2.731
4: Inter Government	2.589	2.563

Note: Standard error of difference²⁹ for comparisons at same level of Question scale: 0.05185
 Standard error of difference for comparisons at same level of Shire: 0.04207

The mean scores of the community by question scales are also represented in figure 5.1 to demonstrate visually, the lack of variation in mean scores for each question scale in the respective Shires.

²⁹ Significance in data is identified by two or more standard errors of difference in all data presented in the data analysis.

Figure 5.1: Mean scores by community and question scale



The difference however, between question scales in both Shires is strongly significant, reflected in the significant score under ‘Between Question Scale’ in table 5.4, and less notably in figure 5.1. However, this is to be expected, as it reflects the difference between the separate elements of community social capital which are being assessed in each of the scales. The differences between the aggregate of scores for the Shires, and within the scales’ mean scores between each Shire, are not significant.

Given the lack of difference in the two Shires in each scale, each scale was then also examined for any difference within each Shire as a result of the demographic factors of age, education, length of residence, employment or family circumstance. When the data were controlled for the effect of these demographic variables in each scale for both Shires, four factors were identified as significant (education, age group, longevity and children) and were consequently examined further, the results of which are detailed in table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Factors affecting Shire and question scale

Fixed Terms	Wald statistic	d.f.	Probability
Education	19.2	4	p < 0.001
Employed	4.82	1	p = 0.028
Age group by question category	57.78	9	p < 0.001
Longevity by Question category	45.38	6	p < 0.001
Children by Question category	26.11	3	p < 0.001
Age group by Shire	10.63	3	p = 0.017

Using education as a covariate affecting social capital scores, analysis identified that the scores for those respondents whose education levels were TAFE Certificate or diploma and above were one standard deviation or greater, higher than those educated up to and including Year 12 level (table 5.6). This indicates the existence of greater social capital being also associated with higher levels of education. A difference in the level of social capital would be expected to be associated with the education levels of respondents, in that higher overall scores would indicate greater community, inter community, and local government connections and awareness of inter government activity, which has previously been theoretically associated with higher levels of education (Coleman, 1990, 300; Loury, 1977).

Table 5.6: Mean score for education

Education	Number of respondents	Mean Score
Less than Year 12	308	2.669
Year 12	137	2.697
TAFE certificate or Diploma	160	2.847
Undergraduate Degree	62	2.841
Postgraduate qualification	60	2.813

Note: Average standard error of difference: 0.06490

In terms of the difference in the way in which each age groups answered the scales, there is little between the older age groups, but there is a distinct difference in the way in which questions were answered in the younger age groups (less than 40 and between 40 and 60 years of age) compared to older age groups, as detailed in

table 5.7. Younger persons (less than 40 years) answering the questions relating to ‘your government’ and ‘inter government’ scales, registered lower mean scores by more than one standard deviation, compared with older persons, across both communities. This highlights the likelihood of less linking with local government, or perceptions of local government linking with other levels of government, in this age group.

Table 5.7: Mean score on question scale by age

Age Group	No. of Respondents	QUESTION SCALE MEAN SCORE			
		Your Community	Inter Community	Local Gov't	Inter Gov't
< 40	119	2.762	2.931	2.484	2.274
40 – 59	289	2.823	2.903	2.671	2.433
60 – 70	180	3.006	2.994	2.887	2.721
> 70	139	2.961	2.766	2.925	2.833

Note: Average standard error of difference at same level of question category: 0.08609

Average standard error of difference at same level of Age group: 0.06646

Overall the patterns displayed in the mean score responses affirm what would be expected of the age groups within the scales. In the first scale (‘Your Community’), a sense of positive belonging and connection increases with age. More than one standard deviation increase in the positive community connections was also registered in the age category of 60 to 70 years of age. In the second scale (‘Inter Community’) the mean scores remain largely unchanged up to the age of 70 when they decline by more than a standard deviation, indicating lower social capital in this group, an outcome which could be expected given the reduced mobility and social networks of the age category. In regard to the third scale (‘Local Government’), the positive responses and higher social capital, indicated by increased mean scores of more than one standard deviation, increase with the age category. This is explicable in the increasing political exposure of people as they age and the increased time they may have to become engaged in community

politics as family lifecycles change. This increasing political awareness is also reflected in the fourth scale ('Inter Government') which aimed to assess respondents' perception of their local government's interaction with other levels of government. There was no difference in the way in which respondents across the two communities answered this group of questions.

Concerning the way in which each age group answered the scales, in both the age groups of below forty, and between forty and sixty years of age, there is a notable difference in the way in which they answered the scales one, two and three ('Your Community', 'Inter Community' and 'Local Government') and also between scales three ('Local Government') and four ('Inter Government'). The mean scores for question scales three and four were more than a standard deviation lower than question scales one and two in both the younger age groups. This would suggest that across both communities, those under the age of 60 felt less confident of their connections with local government, or of local government's connections with higher levels of government. This may mean several things: they are aware of their community obligations to be engaged, but feel they do not have the connections; or an alternative possibility is that they traditionally feel obliged to trust the local government to take care of their political concerns, but are not otherwise notably engaged. In terms of older residents – those sixty years and over – there was no difference in the way in which they answered the scales except in those aged 70 years and older, between the first and second scales ('Your' and 'Inter Community'). In this category of respondents they scored a little lower, which is not surprising given their diminishing social networks and mobility.

Given the differences between the age groups by scale, the data were then also analysed for differences in Shire by age group to see if these differences in age

group responses were restricted to particular communities, or were equally reflected in both case study locations. The results are detailed in table 5.8.

Table 5.8: Mean score across all scales for age group by Shire

Age Group	No. of Respondents	SHIRE	
		Corowa	Murray
< 40	119	2.544	2.681
40 – 59	289	2.729	2.686
60 – 70	180	2.832	2.972
> 70	139	2.952	2.790

Note: Average standard error of difference at same level of Shire 0.08349

Average standard error of difference at same level of age group: 0.07568

The difference in the way that age groups answer the scales is reflected in both communities. There is no statistical difference between the Shires, indicating that the age based responses were uniformly represented regardless of Shire.

In terms of the difference between the ways in which respondents answered scales based on whether or not they had children, the only notable difference was in the fourth scale; the perceptions of the level of interaction that local government has with other levels of government. Those with children had a higher mean score (and therefore this type of social capital) in this scale, than those without. This may indicate a broader external awareness amongst those respondents with children and may be due to their potential exposure to more diverse social networks.

In regard to longevity of residence in the community, the data were analysed by three categories: those respondents who had been living in the community for less than ten years, between 10 and 20 years, and those who had been living in the community for longer than 20 years. The mean score of their responses were then segregated by question category to provide the following results in table 5.9.

Table 5.9: Mean score for longevity by question scale

Longevity	No. of respondents	Question Scale Mean Score			
		Your Community	Inter Community	Local Gov't	Inter Gov't
< 10	265	2.805	2.921	2.625	2.351
10 – 20	191	2.863	2.855	2.706	2.550
> 20	271	2.996	2.920	2.894	2.795

Note: Average standard error of difference at same level of Question Category: 0.06146

Average standard error of difference at same level of Longevity: 0.05447

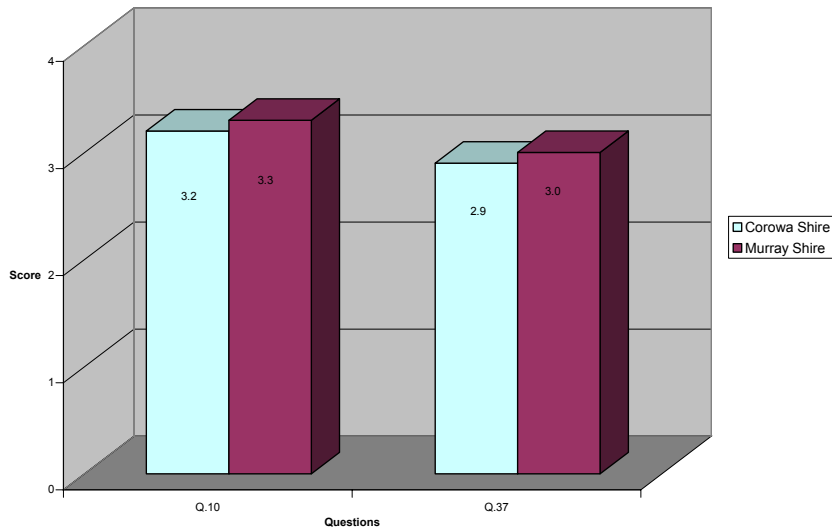
Once again, this table demonstrates differences that can reasonably be expected according to longevity of residence within each question scale. The longer the respondent had been resident in the community, the higher the mean score (and therefore type of social capital) and more connected with the community and resources they felt. Although, as stated previously, there was no difference in the way in which each community answered the questions, there is a noteworthy difference between the mean score of respondents in each of the three ‘longevity’ categories in the fourth scale - ‘Inter Government’ (bridging and linking). This may indicate that with more time experienced in the community, residents become more aware of their local government bridging and linking networks with other government resources. There is also a difference in the mean scores in the scales one, three and four for those who have lived in the communities for more than twenty years. Here respondents consistently register higher mean scores for these types of social capital (community and local government bridging and perceptions of government linking) than shorter term residents. This indicates greater attachment to community, local government and greater perceptions of local government interaction with other levels of government. Not surprisingly, there is no noteworthy difference in the second scale (‘Inter Community’) between the longer and shorter terms residents. Shorter term residents would bring with them, or continue to maintain, connections with external community resources from their

previous community of residence, while in the case of long term community residents, bridging is unlikely to increase with increased longevity in the community, but would rather be expected to decrease due to age and immobility, or simply an increased comfort factor with local facilities and services.

5.4 Qualitative question responses

When qualitative answers to questions of feelings were analysed (question 10: 'Do you feel happy to help out people in your community?' and question 37: 'Do you feel that the Shire Council representatives change often enough?'), there was again no notable difference between the two communities. The following graphs, in figures 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4, show the responses to these two questions, however while they are compared here quantitatively, it is for the purposes of summarising the data only. The responses were categorised by theme and then summarised in the following graphs, with the objective of providing a relative indication of the references to each of the themes uniformly identified in both communities. The only exception to this was in question thirty seven (figure 5.4), where an additional two themes were identified, being that 'regular Council elections ensured appropriate process'; and that the respondent did not 'know enough/was not interested/or had never thought about it'. This information simply provides another insight into the survey data that is otherwise unavailable, with the purpose of adding some dimension to the thought processes behind the respondents' answers. What it does confirm, from yet another perspective, is that the manner in which the respondents answered the questions and the thought processes behind them were very much the same in both communities.

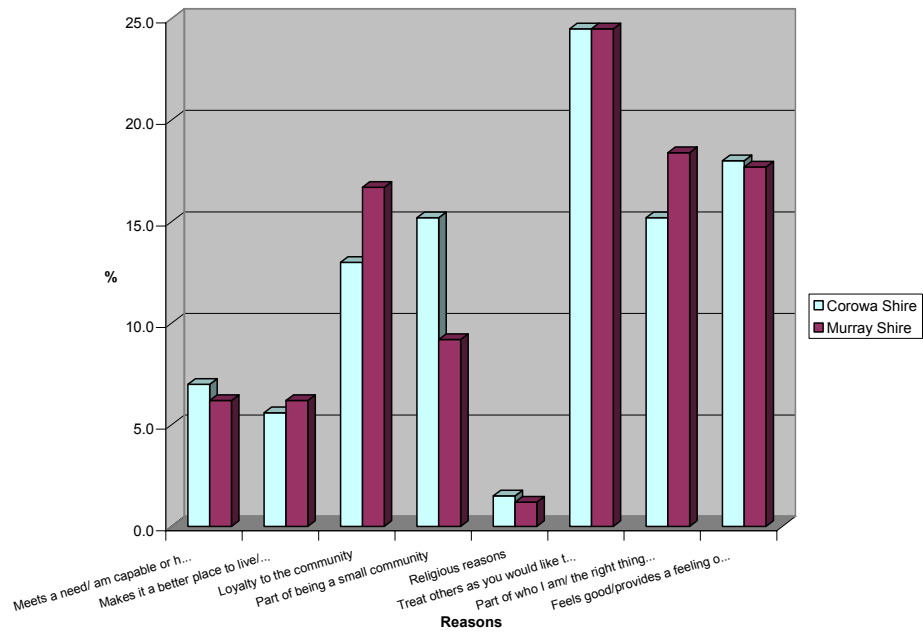
Figure 5.2: Mean scores questions 10 and 37³⁰



As is evident from these summary mean scores of each of the questions here in table 5.2, there is little difference between the communities, being only 0.1 of a point in each case.

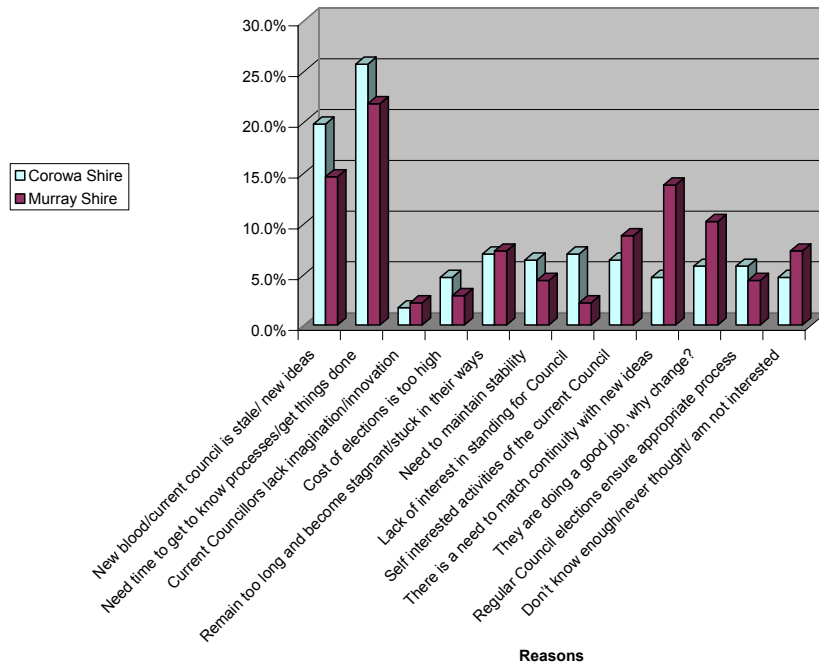
³⁰ Question 10 was “Do you feel happy to help out people in your community?” and question 37 was “Do you feel that the Shire council representatives change often enough?”

Figure 5.3: Question 10 - Explanations of responses to being happy to help people in the community



It can be seen here in table 5.3 that, although there is variation within the specific responses, the responses are potentially interchangeable. For example, the reasons of 'loyalty to the community' and 'being part of a small community' could be interpreted as one and the same thing, while to be true to the data they were coded separately. Coding these responses together, however, results in the results for each Shire looking similar with the variation in percentages being 28.2% for Corowa and 25.9% for Murray Shire.

Figure 5.4: Question 37 - Explanations of responses to frequency of Council changes



Once again, although there is a variation within the explanatory categories between the communities, figures 5.4 and 5.3 are for comparative purposes only and cannot be regarded statistically, given the qualitative manner in which the data were provided and thematically assessed. The concern raised about a lack of interest in stepping forward to be elected on Council is noteworthy however, as it was considered more of an issue in the change over of Councils in the Corowa Shire than in the Murray Shire. By the same token, stability was of greater concern to the respondents in the Murray shire. It is important also to highlight though, that the above categorisation of the qualitative explanation of responses may have suffered from incorrect interpretations, due to the wording of some explanations.

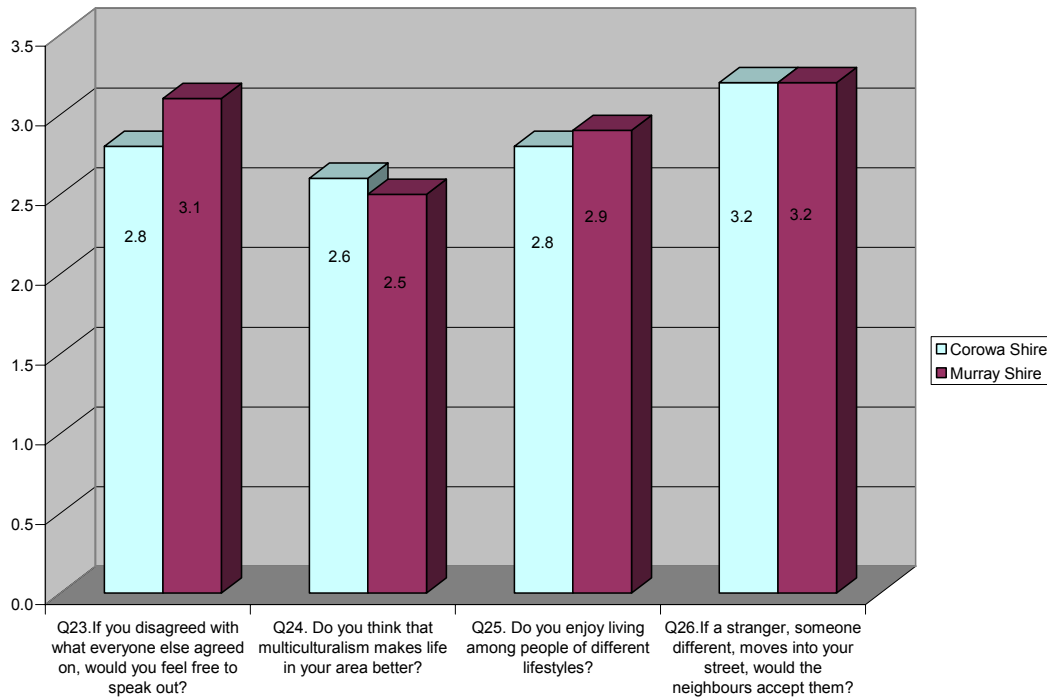
5.5 Diversity and tolerance

Underpinning one of the assumptions adopted in the methodology (chapter four) was the notion that tolerance and the capacity to accept diversity is an element of social capital. This aspect of interpreting social capital is broadly supported by

Australian discussants of the concept as outlined both in chapter three and by Winter et al (2000). Consequently, the results to these specific questions in the survey are worthy of particular attention, and are presented graphically in figure 5.5. The questions on diversity and tolerance were those taken directly from Onyx and Bullen's work (Onyx and Bullen, 1997, 13) and were utilised in the survey as part of the scale looking at bonding and bridging within the community. There was no statistically significant difference between the community responses to any of the four questions. This is notable given the notion that perceptions of tolerance of diversity indicate higher levels of social capital which facilitate an increased adaptability to change. This is particularly notable given the lack of adaptation undertaken by the Corowa Shire community in the face of economic pressures, raising the question of the relevance of this to our notion of social capital in its connection to prosperity and the ability to adapt economically. This query is further supported by the correlation data which identifies weak to no correlation between the questions on diversity and tolerance³¹ and other questions in the internal community bonding and bridging scale. The difference between the two communities that was evident, (question 23, Figure 5.5) was not statistically significant, and although it would normally suggest a greater level of tolerance and diversity in the community of Murray Shire, in this case it could not be regarded as noteworthy.

31 These were questions 23 to 26 incorporating: "If you disagreed with what everyone else agree on, would you feel free to speak out?"; "Do you think that multiculturalism makes life in your area better?"; "Do you enjoy living among people of different lifestyles?" and "If a stranger, someone different, moves into your street, would the neighbours accept them?"

Figure 5.5: Questions on diversity and tolerance



5.6 Relevance

The findings of this component of the research are quite compelling in that they cast major questions upon the validity of attributing a necessary association between the level of social capital, and community prosperity and vitality (Costello, 2003b; Knack and Keefer, 1997; Offe and Fuchs, 2002, 189-90; Productivity Commission, 2003, ix). These results demonstrate no significant difference between the social capital of the two communities, despite their different levels of prosperity and growth. Further, the lack of apparent association between levels of social capital and economic prosperity is equally reflected in either traditional measurements of social capital (question scale one and two) or with the expansion of those measures to include government (question scale categories three and four), as there were no statistically significant difference in the results between the communities in any of these scales. It also calls into question

that strong social capital is responsible for effective local government, which in turn, leads to greater prosperity (Knack, 1999; Knack and Keefer, 1997; Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993). If this were the case, significantly higher mean responses could be expected in Murray shire in relation to the government question scales, when compared to Corowa Shire.

It is important to note that in no way do these findings contradict assertions that higher levels of social capital create more harmonious, and 'easier' communities in which to live (Cox, 1995a), as that question was not the objective here. Nor does it comment on the notion that higher levels of positive social capital may be a pre condition for the effective employment of other factors in the creation of community prosperity. They do cast doubt however, on the claims of a direct causal connection between community bonding, bridging and linking, and circumstances of economic development. While the theoretical validity of the survey may be contested in terms of scales three and four³², and therefore only the first two scales of the survey considered to produce relevant data³³, the result is still the same, however, which is that the quantitative social capital of the two communities has not varied despite their divergent economic fortunes. Therefore social capital, as it has been predominantly assessed in Australia to date, appears to have no direct bearing on community prosperity and vitality in these situations.

32 This may be on the basis of this being the first time that these scales have been used, in spite of these scales having high correlation and reliability scores.

33 Questions in question category categories one and two of the survey were taken from the 'best 36 questions' of previously tested Australian surveys of social capital (Bullen, ; Onyx and Bullen, 1997).

5.7 Summary

The data collected in this research was not able to be analysed using standard analysis of variance techniques due to the difference both in scales and the number of responses in each community. Consequently, REML analysis was employed in order to undertake this comparison of the two communities. This analysis revealed no variation between the two communities in the manner in which they responded to each of the scales, indicating the same social capital in each scale – ‘Your Community’ (internal bonding and bridging), ‘Inter Community’ (external bridging), ‘Local Government’ (community and local government bonding and linking) and ‘Inter Government’ (bridging and linking between local government and other levels of government) – in both communities. There was variance, however, in the levels of social capital between the scales which was expected, but again the difference between scales was the same in both communities.

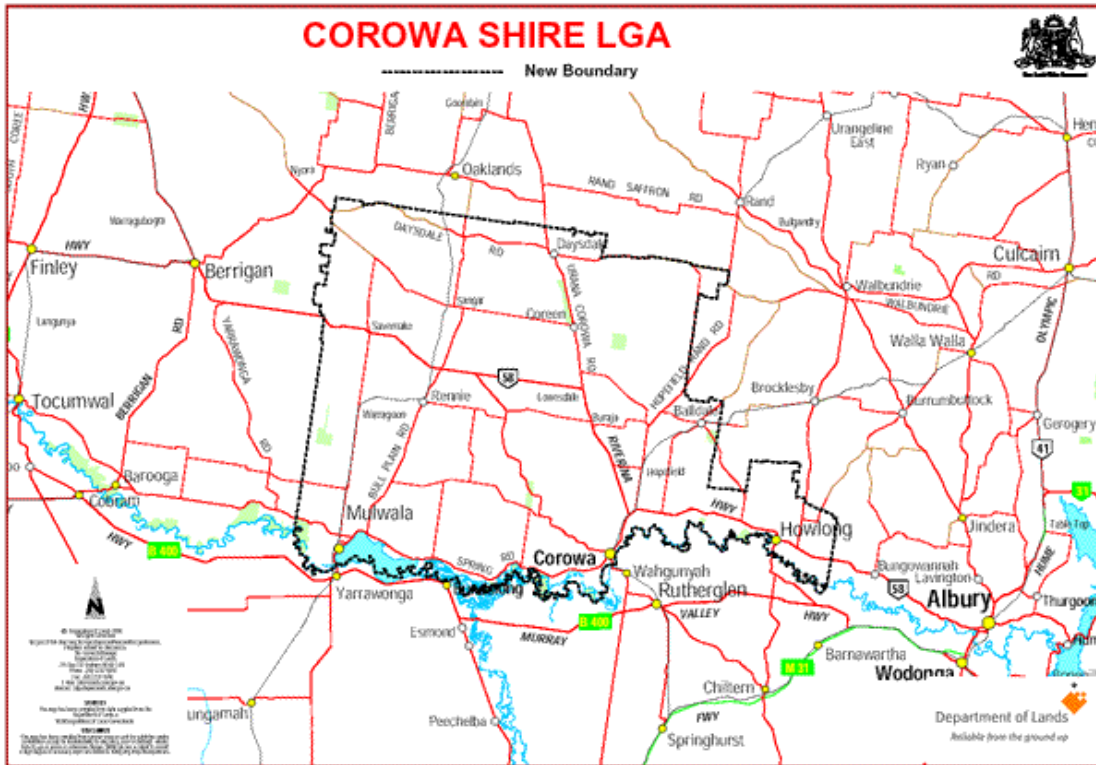
Given this lack of variance between the communities, the data was then analysed for differences in responses within the scales that may have been affected by demographic factors. Analysis was undertaken to identify those demographic factors affecting the nature of responses within in scale, and were identified as education, employment, age, length of residence in the community and family lifecycle (presence of children). These results were then re examined on the basis of these covariates, and did reveal expected patterns within the framework of social capital theoretical understandings of community interaction. These were that bridging and linking networks increase in middle age and then decrease again with age; higher education is associated with increased bridging and linking networks, as are the presence of children in the home with bridging networks. Employment, while being identified as a factor affecting the scores of the scales, was difficult to analyse usefully due to deficiencies in the instrument to adequately

define the basis for responses. Length of residence in the community also identify explicable patterns of greater bridging networks associated with newer or shorter term residents, and increased bonding with an increased length of residency. Largely, this survey added little to our current understandings of the concept of social capital, and also casts doubt on the connection between social capital, as assessed in this manner, and community prosperity.

Although the data from this quantitative analysis point to a lack of connection between social capital and prosperity, the detail behind questions ten and thirty seven reveal that there are perhaps more complex factors at work behind those able to be assessed in this social capital instrument. This component of research revealed no difference between the communities, however the qualitative research conducted via interviews and media analysis of both the ten year period, where the most divergent growth occurs, and up until mid 2004, uncovered the nuances of interactions in these two communities. The qualitative data identify distinct differences in the way in which each community operated, and revealed factors which may account for the differences in their levels of development.

The following two chapters discuss the data procured from interviews and media analysis in the two case study Shires, in the overarching context of community and government relationship networks. The objective is to examine these networks in the light of the synergistic interpretation of social capital to understand if this perspective can provide explanations at the qualitative level as to the differences in resilience, vivacity and the fortunes of these two Shires.

CHAPTER SIX: Corowa Shire's impetus, networks and resources



Map source: © Land and Property Information - www.lpi.nsw.gov.au

- KEY**
- Vegetation
 - Major Roads and Highways
 - Council Border

Note: 1 The Shire boundaries as shown here are subsequent to the incorporation of Howlong into the Shire, which occurred with the shires amalgamation announced in May 2004; after to the social capital survey had been undertaken. Previously, the eastern boundary of the Shire of Corowa continued down past Balldale to the Murray River.

The quantitative survey data provided a snap shot in time of Corowa community's relationship networks. They did not, however, reveal how that particular situation has evolved. This chapter looks in more detail at the relationship networks of Corowa, taking into account some of its historical development, but more particularly economic and social occurrences since 1991, combined with data from community members about their Shire as recorded in early 2004. Through this

qualitative research, explanations may be identified for Corowa's levels of social capital in relation to lack of growth in the community since 1991.

Two sources of information were used to build a profile of the community since 1991. The first was interviews with key members of the community, in the Council, business organisations, community groups and voluntary bodies. These were augmented by interviews with representatives of state and federal government departments, other Councils and consultants who had had interaction with the community since 1991, but more commonly since 2002. This was when the Council began acting on State requirements for community economic and social planning, and sought non community assistance to do so. The second main source was a review of the Corowa Free Press, from 1991 to 2000 inclusively to coincide with the ABS Census period used (see discussion in chapter four). Although the *Border Mail* is another paper which is considered to be a local paper, it is produced in Albury as against the Corowa Free Press which is produced locally and published on Wednesday of each week. The paper covers the Corowa Shire, along with the nearby NSW towns of Berrigan, Oaklands, Urana and the neighbouring Victorian towns of Wahgunyah, Rutherglen, Chiltern and Springhurst, which are located in the Indigo Shire (2001b). The paper reports on events, Council actions and activities, and NSW and Victorian state issues affecting its constituency. The main focus of the paper is centred on Corowa, with sections of the paper at various times also being specifically dedicated to activities in Rutherglen, and Yarrawonga/Mulwala. Only one issue was missing from the review as it was absent from the catalogue of the State Library of NSW, being that of February 3rd, 1999, otherwise all other issues were reviewed.

The story that emerges from the qualitative data is that the Corowa Shire Community is a conservative community, disinclined to change with well

entrenched norms and values. This situation has however been shifting but only slightly and slowly over the period since 1991, as a result of the economic pressures on the community. The two most notable events in Corowa Shire causing this pressure were the high temperature incinerator proposal of 1990 and the introduction of poker machine gambling to Victoria in 1992, both augmented by the decreasing economic benefit in farming. The traditionally conservative and non participative nature of the community was challenged by these events, forcing it to reassess previous approaches to community issues.

The detailed discussion of the Incinerator Project and its implications later in this chapter, reveals that this and other events, such as the Victorian introduction of gaming (Doughney, 2002), caused little permanent shift in community attitudes toward actions required to counteract or minimise the impacts of these events. Although a level of civic community leadership emerged to prevent the incinerator project from going ahead, this was not sustained. Rather, during the period from 1991 to 2001, the community had a tendency to turn inward and look for scapegoats to explain misfortune, causing fracturing of community relationship networks and the creation of very strongly bonded, but distinctly separate, groups within the community. This fracturing appears repeatedly, between the Council and community, community organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Association, between businesses in the community such as the Clubs, and even within the Council itself.

Despite this factional segregation of the community, two elements of the Corowa community are extremely important to note. Firstly, evidence points to the subtle but slow change in community attitude in terms of the need for the Shire to undertake change. This becomes apparent in 1991 and 1996 in the face of a perceived crisis. The first occasion when this came to the surface was the

establishment of the Corowa and District Concerned Citizens (CDCC) organisation, formed in response to the proposal to situate a high temperature incinerator in the community. Although the CDCC has waxed and waned since its inception, community engagement generally appeared to be increasing in 2004, with the development of community economic and social plans which elicited initial participation and will require ongoing input from the community. According to external stakeholders in those processes, the requirement for these plans and the necessary participation by the community appeared to reinvigorate its sense of social empowerment and responsibility. This is possibly a central factor in the emerging change in the community, whereby they were empowered to utilise their networks and build stronger linking relationships through increased access to decision making processes. As important, the second aspect that must be noted about the community is that, at no time was the perception evident within the community that they really needed to change anything. They did not perceive any lasting economic issue for the community and felt that generally speaking the community had been, and continued to be, well positioned socially and economically.

The interview data reveal however, a division amongst the attitudes of respondents. There are those who believe the Council to be very helpful and co-operative, in terms of assisting with requests; and those who perceive the Council as being very conservative with a set agenda of its own. This second group of respondents see Council as operating, not so much 'in secret', but rather that it does not perceive a necessity to obtain approval from the community for its decisions or activities, given that they have been elected by the community.

In some contrast, the media review reveals progressively changing attitudes within some sectors of Council and community to the process of their interaction, albeit a

slow one. Given that the media review is of the period 1991 to 2000 and that the interviews were conducted, in the main, in 2004, it is possible that the division that emerged in the interviews may be a result of this growing change in attitudes, and the newer community members do not carry the same memory of Council attitudes and actions as older residents.

The qualitative data collected suggest that previously conceived notions of social hierarchy in the community may have impeded its adaptation to changing circumstance. That is, an over reliance on the established communication networks of the traditional 'ruling class' of the Shire – or original farming families as represented in the Council - proved inadequate to address the more recent economic circumstances, resulting in a stagnation of the economic climate of the community. This is in spite of the community's feelings of being well connected, as indicated by the statistical survey data which tells a story of a community who feel that they have as strong and diverse levels of social relationship networks as other more prosperous communities.

6.1 History of Corowa Shire

Corowa Shire is historically a self sufficient Shire, geographically cut off from Sydney and legislatively cut off from Melbourne. The history of Corowa is synonymous with that of many inland settlements throughout the eastern portion of Australia. It has a scattered but persistent pattern of settlement from the early 1830s onwards. Corowa Shire is distinguished from other inland New South Wales communities by being located on the Murray River. Corowa, as with other settlements along the Murray River, experienced the economic detriment caused by the legal barriers of the two colonies and therefore had a vested interest in resolving these issues through a federation of the colonies. Corowa claims a major

role in the progress of the Federation issue, as it was there that the decision was made to draft a constitution for the federation of the colonies. The achievement of Federation in 1901 is an event in which the Corowa Shire takes not only a degree of credit but also from which, publicly, it takes a sense of identity, pride and importance in the rural landscape.

The 1830s saw the movement of settlers away from the immediate areas of Port Phillip Bay and Sydney town, further encouraged by the Land Acts introduced between 1831 and 1880 covering grazing leases, selection and the formalisation of squatters' claims. These land acts were aimed at encouraging permanent settlement and also, from the 1860s onwards, to break up large landholdings by squatters and encourage the development of townships. In 1838 the first white man's station was set up in the current Corowa Shire by Charles Cropper and his partner Thompson. The property was called 'Brocklesby', and covered the current township of Corowa (Burton, 1973, 25), despite the township of Brocklesby now being some distance to the north east of Corowa township. The movement of Europeans into the Murray region invariably caused conflict and clashes with the Aboriginals, who were settled densely along the Murray River and attempted to retain their rights to the land and its resources (Pennay, 2001, 14). What followed was a tense period whereby the Aboriginals either learnt to live outside the Europeans' settlements, possibly finding work on squatters' runs, or were forcibly relocated to reserves which were set up to contain them (Pennay, 2001, 17). Compared to other communities in the region which established indigenous reserves, Corowa succeeded in either driving the Aboriginals away or forcing them to assimilate to the European way of life to achieve a level of homogeneity in the community.

Settlement in the area was slow, and largely in the form of sizable squatter claims, as the area was productive grazing land. Settlement was helped by the increase in river traffic on the Murray River, which commenced in 1854 with the arrival of the *Lady Augusta* in Wahgunyah/Corowa. River transport was a major benefit to towns like Corowa as the distances to Melbourne, which was the closer to Corowa of the two closest capital cities, could be greatly reduced using the river to Echuca. Corowa was three months by bullock dray from Melbourne (Burton, 1973, 47) and, with Echuca being closer, it became the main trading point of goods from along the Murray to Melbourne. The river provided fewer climatic impediments to transport than road and, consequently, wool, wine, meat and other goods could make the much shorter journey to or from Melbourne via Echuca, than direct to Melbourne by cart (Burton, 1973, 55). The river trade notably encouraged the development of industry in the region, as although wine grown and produced in the Corowa region was on the market in Melbourne by 1851, its volume increased greatly after 1854 with the introduction of river steamers.

The gold rush of Beechworth in 1853 and Rutherglen in 1858 were the next notable events to affect the development of Corowa. Both these rushes brought large numbers of fortune hunters into these areas that required food and equipment, providing a stable market for local producers of beef, mutton, rice, flour and other food stuffs. Corowa even had its own brief gold rush in 1869. The major benefits of the gold rushes for Corowa were however, not in gold, but in the activity and wealth that it brought to the region. The Robertson Land Act of 1861 further supported that growth by encouraging a lot of the population to stay in the district after the rushes to pursue agricultural activities. A reserve for the town site of Corowa was gazetted in 1852, with the name being taken from the Aboriginal word, 'Currawa' (Burton, 1973, 35), however it was not until between 1860 and

1880 that Corowa gained pre-eminence over its riverside neighbour, Wahgunyah, established by John Foord. A toll bridge, built in approximately 1863, provided an easy crossing point and subsequently encouraged the development of Corowa township activities such as a post office, butcher shop, hotels and a Court of Petty Sessions. The granting of local powers by the extension of the Police Act in 1865 distinguished Corowa from its neighbour Wahgunyah, as it allowed local control of the law, sanitation, traffic and town amenities. It was also during this time that public schools were opened, telegraph lines established with neighbouring Albury, and a voluntary fire brigade was set up.

The gold rush and the transport issues underlined the fact that Corowa was much closer to Melbourne and disconnected from the legislative centre and structural support of Sydney in New South Wales. This is a circumstance which may underpin the current day attitudes of self sufficiency and norms of shunning external contacts and assistance in the Shire.

The beginnings of community sentiment can be identified with the establishment of a citizens' Progress Association in 1876, the formation of the Border United Football Club in 1877 (which still exists), the first Corowa Agricultural and Pastoral Show in 1878 and the first issue of Corowa's own weekly newspaper, the *Corowa Free Press* in 1875. As a result of the drawing together of community members in these forums and the communication this allowed, agitation also began at this time for such things a local hospital, the incorporation of the town as a municipality, and for amenities such as a reliable water supply.

Nowadays, Corowa's major claim to fame, as mentioned previously, is for its role in Australia's Federation in 1901. The history of Federation does pay its due to the official role that Corowa played through hosting two conferences on Federation in

1893. What makes Corowa (and surrounding areas) stand out in the discussion of Federation was that these settlers succeeded in crystallising the need for a federation of the colonies in a manner that saw beyond the political perspectives, highlighting the everyday encumbrances that colonial settlement had brought to border settlers. The Border Federation League was set up in Corowa in 1893 to highlight the real and frustrating issue of free trade and the benefits that would be gained from a federation of the colonies and the abolition of inter-colonial trade barriers (Burton, 1973, 123). Unfortunately, the association with Federation and Corowa's adoption of this event to shape its identity is acknowledged both by some in the community and external observers to have created a sense of 'looking back' rather than forward in the community (Consultant 1 & 3; Council Member 4).

As a community, the periods of World Wars I and II were also a defining time for Corowa. A sense of local patriotism had emerged with the Boer War, which saw the establishment of a Corowa branch of the NSW Patriotic Fund, set up to help those who had fought in the Boer War. The advent of the World War I saw the Progress Association suggest in 1918 that local serving members be commemorated with an Honour Avenue of trees. It was also in May of that same year that a Repatriation Committee was established for the Corowa Municipality and Coreen Shire, responsible for organising 'welcome homes' for service personnel, settling them back into civilian life, and providing financial assistance in destitute cases, as well as raising money for a proposed War Memorial. The committee also purchased two cottages, which were used by servicemen and their families until after the World War II. The committee continued this and associated welfare work until 1969, when it was disbanded as the Corowa sub branch of the Returned Services League took over the role (Burton, 1973, 165). World War II saw the establishment of the Corowa War Service Social Committee and the Volunteer

Defence Corps in 1940, followed by the Women's Auxiliary of the RSL which was formed in 1945. Throughout the documented history of the region it is evident that the majority of these organisations came about as a result of public meetings which identified needs in the community and then pulled together to act upon them. Often these activities, along with community services such as the fire brigade, were financed through public subscription, agreed to in the forums of public meetings. Consequently, prior to 1990 there was leadership in the community, but where this was based – Council or from the civic community - is not evident. What is evident is that Corowa got on with being self sufficient and did not attempt to engage with the potential bureaucratic support it may have been able to procure from Sydney.

The people of Corowa, operating under the extended Police Act of 1865, commenced to agitate in 1876 for the incorporation of the area into a Municipality. In the absence of a unified voice for the community the Progress Association, which was also established in 1876 by a community meeting, called for common concerns that were not taken care of by the colonial government to be addressed and acted in the stead of a local Council. The Progress Association continued in this role until a municipality was established in 1903. This was the first example of the community pulling together in times of administrative need. Subsequent to the incorporation of Corowa as a municipality and given the need for an efficient electricity supply to both Corowa and the Shire of Coreen, the two areas were encouraged to work together to minimise administrative arrangements. Coreen Shire was not in favour of a consolidation with the Corowa Municipality due to fears of the loss of adequate representation (Burton, 1973, 143). Although it had been proposed that either a franchise agreement between the two councils for the provision of electricity (considered the most economical) be established or that a complete amalgamation of the two Councils occur, Coreen Shire initially rejected

both options. Given this, the Corowa Municipality saw amalgamation with Coreen Shire as the only option and submitted this as a solution to the Minister of the Department of Local Government in July 1954. An inquiry was held by the Department in November of the same year, which also recommended the amalgamation, despite a belated acceptance by the Coreen Shire of the franchise proposal. As a result, and in spite of Coreen Shire's dissension, Corowa Shire was formed through the amalgamation of the Corowa Municipality and the Coreen Shire on the 21st of June 1955. Although on their own, these events seem somewhat marginal in the overall history of the area, these divisions in identity and representation may underpin the fracturing in the community that is evident in the data collected in this study.

These days Corowa Shire is described by the Victorian Country Press, publishers of the Corowa Free Press, in the following terms;

[L]ocated on the Murray River 50kms downstream from Albury, mixed farming enterprises dominate the agricultural sector of Corowa Shire, and farms occupy the majority of the rural land. Whilst agriculture is a major employer accounting for over 18.9% [15.4% as at 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001b)] of all jobs, the traditional dominance of agriculture in the rural economy is less pronounced than in other rural shires in NSW. Corowa is home to several companies in the agricultural and allied industries, such as Bunge Meat Industries [now QAF Meats] which is largest supplier of pork in Australia. Uncle Tobys has their company plant over in Wahgunyah and the north east is prime wine making territory, with the Rutherglen area supporting 16 wineries. (Victorian Country Press Association Limited, 2001a)

6.2 Features of the community since 1991

From the mid 1960s to 1990 Corowa shire experienced strong growth, however, in 1990 the tide turned. In addition to increased pressure on agricultural profits through trade restructuring and droughts (Gray and Lawrence, 2001b; Lawrence, 2003; 2005), two other events put financial pressure on Corowa. The change in Victorian gambling legislation put financial pressure on the clubs in Corowa, as with all NSW border towns along the Murray, and the proposed high temperature incinerator, challenged the community to take a proactive role in Shire planning processes. The community's reactions surrounding these two events, highlight the society centred nature of the community's relationship networks, and the potential for a reassessment of how both the community and the Council operate and interact. Together, with more recent statutory planning and reporting requirements of NSW Councils, these events caused changes in interaction, not only between community organisations and with Council, though that has been the main focus since 1991, but also with departments and organisations external to the community that can assist in the development of Corowa Shire's prosperity in the future, increasing its resilience in the face of continued change.

6.2.1 High temperature incinerator

The positioning of a high temperature toxic waste incinerator had been on the agenda of the Federal, NSW and Victorian state governments since 1987 and various locations had been lobbied for its location. Corowa Shire was one of these and on the promise of jobs, income and funding support, the Council successfully sought to have the incinerator located in its Shire, as was reported by Findlay in her description of the announcement:

In a joint statement issued on September 25, 1990, Tim Moore, NSW Minister for the Environment, Andrew McCutcheon, then Victorian Minister for Planning and Urban Growth, and Ros Kelly, Federal Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories "congratulated Corowa on their successful submission for the High Temperature Incinerator". (1991)

However, this success was met with strong criticism from within the community who, as an article which appeared in the Bulletin Magazine described, rebelled against the suggestion that it was prepared to risk its environment for an economic trade off. More importantly, they felt left out and betrayed by the Council who had progressed the application without community consultation. This was demonstrated by the description of the events by Beder in an article for the Bulletin, which stated that

Despite three years of public consultation most of the 4,500 people of Corowa claimed they had never been consulted and 3500 angry people attended a public meeting in October 1990, many spilling out into the street and watching the four hour meeting on a video mounted outside the hall. Local pressure mounted, 17,000 signatures were collected on a petition, and in November the Greiner government backed down saying it had been advised that Corowa was an unacceptable location because of its proximity to the Murray River. (1991)

In terms of the community's comments on the situation, one resident in particular was so concerned about the Council's submission that he helped organise the Corowa and District Concerned Citizens Association – the CDCC – to formally

challenge and, if agreed, reject the project. At the point where the project had been won by the Council, the community member said that

I went to [councillor], I said "God [name omitted] do you know what you've got here?" And he said "Well I'm not real sure, what is it?" And I said "Well I studied a bit of science when I was at Uni and we actually studied some of this technology, it's not great, but I think you need to look at it again". ... and he said "Yeah, Well I couldn't quite understand why they voted for it". He said "I'm worried about it". And I said "Well I would be bloody worried about it". And of course then it just blew up from there. (Community Member 1)

According to reports in the Corowa Free Press, subsequent to public meetings and lobbying by the CDCC, the project was overturned and Corowa was deselected as a suitable location for the incinerator. When the incident is explored however, with those external to the community, it becomes evident that there was tremendous pressure exerted on Corowa citizens by those in the Shires surrounding Corowa, to reject the incinerator. Rutherglen Shire, the location of the Uncle Tobys factory, had the owner of Uncle Tobys (then privately owned) tell the engineer of the Shire that if the incinerator project went ahead then the Council could forget about having Uncle Tobys as an employer in the Shire, that they would be getting out (Indigo Shire resident). Further, Councillors of the Hume Shire were intent on ensuring that the project did not go ahead as the farmers in their Shire, along with those in the Urana and Jerilderee Shires, relied on grain storage in Balldale on the northern edge of the Corowa Shire to store and transport their grain. A toxic incinerator would seriously threaten the viability of their grain transport and storage facilities (Ex Hume Shire Councillor). The environmental knowledge to challenge the incinerator decision came from those in Shires around Corowa who used their

contacts to lobby the various government departments and co-opted Greenpeace knowledge to focus on the environmental impact assessment (EIA) which had not been conducted at the time that the project was announced. Those outside the Corowa Shire who knew how the system worked knew that the 'right' EIA would give the Council and the State government a face saving way of moving the project elsewhere (Consultant 3). From the perspective of bridging social capital, these relationships were forced on the Corowa community in this instance, but introduced dynamics that facilitated the strongly bonded community in developing a level of relations with its government body – the Council.

6.2.2 Council and community relations

In addition to the successful overturning of the incinerator proposal, the event had further ramifications for the community. The history of Corowa demonstrates that the people of the Shire have a history of pulling together in times of need, trouble or other major cause and the case of the high temperature incinerator initially presents as an example of this. In reality, as we have seen, the Corowa Shire community was not entirely self motivated, but was assisted into action by surrounding communities. This project did spawn however, a new type of Progress Association (as operated in the 1870s) being the CDCC. The CDCC was instrumental in raising public awareness about the nature of Council and community interaction up until that time.

The removal of the incinerator project from the Corowa Shire did not see the demise of the CDCC. Instead the CDCC called for a 'New Approach to Local Government' (1, Jan 16, 1991), that would open up the operations of Council to free and public scrutiny. The CDCC had invited Ted Mack, promoter of open government, to speak in Corowa, and as a result the Corowa and District Concerned Citizens agreed to write to the Council seeking easy access to Council

minutes in public locations, such as the front office of the Council chambers and the public library; that copies of forthcoming agendas be available at least two working days in advance of Council meetings; and that Council consider changing from day to evening meetings to facilitate attendance by the public. These requests were rejected by Council, as reported in the Corowa Free Press on 6 March that same year, when several Councillors voted against the issuing of agendas in case they were threatened by adversely affected community members. This sequence of events not only demonstrates the lack of community and Council trust in their relations, but is further corroborated by the comments of one community member who reflected that

we set up a process to try and open government up a bit more and to make the Council more accountable and more communicative and we had a CEO at the time at the local Council who was old school and he would do exactly as the Council stated and he [also] knew how to make sure the Councillors voted for what it was he wanted, OK, and he said that publicly on a number of occasions. (CDCC Member1)

These views were endorsed by another community member who said that

I thought they were very authoritarian as a local government...Very much old-style local government representation, they were elected and they would do whatever they liked in the period that they were elected, if you didn't like them you'd vote them out next time...This was the previous government, Yeah, And there are still some members of local government that think like that. (Community Member 1)

As a result, several of the residents on the committee of the CDCC ran for Council in the 1991 elections with the objective of 'opening up' the deliberations of the

Council. The community members, running on the ticket of the CDCC, were successful in achieving positions on Council in the 1991 elections due solely to the fervour created by the Council's omission to adequately consult the community in applying for the incinerator project.

Further investigations into the relationship networks underpinning these events reveal that this process actually saw the farmers of the district in opposition to each other; the original 'Squattocracy' of old farming families against the younger farmers of the district who, although they may have moved away from the area have since returned and are still related to the district's original families. It was also telling to hear the Corowa Shire Council being colloquially referred to by another Shire Council's employee as 'Corowa Shire Council? Oh you mean the 'Farmers Club'!' (Indigo Shire resident). The Council of Corowa was traditionally seen to be comprised of the elite farmers of the district, a circumstance that has now changed with the introduction of town based merchants into Council as well. Interviewees did reveal however, that an 'us' and 'them' attitude between not only Council and active urban based community members, but also within Council between old and new approaches of Councillors, still remains. The persistence of this in 2004 is underlined in the statement that

You find basically that unless it is going to impact on people in the pocket and it's an emotional issue it is very difficult to get them [the community] motivated. That's what we find. (Council Member 1)

Additionally, members of the council's administrative arm see that

It's not easy, the community is very reluctant to get involved unless they can see something directly beneficial and that's not always the case. A lot of hard work goes in before there's any results. (Council Member 2)

Another prominent community member believed the Council provided services, but did not provide any leadership, an attribute that was identified by this person as essential to the future of the community (Community Member 2). This lack of leadership, described as exploring the broad spectrum of interests and opinions and negotiating a level of consensus, was also referred to by another member whose work often requires liaison between Council, community and other government bodies, in her comments about the lack of a proactive position or approach by the Council, saying that

They're not proactive... but they are very obliging as far as requests. If they got more proactive in their support that would make a big difference for sure in terms of getting my objectives done (Community Member 3)

The Council itself acknowledges that it is still very circumspect in its approach: 'Well the Council is very set in their ways there's no doubt about that, it's a fairly conservative Council' (Council Member 2). As recently as December 2005, when asked who the leaders in the community and Council were, two members of the Council agreed that there really were not any leaders in the community (Council Members 1 & 3).

Although the Council has worked on modifying its approach since 1991, this conservative attitude of being separate to the community is reflected in reports in the paper between 1991 and 2000 of its disinclination on many occasions to modify its mode of operation, or to introducing new ideas from outside the Council itself. When the position of General Manager (as it is now known) came up in 1991, it was filled from within, despite a process of advertising the position (1, April 4, 1991). This was further reported on by the Corowa Free Press (3, October 28, 1992) in that Bruce Corcoran had been appointed as the new Shire Clerk, despite calls

from Councillor Piggen that the process of appointing someone should be an open one, rather than pre-ordained just because he was the deputy. Consultants, who worked with the Council on projects between 2001 and 2004, also reinforced that it remains commonly accepted that people within the Council are groomed up for positions to take over as their superiors retire (Consultant 1), and consequently the Council is viewed as a 'closed shop' by the community and external observers.

Other aspects of the Council's operation discouraged increased access of the community to decision making processes. As recently as 1999 a suggestion of a scheduled monthly meeting for the community to meet with Council members to discuss any concerns was rejected by Council (12, December 5, 1999). The process of communication preferred by Councillors was described by an external observer as being that

there is one legitimate way . . . if you are a Councillor you therefore have a legitimate role in defining community needs, and speaking on their behalf. But . . . as a Councillor you have no responsibility in ensuring that information is coming from the rest of the community, but . . . as we've said there are now a few Councillors who are of the new breed who are trying to break that mould and who are themselves involved in other community groups and see themselves as representatives and trying to make that link. (Consultant 2)

The generally accepted method of accessing the power of the Council is through knowing a Council member, and the Councillors largely rely on this as a fair and reasonable method of communication with the community. The limitation of this was well illustrated by comments from another community member who described the change in ability to access Council assistance as

Now her husband is very high in the Shire, so there's a different perspective. What was hard work and "Can we have" and "please may I" all of a sudden has changed. [Now it] has become "Yeah, no problems". It's not what you know, it's who you know. (Community Member 4)

There were and continue to be, however, moves afoot since the CDCC was first created to open up the process of Council deliberations and increase the interaction between the community and Council. Throughout the period under review, there were newspaper reports with increasing frequency of the Council calling for public meetings to discuss projects, plans, and options for the Shire. In fact, at some points they almost went overboard, becoming paralysed by community consultation and public meetings, where they appeared to respond to the call for more open Council by abrogating all responsibility for project decisions to the community. For its part, the community had no recent experience of this approach and while, appearing to appreciate the new level of interaction, they also had no experience of ways in which to reach a consensus. Hence these forums of increased community participation did not assist the Council at all in delivering decisions, mainly because there was no person(s) who had the inclination, ability, experience or understanding of the need to not only discover differing community perspectives, but to also negotiate a consensus. Unfortunately, despite these endeavours to increase interaction, the Council was criticised for this alternative approach, falling into a common government trap when utilising the term 'community consultation', in that only information dissemination was undertaken rather than genuinely seeking community input to which they are prepared to respond. An example of this was reported in the Corowa Free Press on the September 15, 1993 in regard to a public meeting which had been called to discuss public safety issues, where it was reported that

In opening the meeting he [the Mayor] emphasised that it was an information meeting to provide information to the community on recommendations from the Traffic Committee on matters relating to parking, speed limit and pedestrian access to the completed section of Sanger Street. If a public meeting was requested after the information meeting, then one could be held. (Page 1)

The Corowa Shire Council would not be alone in having made the mistake of mislabelling its intentions, as it is one commonly levelled at state and federal government departments, as well as local governments. The Council's employment of these tactics however, regardless of its cognisant intent in using them or not, is worth noting as they undermined community willingness to engage with government structures and become involved – the exact response that Council members continued to bemoan as recently as 2004. This lack of engagement, but not necessarily of opinion, is indicated by the comment from Mrs Clifton, spokeswoman for a group of residents in relation to the Sanger Street (the main street) redevelopment survey undertaken in 1993. It was noted in the report that the results of the survey suggested an overwhelming majority of citizens were opposed to the direction the Council was taking with regard to the Sanger Street redevelopment. This was despite the poor attendance at all street meetings, and the survey made it evident that many people were concerned about several aspects of the work undertaken so far. The report went on to say that

The results show that surveys such as this should be conducted on all future important issues within the town and Corowa area but these surveys must be done early in discussion stages and not left to concerned individuals to conduct. (11, August 4, 1993)

The lack of engagement between the Council and community may have resulted from either inexperience of how to go about engaging, or alternatively burnout from trying to engage. Such burnout could have been caused through community members feeling disempowered through either, not having the opportunity to be listened to or, alternatively, believing that their perspectives were disregarded anyway due to a lack of feedback. That being said, the Council has been changing its method of interaction, demonstrated by the promotion in the newspaper on August 23, 2000 of a public information night regarding the refurbishment of the Odd Fellows Hall along with several other projects in the Shire, where it was specifically noted that there would also be a question time in the agenda of the meeting. In terms of the community's perception of Council attitudes, there are those community members who have managed to establish and maintain links with the Council and reported that the Council was helpful and pleasant to deal with, in that 'The Council's good in this regard because they've got about a dozen or more committees around the town...' (Community Member 5), and that in terms of community activity support, another community member said that

I think the Council have always supported the Festival as far as I know. And they are great they always do lots of things, like... just simple things like bringing all the extra bins and stuff down and emptying them and planning them.... I mean I know that its normal Council type things, but over the weekend and stuff like that. (Community Member 6)

It is worth noting however, that both these community members were well linked into the Council and community through the committees they participated in, and the indications are that unfortunately their experience was not necessarily widespread in 2004. Despite this, it is definitely evident that, initiated by the

incinerator project, the Council has been subtly forced into altering its method of operation since the conservative and siege like approaches of 1990 and 1991.

6.2.3 Victorian gambling laws: conflict and opportunity

Poker machine gambling in the clubs of NSW was a niche market of tourism for NSW border towns on the Victorian border prior to 1992. In that year the Victorian government introduced poker machines into hotels in Victoria, dispelling the previous attraction of travel by Victorians to the NSW country border towns for weekends or short breaks to indulge in gambling.

Although the Corowa Shire had relied heavily on the fortunes provided by the poker machine industry in New South Wales, the community persisted in the belief that the Victorian introduction of poker machine gambling would have no, or little long term, impact on its economic prosperity. Despite the impacts becoming undeniable by 1996, with the demise of one of the town's three Clubs, the Corowa community continued in the belief that the economic climate would turn back in its favour, but the cause of such a change of circumstance remained largely unidentified or acted upon. State Government pushed tourism as the saviour of regional prosperity but the Corowa Council resisted any new impost on its role as other than provider of roads, rates and rubbish removal, and consequently tourism initiatives were left to the civic community. In addition to the absence of Council economic leadership, there was also factional disagreement between the Tourism Association, Chamber of Commerce and the Council over objectives, processes and responsibilities, further stalling any progress.

The Corowa Golf Club was reported in the Corowa Free Press as pursuing conferences as the latest growth category in tourism (Corowa Free Press, 3, Sept 25, 1991). However, other than this there was largely no acknowledgement of the

effect of the Victorian poker machine introduction on the Corowa clubs or economy until 1996. Instead there was extensive discussion, verging on bickering, within the community as to the role of tourism and whose responsibility that should be, both in and amongst the various groups, Council and businesses of the Shire. Although the economic effects of the demise of gambling tourism was not discussed, newspaper reports suggest common agreement that the generic direction to pursue for the community's economic security was still tourism, but the manner in which that should be done, was not. There was a quiet and implicit acceptance that the clubs would take an economic 'hit' from the change in gambling patronage and that the community should look to boost its tourism income resources from other avenues, but none was identified. Instead of pulling together to address the economic downturn and identify other opportunities, the community took to blaming, and competing for the income that was still available. To exacerbate the situation, although a small drought had impacted south eastern Australian from 1991 to 1995 (it was broken that year with floods,) the region again went into drought in 1997 which was only relieved in 2005. The effect of the drought compounded the economic pressures on the community, not only due to the decrease in external income, but also of expenditure in town businesses by agriculturally dependent residents over the second half of the 1990s.

The image that emerges from the newspaper review and interviews is of a community that was fractured by the economic circumstances of the 1990s. The Clubs of the community provided not only social and sporting facilities for the community, but also employment. A further essential aspect of clubs in rural towns in NSW is that they are a mainstay of community social services in terms of funding for community groups, charities and hostels, through the percentage of their income that they are legally required to return to the community. In Corowa's

case, one of the major festivals – The Federation Festival - was funded up to 50% by the Clubs in the community. Consequently, although the Clubs in a rural community may only be visited by a restricted sector of the community in the sense of taking advantage of the sporting, gambling and social facilities they provide, they provide essential infrastructure to the benefit of the whole community that could not otherwise be funded. As a result, the Clubs of Corowa, as elsewhere, were and continue to be, an integral part of the sustainability of the community.

6.2.3.1 The Clubs

The Clubs of Corowa were unique in the manner in which they chose to address the change of circumstance wrought by the Victorian legislation. Rather than the three clubs of the community (Bowling, RSL and Golf) collaborating and agreeing on sectors of the market to pursue, either individually or jointly, they instead entered into direct competition for the remaining tourism and local income to be had. The headline in 1993 in the Corowa Free Press points to this with 'New restaurant at the Corowa Bowling Club competing with the golf club and the RSL Clubs' (7, June 30, 1993). Between 1992 and 1996, while the three Clubs competed for the diminishing revenue, debate continued in other community sectors over who was responsible for the promotion of tourism and how that should be funded. Surprisingly, despite the Clubs' previously heavy and continued dependence on tourism, they were never profiled in the reports of these discussions; its direction, funding, or the manner in which it should be pursued. In the absence of any other leader in the area of tourism, it is noteworthy that the Clubs did not take on this role, possibly due to the competition among them.

In 1995 the Corowa Bowling Club announced losses for the year, which was met with some surprise in the community. A year later, merger talks commenced with

the other Clubs to avoid the closure of the Bowling Club, and were again met with dismay but also resignation in the community (1, February 21, 1996). The losses were put down to the costs of refurbishments coinciding with introduction of gaming in Victoria. The merger discussions were unsuccessful and the Corowa Bowling Club ceased trading in mid June of 1996 but the community refused to be negative as noted in the Corowa Free Press that

The closure announcement caused a state of shock initially, but there is an air of quiet optimism prevailing in Corowa that a use will be found for the Corowa Bowling Club. (1, June 19, 1996).

In this case the community was right; such was the community pride in the Clubs of Corowa that a consortium of nine, including sporting clubs and community members within the Corowa District, collaborated to form the Corowa Sports and Citizens Club. The consortium, which included a Councillor who shortly afterward became the Mayor, sought to take over the Club and run it as a going concern, initially with volunteer labour. However what ensued was a long running 'pokie war' between the three clubs; the Golf Club, the RSL Club and the now, Corowa Sports and Citizens Club (CSCC). Although the CSCC saw poker machines as essential to its financial stability, the RSL and Golf club did not want it to have them, and even went to the point of taking the newly formed Club to court – a process which raged for another three and a half years. In 1997 it was reported that this issue had divided the Corowa community and that neither the Golf nor RSL Clubs would comment on the bickering with the CSCC, and that the Council was taking no action on the matter (5, November 3, 1999). It was not until 1999 that a settlement agreement was reached, which allowed the CSCC 60 poker machines for a period of 2 years (1,3, December 15, 1999). Despite this resolution, the CSCC was sold to the RSL Club in 2002/03.

6.2.3.2 Tourism

As stated earlier, the rivalry between the Clubs appears to have been exacerbated by the competition for the dwindling tourism dollar and remaining local income. Tourism was definitely on the agenda of Corowa citizens but there was no unified approach to the process of attracting tourists to the Shire. In October 1991 the Corowa Chamber of Commerce held a well attended meeting to discuss tourism, and formed a committee to oversee the development of tourism within the Corowa area, with the agreement to work jointly with the Rutherglen Tourism Development Committee (1, October 30, 1991). This was possibly in response to the lack of activity that was occurring from within the Tourism Association of Corowa, which had been unable to fill two executive positions at two consecutive meetings, and put down to a lack of interest by Corowa's business population (Ibid, 1, July 3, 1991). The perplexing aspect of these reports is that the Corowa Chamber of Commerce purportedly represented Corowa's businesses, but in all the reports of the Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Association, they are described as two distinctly separated organisations operating in tandem but not co-operatively. This can most likely be attributed to the domination of the Chamber of Commerce by Corowa main street businesses only and not a cross section of Shire businesses, including, for example, those from Mulwala (Council Member 3 & 4; Consultants 1, 2 & 3; Community Member 5). A member of the tourism industry believed that the Chamber of Commerce, although maintaining a high profile in the community, did not work collaboratively with its members, but rather was guilty of what was referred to as having the 'meeting before the meeting'. He related his personal experience, saying that

I found that the executive had their meeting in the afternoon, and we had our meeting at 6.00pm. The executive had already decided what was going

to happen and it didn't matter what we decided they went and did what they'd decided in the afternoon. So again the executive is three or four of the old people, been in town so long, all the old ideas and they wouldn't entertain anything new. I drifted away from that. (Community Member 5)

The sentiment of the need for the Chamber of Commerce to work collaboratively, not only with its own members, but also with other sectors in the community was echoed in 1996 by the Chairperson of the Corowa and District Tourism Association, Michelle Alexandra, who at the Annual General Meeting of the Corowa Chamber of Commerce called for a unification of small business and for Corowa to develop a vision (19, May 1, 1996). This need for a change in the style of operation by the Chamber of Commerce in Corowa, and its relationship to tourism was also referred to in December 2005 with the comment that '[tourism is] going well but the problem is the Chamber of Commerce – they're a spent force [and that] the business houses don't promote themselves' (Council Member 3).

The Council, for its part, refused to fund tourism activities until they were well supported by industry. This was reported in the Corowa Free Press in the discussions held by Council, from which the primary outcome was that support for tourism was needed from the tourism industry before the Council should increase its financial support, despite this being reported as 'contentious' amongst Councillors (9, January 5, 1992). A year later, the Tourism Association appeared to continue to have difficulties in getting support from the community, as the Association called for more community involvement through joining the Tourism Association, volunteering at the information centre or assisting through making an effort to be 'Tourist Aware'. Gabrielle Reid who came to Corowa to work on the promotion of tourism, was reported in the Corowa Free Press as saying that

“We need to catch up to the Tourism Industry in places like Echuca Moama with a total commitment to tourism in both the retail and industry sectors” said Gabrielle Reid “The Echuca-Moama Monte Carlo on the Murray concept is one that has been a joint project by the Tourist Association and the Chamber of Commerce”. (8, July 7, 1993)

Although the need was identified for the Clubs and the Chamber of Commerce to pull together to establish a tourism direction, as had been done elsewhere, their own lack of cohesion within the industry appears to have precluded them being able to establish links with other community organisations and forge a direction for the community. In the absence of these community organisations working together on tourism, Council leadership would have been an effective alternative, however this was not forthcoming as that role did not fall into the traditional scope of Council.

The ‘Main Street Program’ offered a potential bridge for the community between these different factions. The program provided an opportunity for Corowa to revisit both its image and how that image was portrayed elsewhere, without the Council being directly involved. It was a program offered by State Government to assist rural centres to refurbish their business centres, and beautify their main streetscapes.

The Main Street New South Wales program has been designed to encourage the revitalisation and promotion of town centres throughout this State. Through this program, the local government, the local business people and the community at large work together to improve the physical, economic social environment of their commercial districts. There are opportunities for support, educative and financial, available to local governments and

communities for these initiatives. The key to success is organisation.(NSW Department of Community Services, 2004, Access date: Nov 21, 2005)

It was in August 1991 that the Council and community were first made aware of this program, when a committee was appointed and some twelve months later a consultant contracted to conduct a Heritage study to identify recommendations for the Main Street Program (Corowa Free Press, 12, July 29, 1992). The program also funded the position of a co-ordinator and consequently Gabrielle Reid was appointed in January 1993 (3, January 20, 1993). This appointment only occurred after much discussion about the need for financial support from both Council and the State Government for the project to go ahead. The Main Street Co-ordinator not only took on the position of rejuvenating the main street of Corowa, but more importantly for Corowa, was also appointed Tourism Manager and as such, provided the leadership and action behind the community formed Tourism Association. It is notable that while funding was provided on a Shire basis, activities were focused exclusively on Corowa township only, underlining the lack of cohesiveness in the Shire.

By the end of 1995, when the imminent demise of the Bowling Club was obvious, tourism once again came to a head with the resignation of Brian Maroney (the second co-ordinator in two years) in October for reasons not detailed (3, October 25, 1995). The Council had sought to institute a tourism levy on Corowa businesses to fund the position of tourism manager and regional promotions; a move that was unsuccessful. Brian Maroney's departure promoted further vigorous debate about the direction of tourism and criticisms from the Council about the responsibility for tourism and its benefits for the community, with comments from Councillors that the 'Council should not be required to drive tourism but should assist the industry' (ex Councillor 3) and that

following talks with business people, I've been receiving very bad vibes. People are not happy with tourism, saying it's a waste of money and suggesting that an economic development officer would bring more industry to the town. (Ex Councillor 4)

The situation between the Council and the community deteriorated further in November the same year, when it was reported that the new Mayor 'put the boot into the community' saying that while they were all aware of the recession, there was no point in bemoaning the fact, but they needed to come forward with ideas to actively promote Corowa (Corowa Free Press, 6, November 1, 1995). At this point it was also asserted by Council that the new tourism main street manager should be mindful of being an economic development officer as well. Discussions of the benefits of an economic development officer to the community over tourism were however, never developed in the public domain of the newspaper. Although the Main Street Program had invigorated the community to an extent, providing an insight to what might be achieved, it was unsuccessful not only because of the fracturing within the different groups of the community, but it also lacked commitment from the Council as noted by the NSW Department of State and Regional Development, whose representative commented that 'the Main Street program was supported by Council but there appeared to be only limited commitment from them' (Government representative 1).

The Clubs, the Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Association could not agree on a direction even within their own ranks, let alone negotiate a position on tourism and a vision for the community with other community groups, or other Shires. The lack of Council support stemmed from its own inability to agree amongst the Councillors how involved it should become in the process (8, April 29, 1998). Generally, there was an overall lack of effective bridging networks in the

community and certainly no evidence of linking networks either inside or to external resources for the community.

Meetings continued to be held over the future of tourism and the position of a main street co-ordinator, or economic development officer, until June in 1996 when the Main Street Committee was disbanded and the members incorporated into the Chamber of Commerce Tourism Association and Tidy Towns committees. At this point a Councillor further criticised the community, saying that

people should get off their backsides, get involved in the betterment of the town and operate as a team [asserting that the committee's termination was a] reflection on the way things were going in the town. (8, June 26, 1996)

A positive upshot from this was that the Corowa Council invited the Chamber of Commerce to be part of Council's joint management Committee, replacing Main Street representation. This move was an improvement on previous interactions, which had been purely administrative; the Council was and is often the technical employer of a committee, providing treasury and insurance support, but otherwise did not see itself as involved with these committees, or that it was necessary to interact with them beyond this administrative role³⁴.

Tourism managed to procure enough support from State and Council funding to maintain the position of a tourism manager. However the lack of reporting both on tourism activities and profile of Corowa and the region indicates that the financial support was sufficient only to maintain a tourism facility in terms of an office, rather than to establish direction and build the industry. As a further dimension to

this, while there were times in 1993 and 1994 where Corowa did participate in regional promotions, these appeared to die away with reports that the general Council consensus was if money were to be put into tourism from the local area, then the Shire should work only on Shire specific activities rather than the combined regional focus that had previously been adopted (Ibid, 5, 29 November 1995). Additionally, Corowa and Mulwala, although both being part of the same Shire, operated quite separately with reports in 1995 that Mulwala was doing better than Corowa; adopting a tone of competition within the Shire. This was demonstrated in a letter to the editor in the Corowa Free Press noting that tourist numbers for the season were down while the same was not the case for Mulwala or Yarrawonga, and called for a review of tourism aspirations for the Corowa region (19, February 5, 1995). It is notable that Mulwala is often referred to as Yarrawonga/Mulwala, having put their lot in with Yarrawonga to promote themselves as a regional destination, despite being in the same Shire as Corowa. Countering this approach, the Corowa Mayor (in February 2004) regarded interaction with adjacent Victorian Shires as being

across the river but we don't have a lot to do with across the river at all. In Mulwala/Yarrawonga we do this ... sort of acts as one complex more so than Corowa/Rutherglen, there's not much happening here ... We don't have much to do directly with the Shire ... Well there's no need, there's nothing very much in common ... Practically there's not much we could do together, I mean the fact we're in two different States makes a fair difference

³⁴ This attitude was, however, still evident in interviews with community committee members and Council in 2004.

there and the two Associations operate a bit differently too, different styles of Council in some areas.

Consequently, from the Council point of view there was not, and continued not to be up until 2004, an overall Shire approach to developing bridging and linking relationships with other local governments, particularly when located across the border. It appeared that the people of Mulwala interact with Yarrawonga independently of the Corowa Shire Council; despite the Mayor of Corowa at the time of the interviews (2004), living in Mulwala.

Although the community in Mulwala has obviously been able to pull together with Yarrawonga in order to promote the area for tourism, the community of Corowa has been unable to imitate this initiative. Given the fractured relationships between Corowa's tourism and business interests, they required leadership which was not present. Additionally, the patriarchal nature of the Council which controlled information flows to the community about funding and applications processes (Consultants 1, 2 & 3) limited opportunities to develop productive relationship networks. At times, the Council reluctantly provided a low level of leadership in relation to such activities as the Main Street Program, in being a contact point. The Council's predominant belief was, however, that the community should be shouldering that responsibility rather than the Council.

The silence within the community on the gendered nature of the gate keeping of information in the community – it was, in the majority, controlled by male Councillors or male Council employees – was also telling in the unquestioned acceptance of it by women in the community. It was never raised as an issue, which was contrasted with the circumstance in Murray Shire, where this male dominance over information was noted. As will be discussed in chapter eight in

the comparison between communities, the gendering of information is also a critical element of the need to develop, or the existence of, bridging and linking relationships. In the case of Corowa it appeared that women lacked these relationship networks which could provide them both with the knowledge of different ways of sharing information and also access to the power that that information might provide.

Overall, the downturn in tourism income initiated by the change in Victorian gambling laws, exacerbated by the droughts, was generally seen in the community as something to be 'ridden out'. In May 1996 the issue of Corowa's directions and economic fortunes came to the fore with the inescapable loss of the Bowling Club, and resignation of the second Main Street Co-ordinator. Despite this and the evidence of the downward spiral, the President of the Chamber of Commerce was re-elected for a fourth consecutive term and chose to speak of the downturn of the economy and how he believed that it had bottomed out and expected to see moderate growth in 1996 (Corowa Free Press, 19, May 1, 1996). At the same time however, a Corowa Councillor was reported in the Corowa Free Press as warning that 'the people in Corowa need to rid themselves of the poker machine mentality or Corowa would go down the gurgler', while another Councillor was reported as countering the suggestion that effective tourism strategies could add 4.9 million dollars to the Corowa economy by saying that '[t]here is nothing to do in Corowa' (Ibid Corowa Free Press, 4, May 29, 1996). There were levels of both complacency and defeatism evident in the community about the lifecycle of the economic impact of the Victorian gaming laws. The community was concerned about the loss of money, but did not see that the economic impact would be a long term event and that if they could survive it, tourism such as it was, would return to previous levels.

This apparent community apathy to be involved in revitalising the community was an issue that was raised in the interviews, eliciting the following comment about the community attitude which

tends to be this sort of contentment with apathy of like “Well No, we don’t have to get involved, everything is fine, unless it’s really bad”. I think overwhelmingly this community is more often than not conservative in spite of itself. It would rather hurt itself in its conservatism than take a risk of doing something different for a good outcome. (Community Member 1)

This comment was recast by a government representative who thought that

I don’t think it was apathy I think it was more acceptance of the conditions as they existed and no desire for change. (Member of Parliament)

6.2.3.3 Council

Despite the dominance of the three major industries (QAF, previously Bunge Meats), Australian Defence Industries and Uncle Tobys (The Regional Development Company, 2003) the Corowa Shire Council and community still regard itself as a rural based community, making all development decisions accordingly. This is illustrated in the comment by a Council member that ‘we’re a Rural Council (you know) just a different style Council than a City Council’ (Council member 2). Although this comment was made in the context of the politicisation of Council and rejection of the suggestion that Corowa Shire Council was political, it reflects the schism of attitudes that exist within the Council about its approach, particularly given that 50% of the shire’s employment is in manufacturing with QAF Meats, Uncle Tobys and Australian Defence Industries.

Although the notion of Corowa as a rural shire is defended on the basis that the Shire's manufacturing industries rely on the agricultural sector for its raw produce (Council Member 3), it does not take into account the high levels of employment and economic activity generated by the Clubs in the community. It is reasonable to look to the economic downturn of the Clubs as the cause of the decline in annual population growth in the community between 1991 and 1996 (1.8% per annum), compared to the previous census period which saw annual increases (2.4% per annum in 1986 to 1991). The economic benefits provided to the town by the poker machines and the consequent dependence on the gaming industry was an aspect of the Corowa's profile that, although acknowledged on the one hand by the residents, does not feature in the Shire's perception of itself as a rural Shire. It is potentially the case that when the surveys and interviews were undertaken prior to the Council election in March 2004, the majority of the Councillors were property based farmers rather than town residents, hence the assertion of Corowa being a rural Shire; endorsing the Council being colloquially known as the 'Farmers Club'. It is important to understand how the term 'rural' is being used here in Corowa. Fundamentally, rather than direct agricultural produce, Corowa Shire supports secondary agricultural industry in terms of the piggery feedlot and abattoir (QAF Meats), food processing (Uncle Tobys), agricultural machinery, feed processing (QAF Feeds) and agricultural engineering and transport companies. Consequently, although Corowa is obviously not an urban shire, it is blend of urban and rural. This is particularly the case given the growing retirement population in the Mulwala portion of the Shire, and Howlong being added to the Shire's domain in the 2004 shire boundary re adjustments, which again although having a rural component is becoming more akin to a satellite suburb of Albury, being within commuting distance.

Not only is the Shire obviously not solely dependent upon its rural and agricultural activities as the mainstay of its income, but also Uncle Tobys, a major employer in the community, is not taken into account in Shire planning because it is once again in a different state. This is despite its high level of contribution to the community's employment. This was clearly enunciated when a Council Member noted that

you've got Uncle Tobys. Well there's a lot of people in Corowa that work there, we don't as a Council have much to do with, No, because they're not in our Shire of course. (Council Member 1);

whereas another employee noted that

well 50% of the employment in the Shire is made up with QAF and Uncle Tobys and ADI, and the thing there is that, and particularly with Uncle Tobys and then again they weren't taken into this, they were mentioned as a assistance to the Shire, but because this was a NSW State run project you weren't allowed to use their statistics in the actual development of the plan even though there are 230 people employed out of Corowa there. (Council Member 2)

This apparent marginalisation of the importance of the connection to Victoria through employment at Uncle Tobys is reinforced by the comment from an external observer of the Shire that

it's a bit of a 'protect my own patch' over there, yet I see Corowa relying very much on Wahgunyah because Wahgunyah is a town population is 610 people and the Uncle Tobys employs 700 and something people there. They employ bigger than the population of the town and most of those people

would come from Corowa; there's a lot that come from Howlong down the back way and some come up from Wangaratta and work there. But the majority of those people come from Corowa Shire to work there. So you've got a situation that I believe that they've got a very strong relationship with each other but don't realise it in some respects. (Murray Shire Council Member 2)

The only explanation of the lack of liaison by the Council with this major employer that could be uncovered was the difficulty in identifying appropriate decision making personnel, given that the company is owned by a Sydney based company and although all major decisions are made out of Sydney, there was also a high turnover rate of senior personnel at the site making local liaison too difficult (Council Member 4). The situation with Uncle Tobys is further evidence of the schism in perceptions and attitudes that keeps coming to the fore when reviewing activities in the shire; a formal acknowledgement on the one hand of a circumstance, but the fact being ignored when it comes to the activities and liaison undertaken by the Council, or the consideration of stakeholders in decision making processes, underlining a lack of relationship networks with major players in the community's future – bridging and linking relationship networks.

In October 1998 it was reported in the Corowa Free Press that there was a move to attract industry to the region with the suggestion by Cr Broderick that the Council should establish an Economic Development Committee (1, October 7,1998). This Committee was suggested to be a combination of business and Council executive staff, whose aim would be to combat the concern that Council was 'always putting obstacles in the way of industrial development' (Ibid). It would seem that concerns about the Council's difficulties in supporting economic development has continued since that time with the comment in December 2005 that although the

Corowa Shire had a lot of great opportunities, the Council would have to 'bend over backwards to get it up and happening' (Council Member 3).

6.3 Since 2001

6.3.1 Community social capital (bonding and bridging)

Although the Council has undoubtedly been conservative, averse to major changes either in style of operation or equally in the role that they are required to carry out for the community, statutory requirements imposed on councils since 1998 have further forced the Corowa Shire Council to adapt its approach to its business.

In 1998 the New South Wales Government required all councils to undertake social and community development plans for their communities, as a part of their management plans. The objective of this was to:

- Promote fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those most in need;
- Recognise and promote people's rights and improve the accountability of decision makers;
- Ensure that people have fairer access to the economic resources and services essential to meeting their basic needs and improving their quality of life';
- Give people better opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives.

(NSW Department of Local Government, 1998, 1)

The reporting requirements for local governments were introduced by the NSW Department of Local Government in recognition that local governments were invariably the key interface between people and government and that the responsibilities of councils now exceeded the traditional scope of roads, rates and rubbish. The reporting requirements were seen as a tool to assist councils in

increasing their public interaction and accountability, establishing directions for the future with their communities, and developing effective partnerships with other government and non-government agencies. Under the legislation, councils were required to make provision in their 1998/99 Management Plan to develop a social/community plan by June 1999. Subsequent to this, their 1999/2000 Management Plans needed to include a progress report on the development of their social/community plan and a report on any access and equity activities undertaken in the previous years. This same process was to be implemented as part of the annual reporting requirements of local councils each subsequent year.

Despite the legislative requirements, the Corowa Shire's first Social and Community Plan was not developed until 2003, when consultants were employed to assist the Council and community to put it together. The consultants were employed as at that time the Shire did not have a community liaison officer (apart from the General Manager) or an economic development officer to undertake the project. The companies who undertook to assist the community in pulling the information together and writing up the plans had undertaken the same activities for Councils in both NSW and Victoria across the region and as a result had substantial experience in the field. These consultants found the community to be very disconnected due to its strong bonding of distinct groups within the community and that, although the Council was communicating well with their peers in the community, there were whole sectors of the community that had been left out of previous consultative processes.

I think Corowa Council probably for me reflects quite a number of councils where it's a very small group of the community that is represented on the Council, ahh... over half of them [the Councillors] had been there for twenty years, and their idea of consultation is consultation with the groups that

they represent and probably they do that reasonably well because they are active in those groups and they work with them. What they fail to do is encompass or you know embrace the fact that what Corowa was twenty years ago is not the community that it is now and that there are many other groups that are far more diverse than what they represent but they have made no attempt to link them in any way at all, or have any regular input with them, because as far as they're concerned they don't see people like that. (Consultant 2)

This new planning process did begin to achieve an empowerment of those in the community who had previously been disenfranchised by the processes of Council. It also moved toward providing a publicly available document to which the Council would be accountable. Councils can however, prioritise recommendations of plans and implement them in staged processes according to resources available (NSW Department of Local Government, 1998, 8). This allows councils to draw out the implementation of plans over potentially indeterminate periods of time. Additionally, although a planning process can be legislated and external specialists employed to assist in fulfilling that requirement, the objective of the exercise is fundamentally to modify the approach of councils to one which is more open and consultative. Councils themselves may not see the need for such a change in approach and feel aggrieved about the power it gives community members to force action. This was noted by one Council member who said

Well the grief [in the Social and Community Plan] is they've stirred up about six of the worst trouble-makers in the town and given them something to work with now. One of them is a doctor and a few others and they'll be on our back now they'll say "well there it is, you've got to do it,

why aren't you doing it?" That's all they'll hound us about. (Council Member 1)

What this social planning process has underscored in Corowa is the lack of community bridging across the entire community to create a common vision, facilitated by active relationship networks between the different interest groups and the Council.

By contrast, the economic development plan was viewed by Council as an opportunity to bridge between the Council and community with those groups in the community that had previously been difficult:

you get a lot of feed back . . . that Council's stifling development and basically these fellows are just bending the rules to make quid. What we're doing as part of the business plan that we've just developed is to employ a business development officer who will do that liaison, hopefully that assists with that situation. (Council Member 2)

The objectives in making planning a requirement for councils were to develop an understanding of the needs of their community, but the Corowa Council already believed that they had that well under control. Additionally they were to identify which services the Council should have a role in funding or providing, a process which the Council saw as opening them up to more demands upon its limited resources and time given the rating restraints imposed by the NSW government. Further, the planning legislation required the identification of the relationship networks needed between the council and other government departments, the private sector or community organisations to provide improved facilities or coherent service systems. This was a role, however, that the Council saw as not being within its scope and that, again, they did not have the resources to

implement such a liaison role, nor had they ever operated that way. Consequently, planning processes that are now required in Council Management, highlight the conservatism in Corowa Council and the community in the context of their bonding and bridging relationship networks.

In spite of the Council's apparent reluctance to adopt the planning requirements however, the implementation of a planning process has initiated the engagement with those sectors of the community that were previously ignored or marginalised from the consultative processes of local government. It has demonstrated to the community ways of participating in planning and consultation; a change which has occurred ostensibly due to the involvement of external managers of the process. This is demonstrated in the observations made by the external consultant of the reactions at the community meeting to present the report on the social and community plan.

Yeah I think just the sense of opportunity to finally speak their minds that the dam wall had broken, people were able to finally express their frustration and that that meeting at Corowa to present the final . . . recommendations which had really come out of the community consultations, which was pretty much a direct response to what people had been saying they wanted . . . the balance of the meeting shifted from them, almost as if, it was almost as if a small paradigm I think of how it had been, they were used to being powerless, but as time went on they'd got angry and went on and just pushed the issues, so the balance of power just shifted and [the Council representative] was on the back foot. (Consultant 1)

6.3.2 External resources and networking (bridging and linking)

Corowa Shire continues as a very independent Shire, psychologically separated from surrounding Shires, both in Victoria and New South Wales.

With regard to relationship networks that provide bridging social capital, Corowa Shire Council participated in the Murray Regional Organisation of Councils, the Health Group Network 8 (a Councillor was the Chairman at the time of the interviews), the G Division of Local Councils and the Murray Darling Association. They have also made joint representations with the Rutherglen Council to State Government over issues such as the Australian Paper Mill's proposed effluent treatments, and the Road and Transport Authority with regard to a new river crossing (completed in 2005) (Council Member 2). As with the funding for a planning consultant, which came in equal part from the State Government, the interviews, however, revealed that these bridging activities to external government or regional organisations came about because 'we didn't go after that, they came to us' (Council Member 2), rather than as a result of an active two way nurturing of the relationships.

To say that bridging relationships did not exist either prior to 2001 or since, would be mistaken. However, as in the cases cited above, although a relationship may exist in which the Council was politically required to participate, they rarely saw any outstanding need to either initiate them or actively 'work' them for new ideas to create change or with a view to future uses. The relationship of the Council with the State government department of regional affairs appears to remain difficult given the Council complaint that grant or subsidy applications processes were 'unnecessarily lengthy, complex and [involved] restrictive legal agreements' (Council Member 1). When a State representative was interviewed about the

interaction with Corowa Shire however, the comment was that the Corowa Council were and continue to be uncommunicative and 'usually only ask for help too far into a process after they've already struck problems' (Government Representative 1). Ostensibly, although Corowa appears to have bridging relationships, these are not partnership relationships that encourage the ongoing development of collaborative projects or problem solving. Rather, they have connections with communities and resources external to the community that they endeavour to use only when it is expedient, but they are void of any relational component that builds trust or feelings of reciprocity. As a result, they often find these relationship networks are, at best merely adequate and, at worst, the window dressing of their participation in regional activities.

As discussed in chapter two, effective bridging relationships underpin the development of linking relationships. Where there is no trust or mutual exchange of benefit between two dissimilar parties there is no foundation or motivation for the further creation of a vertical exchange of power as created in linking relationships.

Given the questionable ability to cite the nature of Corowa's external networks as effective bridging relationships, it was not surprising that there were no identifiable linking relationships. At the time of the research, however, Corowa did not perceive a problem of any sort with their existing relationship networks as the community was stable and had in fact just grown (in 2005) due to the incorporation of Howlong as part of the Shires amalgamation process. From the Council's point of view, bridging and linking networks were not required as they were doing quite well in terms of population, employment and income levels. There was nothing that needed 'fixing' from the community or Council's point of view that required a change in relationship patterns or Council behaviours.

6.4 Summary

Historically, Corowa is a Shire which has a community of rigid norms, dominated by small group of the 'landed' people, represented through Council. There are strong levels of community pride and identity, rooted in a long established history of economic success and prosperity, originally based on primary agricultural production, but which has now shifted to largely secondary agricultural production – a factor which still has not been absorbed into the psyche of the community. Due to this strong sense of community identity based on past events, the economic pressures which have been imposed by external factors since 1991 have exposed fissures and factions within the community that have impeded the potential for a pursuit of alternative industries and sources of income for the community.

The existence of these factions within the community highlights the strength of bonding of groups within the community and lack of bridging networks to bring these groups together. This factionalising and the power plays within groups effectively removed equity of participation among community groups' members, through such activities as the 'meeting before the meeting'. This has caused community members to 'disengage' from community processes, or for them to require evidence of the worth of their contribution before they would participate, and even then, they appeared to do so with reservations about the level of importance that would be attributed to it. Such examples include the Chamber of Commerce being renowned for the executive making decisions prior to the official meeting and then ignoring all subsequent perspectives or wishes of the members; the external consultants finding that people did not engage with the Council because of a lack of recognition or action on issues or concerns expressed by the community, one example of this being the reconstruction of Sanger Street (main

street) and parking arrangements. As noted by the consultants working with the community;

a number of key community players [were] saying "Well he put the submission in against the views, ah well what happened at that public meeting was that they passed a motion that umm and it was the recommendation that the submission that the community development person go back to the health committee and resubmit it jointly. [He] never took it back to them and he just sent it off, he re wrote it and sent it off. And they were furious because part of the issue is that he doesn't know how to write, he doesn't know what the requirements are ...and so the submissions don't get up. (Consultant 2)

[F]rom a pragmatic point of view, if the Council's serious about wanting more resources it makes absolute sense for them to go to people who know how to do the job, but they're prepared to cut off their noses to spite their face, they don't want to share the power and decision making so they're prepared to go without the funding it would seem rather than lose the power. (Consultant 1)

Up until mid 2004 the opportunity for the Council to act as the leader of the community and drive the establishment of a vision that is provided by the planning process, has been declined by the Council. This appears to be largely due to a lack of perceived need or ability in the community or by Council to intervene in, or change community processes to achieve different outcomes.

The history and the responses of the community and Council to the economic pressures since 1991 are important in relation to social capital, given the policy perspective that strong social capital is directly related to strong economic growth.

The Corowa community and Council demonstrate strong bonding relationships (strong sense of belonging and defended status quo) that has, and continues to give, the community a good sense of well being. They do not perceive the decline of the Shire as requiring overt attention and in fact see themselves as a lot better off than many other rural shires. The lack of bridging and linking relationships in the community is defended in the community as a situation of choice.

The qualitative data starkly highlights how social capital, as measured by a survey instrument, is a static measure that cannot provide context to events or understanding of the relational nature of the networks. The qualitative research did identify an evolution of awareness about the role of bridging and linking relationships. Due, however, to a relatively strong economic position, very positive feelings of well being in the Shire and the effect of the strong bonding networks identified in the survey data, the community and Council have consciously, or otherwise, chosen not to pursue a change in the nature of their relationships networks at this time. The lack of bridging and linking networks within the community and to external resources can however, be aligned quite clearly with lost economic opportunities and therefore offer explanations in regard to the status of this community's growth and development.

Chapter 7: Murray Shire – Resilient, growing and connected

MURRAY SHIRE LGA



Map source: © Land and Property Information - www.lpi.nsw.gov.au (NB. The southern border of the Shire is the Murray River)

- KEY**
- Vegetation
 - Major Roads and Highways
 - Council Border

I thought this community had a great attitude, a real attitude that we can not only survive but thrive. And I just thought that Moama was the place to be in. (Council Member 2)

I don't stick totally to the rules, which is how I make it work, because if you stick totally to the rules there are things you can't do for people.
(Community Member 2)

The community of Murray Shire is distinctive in its open and proactive approach to changes in circumstance. Despite the community exhibiting some intra and inter community conflict, these have been dealt with in the past due to the necessity to refocus on externalities affecting them and over which they had some agency. These qualities were evident at the time of the introduction of poker machines to Victoria, in their motivation to revisit relationship networks to the benefit of the community's economic development. At a local government level, this was most evident in the shift in Council communication and cooperation with Campaspe Shire in exploring opportunities to promote themselves as part of a greater region rather than just on a Shire by Shire basis. The Clubs in the community which had traditionally relied on gambling as a major source of income also sought to work co-operatively with each other and the tourism industry on a campaign to revitalise the appeal of the area to tourists. The Council actively began to examine and pursue new development opportunities in the form of rezoning areas to allow viticulture and the piping of natural gas into the town to entice new industry, along with an innovative 'Great Mathoura Land Give Away' project to attract attention and new residents to the Shire. For the community's part, it established new groups in the Positive Thinkers, the Moama Community Development Committee, and the Moama Traders Association and generally the community was motivated by the Clubs, media and tourism associations to support initiatives to reinvigorate the region. What appears to be the key to the changes in the Shire's economic fortune were the attitudes and co-operation demonstrated by the local government and major employment providers of the community, in relation to

internal and external sources of information and opportunities, suggesting high amounts of bridging and linking social capital.

In 1998 Murray Shire was the fastest growing Shire west of the Blue Mountains in NSW (26, February 6, 1998) and by 2001 it was the tenth fastest growing Shire in New South Wales (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002d). The community's background identifies the majority of its roots in a merchant and working class population. The influx of new residents since the early 1990s has increased diversity in the Shire, providing a renewal of enthusiasm to participate in community activities and an increase in the breadth and depth of expertise. The range of activity and initiative demonstrated indicates that this introduced diversity may be a cause of the increased sense of community equality and willingness to become involved, than that experienced elsewhere. The Shire Council, despite engendering disgruntlement in some quarters because of its driven position on development, has also succeeded in developing the community's sense of being appreciated for its participation, and awareness of opportunities for change.

This chapter discusses the elements of Murray Shire's history that may have contributed to its current form, and the effects of the Victorian gambling legislation and 'Great Mathoura Land Give Away', the two significant events that demonstrate the use of relationship networks in the community in the period 1991 to 2000. The chapter then discusses general characteristics of the community in this same period relating to the elements of bonding, bridging, and linking that generated the resilience and prosperity of the community during this period of economic pressure and change.

Overall, despite some negative comments about the community's interaction and Council attitudes and approaches, the picture of Murray Shire that evolves from the qualitative research is one of an interactive community. It presents as a community where the different elements of social capital are dynamic, but relatively in balance with one another. That balance – being largely similar amounts of bonding, bridging and linking social capital – has, despite fluctuating at times, allowed a level of diversity, realism and equity of access to decision making processes, which appears to be a major factor in the resilience and positive prosperity of the community.

7.1 History of Murray Shire

As with other areas of southern and south western New South Wales, settlement in the area that was to become the Shire of Murray was initially sparse, commencing with uptake of the land by squatters in the early 1830s and was comprised of only a small number of settlers. Given the permanent water source of the Murray River, the region was originally also heavily populated with Aborigines (or Kooris as they prefer to be known in the south east of Australia), mainly from the Bangerang Tribe. Despite retaliating against the appropriation of their land by the whites, the Koori were either killed or dispersed by European diseases and superior weaponry, resulting in population being reduced by 85% within the first generation of white settlement (Atkinson, 1995). In 1851, when the river became the boundary between the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria and neither government would take responsibility for the care of the Aborigines, the missionaries stepped in, setting up private missions (Hearn, Durrant, Bowman, Gamble, McCallum, Scott, Gilmore, Kilpatrick, McAllister and Milgate, 1990, 15-36). Since that time, sectors of the Koori community have worked consistently at re-establishing their legal right to the land through political activity. This included

the '1939 walk off' in which the majority of residents packed up and 'walked off' from the Koori missions in protest against the living conditions, the leasing of most of the reserve land to a European, and the oppressive laws of the reserve system (Bennet, 1991, 5). More recently, there was also a land title claim lodged in 2002 in the Federal High Court by the Yorta Yorta Nations which was unsuccessful. Subsequent to the changes in mission management as a result of disputes and legal changes to the status of Australian Aboriginals, the Kooris of Murray Shire have retained an exclusive settlement at Cummergunja. In 2001, at 3.2%, the Koori population of Murray Shire was higher than the national average of 2.2% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002e). A low level of friction between the whites and Kooris of Murray Shire is apparent in the interview data (Community Member 1), although overall the Koori and white population do accommodate each other. A level of integration has occurred at the Moama Primary School and in the donation of playground equipment and development of art work on the community park Sound Shell, when the community was publicly congratulated for 'uniting the different sectors of the community' (Riverine Herald, 24, Dec. 19,1997, 3, Feb 23 & 1, Feb 25,8) .

Murray Shire was initially dominated by a small number of very large holdings because of the lower quality and productivity of the land. In 1849 the region was in the hands of only ten pastoralists. This situation remained largely unchanged until 1904, despite legislative efforts in the form of the 1861 Robertson Land Act, its further amendment in 1875 and the Land Act of 1884. It was the Closer Settlement Acts of 1904 to 1909 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1910) which, being specifically designed to cut down the size of pastoral holdings, provided for the purchase of estates by an Advisory Board who could then subdivide and re-sell the land to encourage greater density of settlement (Burton, 1973, 63). Combined with the

State Government enforcement of municipalities to provide basic services and the attendant imposition of land rates and a Commonwealth Land Tax between 1901 and 1910, this achieved a reduction in station size (Hearn et al., 1990, 35), giving greater access to small and retail landholders of differing economic classes. This, assisted by the focus of trade activity on the river and the rail line to Melbourne, concentrated settlement around Moama, which was the crossing point on the New South Wales side of the river. As the land was less productive than that further to the east only a portion of the wealth of the area came from wool and pastoralist activities. Most of the region's economic focus was in the trade of agricultural products.

The Robertson Land Act of 1861 allowing the selection and purchase of land began a process of introducing a diversity of settlers to the district. Most selectors came from Victoria, 'some via the goldfields, some later as children of miners, others came or more or less direct from towns along the south coast' (Hearn et al., 1990, 43).

During and after the Victorian gold rush, diggers and those who had worked on the gold fields moved into Murray Shire to settle and established themselves. This saw the introduction of Chinese people to the district as gardeners, cooks and in other service positions, and resulted in a large Chinese settlement being established on the northern boundary of the Shire, at Deniliquin (Hearn et al., 1990, 40). Travelling through Murray Shire, these immigrants along with itinerant travellers and traders utilising the north/south trade route, further increased residents' exposure to a diversity of people, ideas and customs.

The area of Murray Shire enjoyed and suffered the Australian climate more acutely than regions closer to the mountains and coast. Droughts broken by floods, not

only interrupted transport, but also affected commodity prices. These were prices both of items they were trying to get to market, and of basic supplies such as flour and sugar, making it a more economically vulnerable region than those closer to major cities or in more climatically stable regions. However, being positioned directly between some of the country's major gold fields and where the majority of stock was bred, Murray Shire was perfectly positioned to profit from the movement of supplies into the goldfields. Many of the pastoralists, as well as producing meat and goods for the gold fields, also benefited from the movement of stock along the road between Deniliquin and Moama (known as the 'Long Paddock'), offering land as breeding and fattening grounds for stock during good seasons before being driven on to the gold fields (Hearn et al., 1990, 37). Given that the majority of the Shire's pastoral activity was focused on sheep, the region also suffered from the fluctuations in wool prices and the economic depression of the 1890s, as well as the Shearer's strike³⁵. The fluctuating economic fortunes of the region, along with the dominance of the wool industry, with its small number of pastoralists but large number of labourers, was fertile ground for the development of new and different ideas both in regard to economic approaches and political structures. In some quarters, Murray Shire is perceived as being a traditionally Labour voting seat (Member of Parliament 1) but in others it is seen as traditionally a National/Liberal voting electorate with its Labour inclination only a recent

³⁵ The Shearer's Strikes in 1890 and 1891, during the overseas induced depression, was a response to the pastoralists intention to reduce shearers' wages to compensate for falling wool prices, then at one pound per hundred sheep shorn. The Shearer Union had terms under which they were insisting that their workers be employed, including continuance of the existing rates of pay, protection of their rights and privileges under just and equitable agreements, and a "closed shop" to exclude scabs or Chinese labour. The strikes were broken by the Governments of NSW and Queensland who sided with the business interests, and allowed the introduction of free labour, and prosecuted the Union leaders.

aberration (Council Member 1 and 2). It is undeniable though, that Murray Shire has never been politically dominated by wealthy land holders to the extent of those areas to its east.

The north of the Shire was restricted to grazing, yet the southern part of the Shire was fertile enough to sustain wheat as the main cereal crop, and red gum timber from the Barmah forest as another economic mainstay of the area. The extreme distance from Sydney³⁶ however meant that Melbourne was the main market for Murray Shire and its community, developing the strong link that the Shire still retains with Victoria, despite it being located in New South Wales. It was the attractiveness of Port Phillip as a port of loading in preference to Sydney that prompted James Maiden to purchase a punt in 1844 to transport goods across to Victoria and capture the lucrative and increasing trade to Melbourne. The point of departure on the New South Wales side of the river was known as 'Maiden's Punt', later to become the Moama township (Hearn et al., 1990, 127). As Echuca, on the Victorian side of the river, was the focal point into which goods were funnelled to be transported to Melbourne, the means of transport between Deniliquin and Moama was upgraded with the establishment of the Deniliquin to Moama (D&M) Railway in 1876 in the Victorian (broad) gauge. The railway only made one stop on the journey at the township of Red Bank, leading to the demise of most of the inns along the Moama to Deniliquin road. Red Bank continued to prosper and changed its name to Mathoura, which is now the central town of the

Although the shearers' objectives were defeated, the strike not only increased the economic hardship of the depression, but also spawned the Australian Labour Party (Svensen, 1989, 6).

³⁶ Being 800 km from Sydney, the round trip would take a minimum of a month to complete in fine weather. The bullock drays used to transport the wool clip would take up to two months to reach Sydney from Moama (Hearn et al., 1990).

Shire, housing the primary Shire offices. With the establishment of the railway from Deniliquin to Moama, it was much cheaper to transport of goods through to Melbourne, but it also became obvious that in establishing the rail line, it had to be connected to the Victorian rail system which had connected Melbourne and Echuca in 1864 (Burton, 1973). Given that government departments and ministers in the two colonies could not agree on how to go about it, a group of Moama townspeople came together to form the D&M Railway company on the 18th of January 1873, to make the link with the Victorian rail system a reality. The D& M Railway is historically important, as it was the first time that a railway line in Australia crossed a border to connect two colonies (Ibid, 131). This event is perhaps part of the foundation stone of the Shire's objective to look beyond its own borders to address problems of supply and prosperity.

The Municipalities Act of 1858 provided for a voluntary system of community incorporation. A municipality would be granted on receipt of a petition containing the signatures of at least fifty persons liable for rating assessment. Under this legislation Moama was declared a Municipality in 1890 with two wards and a population then of approximately 700 (Ibid, 429). After Federation, the States overhauled the system of local government, introducing the Shires Act in 1905 which came into force in 1906. This Act forced the division of the State into local government areas known as Shires, which were further divided into ridings of equal representation on the Council. Moama Municipality was encompassed by the area of Murray Shire, but it retained its status as a separate municipality. Mathoura became the centre of Shire activities with the first Murray Shire Council meeting being held in the Mathoura town hall in December 1906. As with all councils, revenue was derived from rates levied upon annual land values to be spent on administration, health, roads and other public services.

Moves had been afoot since 1920 to disband the Municipality of Moama and legally incorporate it as part of Murray Shire. This did not occur though until 1952 when the Municipality of Moama ceased to exist due to boundary readjustment. At that time, Murray Shire was re established to cover the area from the southern boundary of Deniliquin municipality extending south, west and east to be bordered by the Murray, Edwards and Wakool rivers. The Shire prospered until the 1970s, when during that decade it suffered badly from unemployment, increased rates and a generally depressed economy. Towards the end of the 1970s however, the economy started to improve with the development of tourism playing an important role and a tourism committee being established in 1975 (Hearn et al., 1990, 434). During this time the NSW Department of Local Government argued for the amalgamation of two or more shires, to ensure economic sustainability. It was a push which Murray Shire resolutely resisted and a position which it has maintained in the most recent round of pressures to amalgamate in 2004. It is this position which has dictated the Shire's current attitude toward development and inter government liaison, seeing these as the keys to maintaining independence and avoiding amalgamation with other Shires (Council Member 1).

Since the amalgamation of the Moama municipality and Murray Shire, the two main towns of the Shire have remained Mathoura and Moama. Mathoura is the administrative centre of the Shire, being located almost in the centre of the Shire, but Moama is the centre of greatest population and economic activity, despite only

having the secondary Shire offices³⁷. Both office locations are used extensively by the community for meetings as well as for Shire business. It has been suggested that the primary administrative offices should be relocated to Moama, though this has been rejected on the basis that Mathoura is closest to the geographical centre of the Shire and therefore should remain the site of the primary Shire offices in order to ensure equitable service to the entire Shire. In addition, the residents of Mathoura understand that if

they put the head office somewhere else, well Mathoura will suffer because of that very reason. Because the Shire are there for expertise and you can just go and ask them. (Community Member 3)

As was noted by this community member and Council, smaller towns generally suffer more when they lose people such as teachers, doctors, bank managers, and engineers who support infrastructure and who often come from out of town (Council Member 1). As a result these people have new ideas, approaches and 'they knew how to do it easier than they [the locals] did' (Community Member 3). There is a high level of awareness of the importance of the Shire offices to the skill base and number of families that reside in Mathoura. Consequently, despite Moama being a thriving centre, the community overall is cognisant of the need to balance the resources of the community between the two towns and not concentrate them in Moama.

³⁷ As at the 2001 ABS Census Mathoura had a population of approximately 645 persons while Moama had 4,183 residents. These figures are approximate as they are taken from both postcode and statistical district data. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002e)

Moama's history also reflects the historical events experienced by Corowa Shire, yet its location on more marginal agricultural land and also on a major trading route, affected the nature of development, social hierarchies and mores that evolved in the region. It was by necessity that the community which developed in the Shire was diverse with ideas of egalitarianism³⁸, which influenced its subsequent social and economic approaches to development. This is noteworthy in the context of social capital, as it sets the community expectations for greater acceptance of bridging (diversity) and linking (sharing of power and decision making) in the community.

7.2 Features of community since 1991

In the previous chapter, the discussion of the events and attitudes affecting Corowa Shire lent themselves to being categorised by issue to demonstrate the nature of the relationship networks within the community, between the community and the local government, and the Council's relationship networks with other levels of government. By comparison, the response of Murray Shire's community to the Victorian gambling legislative change and the Mathoura Land Giveaway are the only two major issues that stand out as focussing the community. Otherwise, Murray Shire demonstrates far less community friction and exhibits a dominantly proactive approach, lending itself to a slightly different narration and analysis. The following two sections focus on specific events, with the third reviewing the data through the lens of the relationship categories (bonding, bridging, and linking) of social capital in the community and with local

³⁸ Egalitarianism is used here in the manner discussed by (Oxley, 1978) as that particular interpretation of the term relating to a community's hypothetical constructs of social equality, rather than an observable behaviour brought about by ideology.

government and the local government's external relationship networks. Through examining these and how they are balanced and intertwined, it becomes clear that these relationships have positively changed the community's responses to the economic pressures to diversify the sources of income of the Shire.

7.2.1 Club reaction to the Victorian gambling legislation

As outlined in chapter six, 1992 saw the introduction of poker machines to Victorian Clubs, impacting significantly upon the traditional revenue streams enjoyed by the New South Wales/Victoria border town Clubs. There were two salient observations that were made about the relationship between the Clubs and community in Murray Shire, concerning the changes to Victorian gambling legislation. The first was by a Council member who noted that

Moama need Echuca, but Echuca people don't necessarily need Moama, but we've got our sporting facilities and our Clubs. (Council Member1)

As an extension of that comment, it was noted by a Member of Parliament that the greatest contribution the Clubs

make to the community is the people that they employ. The amount of money that they spend on community contribution that they make or what ever is significant. A lot of people rely on it, a lot of sporting teams rely on it. But by far and away the biggest contribution that they make is the people that they employ. (Member of Parliament 1)

The importance of these comments lies in the recognition of both the role of the Clubs in the sustainability of the community, and also in who is making them. The comments demonstrate the implicit awareness of the Council and the NSW Member for Parliament of the major contribution of the Clubs to the prosperity of

the community. This awareness was also accompanied by their acknowledgement of how each could contribute to the positive management of the industry. Neither the interviews nor the media review revealed any uninvited intervention by either the Council or Members of Parliament; they did reveal, however, an ongoing awareness and readiness to provide assistance and work collaboratively with the Clubs for the benefit of the Shire.

The announcement of the legislative changes to gambling in 1992 prompted a proactive response in Murray Shire. Although the Riverine Herald announced that Moama (amongst others) needed to reduce its economic dependence on gambling (Riverine Herald, 5, July 3, 1991), the Clubs would not give up their poker machine income. Contrary to the response of the Clubs of Corowa, the Riverine Herald reported on January 1, 1992 that the Murray Shire's Clubs had met with the NSW Minister for Clubs at the time to discuss ways of addressing the economic effects of the changes (p. 5). By the end of that month the Shire Council had come out and openly pledged support for the Clubs to combat the threat to their income. The Council committed to lobbying the NSW government to give NSW Clubs access to similar poker machines as those being introduced in Victoria, so that NSW Clubs could at least 'keep up with the game' (Ibid, 1, January 29, 1992). In the same issue of the paper, the solidarity of the Clubs in Murray Shire was clearly demonstrated with the report of a first 'Oz Sports Day' which had been organised by all four Clubs in Moama aimed at the appealing to locals, not tourists. Rather than take a position of competing with one another, the Shire's Clubs - four in Moama (Sports Club, Bowling Club, Rich River Golf Club and the Echuca Moama RSL & Citizens Club) and one in Mathoura (Mathoura District & Servicemen's Bowling Club) - adopted a co-operative approach to business and income streams. In January 1992, the managers of the Clubs attended a meeting to hear a presentation from the

Victorian Gaming Commissioner, in order to obtain any possible insights to the manner of introduction and operation of the Victorian gambling facilities (Ibid, 5, February 3, 1992) that would assist in differentiating themselves from Victorian poker machine and tourism venues.

7.2.1.1 Club support of the community

Despite the pressure on incomes and the active search for tools with which to combat the competition from Victoria, the Clubs maintained a strong focus on their relationships with the community. This was not only through the joint organisation of community events, but also through continued donations to the community, one being a \$20,000 joint donation from the Moama Sports and Rich River Golf Clubs for the Moama Recreation Reserve Committee in March of 1992 (Riverine Herald, 12, March 1, 1992). Further, the Clubs also worked both, on obtaining recognition for their activities through awards, and with the local media to ensure that the community was aware of their activities and could share a sense of pride in the calibre of the region's facilities, as demonstrated by the report in the Riverine Herald on the 6th of April 1992, that

two Moama Clubs have been nominated for different categories in the NSW Club of the Year awards. Moama RSL and Citizens Club has been nominated for Most Improved Club of the Size and the Rich River Golf Club has been nominated in four different categories, including Club of the Year.
(3)

Such reportage might be seen as self promotion, given the threat to the viability of the Clubs hanging over the Shire, but it was deemed important that the community feel proud of the Clubs as part of the community's essential infrastructure and support them. That support had to be not only through

patronage, but also in the positive promotion by the community of the Clubs and what they had to offer beyond gambling facilities, through its own networks both in and, more importantly, beyond the community of Murray Shire.

In contrast to the Corowa Shire, where the Clubs had competed with each other for the remaining tourism dollars, disconnected from either the Chamber of Commerce, the Tourism Association or the Council, the Clubs of Murray Shire banded together, eliciting the support of the Council and community and, perhaps most important of all, the local media to participate in and report on their efforts. It was noted that 'the Moama Clubs heavily supported tourism', both at this time and on a continuing basis (Council Member 1). The results of the Clubs' efforts were that not only did they all survive through the 1990s despite fluctuating revenues, but the Bowling Club continued to expand its premises and the Rich River and the Sports Club also continued to expand the diversity of services they offered. There were no losses of jobs, and the infrastructure support provided by the Clubs through donation to charities, support of community events, training and employment was maintained.

Both Council and the local media saw their roles as not only the delivery of a service to the community, but that they also had a level of responsibility for facilitating communication and action in the community. This is likely to have been a key to the ability of the community to pull through this challenge to its status quo, and an encouragement for the Clubs to work for a common goal. The Council and the media appeared to understand that they had to support the activities that maintained their community and allowed it to exist with the degree of vivacity and resilience that it had up to that time. The Clubs of Murray Shire would not have been as successful in maintaining in such a short period of time their positions, had they not banded together, using the active support of Council,

local media, and the community. From a community perspective, the activity of the Clubs was instrumental in developing the bonding relationships in the community in the new circumstances they were facing, through creating a common vision and focus.

7.2.1.2 Tourism and Club activity

In June 1992, a major campaign came to the fore, whereby the Clubs worked in conjunction with the Council and NSW Tourism to promote the Murray region and its facilities between Albury/Wodonga and Echuca/Moama to the Melbourne market (Riverine Herald; 1, June 8, 1992). In that same month the Echuca and Moama tourism bodies agreed to merge in order to maximise their efforts and promote the region together. The amalgamation was reported as coming about specifically as a result of pressure from the Clubs which was articulated by Ian Hardinge from Rich River Country Tourism who said '[i]t will let us physically use all our resources on both sides of the river' (Ibid; 1, June 10, 1992). The amalgamation in the form of one central office did not come about, however, until 1994. In the meantime though, the Clubs still worked with the new body to refocus their efforts away from the traditional activities of bowls, golf or football and poker machines, and pursued efforts to retain and increase tourism through other activities.

Singularly and in combination, the Clubs provided donations to initiate or reinstate events to boost tourism. Aside from one off or annual events, the Clubs also got together with the Tourism Association and kicked off a major media campaign that was to run for the next eight months. In 1992 the Clubs contracted a marketing firm, who had presented at a Murray Shire Council Business Breakfast, to develop a promotions strategy that would appeal both nationally and internationally. They unveiled the strategy at a public cocktail party which was

advertised in the Riverine Herald (5, November 4, 1992), announcing a 'Monte Carlo' theme to promote the region as the gambling and sporting capital, with all its river and tourism facilities, in direct response to the introduction of poker machines in Victoria. The Riverine Herald also got on board and supported the campaign (despite being based in Echuca, Victoria) by offering a prize to the reader who came up with the best idea for furthering the theme into the future (Ibid; 1, November 13, 1992). In the following year, the Echuca based Chamber of Commerce worked in conjunction with the Moama Clubs to supplement the campaign with further promotions, in the form of a 'Monte Carlo Ball' which although promoted regionally, was also strongly supported by the local communities on both sides of the river. The campaign was designed to engage locals as much as tourists and consequently succeeded in doubling its promotion efforts through the enthusiasm of the local communities of both Moama and Echuca. In June 1993 a meeting of the Clubs was held to discuss the future of the Monte Carlo campaign (Ibid; 3, June 25, 1993), as the campaign had allowed the Clubs to maintain the local employment of 405 people which contributed some eight million dollars into the local economy each year (Ibid; 11, July 26, 1993).

Although in 1993 the Monte Carlo theme was considered to have fulfilled its initial objective, it still remains a feature of district promotion in the Jazz Food and Wine Festival each year (Community Member 6). The Monte Carlo promotion provided the impetus for a combined effort by the Council, Rich River Accommodation Association, local restaurants, caravan parks, river boats and Chamber of Commerce with the Clubs, which was a new co-operative feature of Shire relations. It might be said that the Chamber of Commerce only supported the Clubs because the Clubs had funded the Chamber of Commerce's Street Christmas party (which also had a Monte Carlo theme). The significance however, is in the mutually

supportive and self regenerating reciprocity that was created in the community, which transferred from one event into the next, and built bridging relationships that were developing into linking social capital, through which responsibilities and decisions were being shared.

7.2.1.3 Bridging activity of the Clubs

From 1994 onwards the Clubs, although moving away from the Monte Carlo theme, did not let their interaction with different sectors of the community flag. In June 1994 the Clubs continued to work together to pursue the notion of paddle steamers with poker machines (Riverine Herald; p.1, June 6, 1994) to provide a different activity, that was not available elsewhere, capitalising on the historical significance and media recognition³⁹ of the region (Ibid, 1, November 20, 1992). In addition to constantly working on projects that were sympathetic to other aspects of the community to boost their own revenue streams, the Clubs were also instrumental in collaborating with surrounding Shires to profile the area. It was reported on May 8, 1996, that a panel of border clubs got together and met in Moama seeking to compile a profile of the social and economic effects of Victorian gaming on the Murray region (Ibid, 1). It was proposed that from this report, recommendations in the form of a strategy could be put forward to counteract problems. It was not detailed who sat on that panel and how broad ranging it was, but the fact that it was held in Moama indicated the level of leadership and motivation that Murray Shire Clubs had in the process. This regional gathering occurred again in 1997 (Ibid; 1, March 31) when nine representatives, from Clubs along the Murray and Murray River Tourism, gathered to discuss the promotion of

³⁹ A major Australian Broadcasting Commission series – 'All the Rivers Run' – was filmed in the Echuca Moama region in 1983.

the industry at the Moama Bowling Club. In addition, the Council continued to implement its promise to lobby the NSW government on behalf of the industry and the welfare of its community, with reports of the NSW Gaming and Racing Minister visiting both Mathoura and Moama clubs in September 1996 (Ibid; 8, September 27, 1996).

7.2.2. The Great Mathoura Land Giveaway

7.2.2.1 Internal and external bridging

In September 1997, Murray Shire Council commenced what was known as the 'Great Mathoura Land Give Away; the first of its kind on the eastern seaboard of Australia. The 'Land Give Away' was reported as being the brain child of a Mathoura resident, who had picked up the idea from Western Australia (Community Member 3 & Riverine Herald; 1, August 13, 1997). It started with the idea of raffling off one or maybe two blocks as a way to get the town growing and introducing new people to the area. It was on this basis that it was raised by the Economic Development officer with the Council. The Council gave the go ahead for further investigation as Mathoura had been in decline for a period of time, given that it

had lost a lot of its infrastructure, social infrastructure in terms of the forestry office had gone down to only three or four people; (and) there was an RTA road patching gang that used to be stationed there, (but) they moved them to Deniliquin. ... the forestry offices probably cost us eight or ten families and they closed down the forestry operations...; the school was downgraded by one teacher (and then) they dropped below the mythical line - that was from the policeman leaving because he had five kids. And it took us from one side of the line to the other. (Council Member 2)

The Economic Development Officer at the time had only started with the Shire Council in March 1997. Having come originally from Gilgandra, and gaining a degree from UNE, he had previous experience in Bourke and Coonamble, and was regarded as bringing new ideas and fresh perspectives to the community and the position (Riverine Herald, 8, March 7, 1997). The original idea of giving away one or two blocks blossomed into one of subdividing a large Council block in Mathoura into twenty six building blocks to be given away. As Mathoura did not have excess employment opportunities at the time, the process of giving them away was proposed to be tightly controlled in an application process. Applicants had to show occupation, qualifications, work history, outline past community efforts and include referees, with favourable consideration going to those who could bring industry to the area (Ibid, 1, August 13, 1997). The plan was officially launched by the Council in the middle of August 1997, with close of applications to be at the end of September that same year. Open days were held, along with displays of the Giveaway being open to the public at the Mathoura Bowling Club, in real estate agents offices, and the Council and banks. It gained broad publicity including the John Laws program and television coverage (Council Member 2), with the effect of reportedly eliciting one thousand enquiries. Despite the positive bridging relationships the project was encouraged which was envisaged to result in diversity and growth it was not, however, comprehensively supported throughout the community.

7.2.2.2 'Land Giveaway' challenges to bonding in the community

From the retelling of events and the reports of reactions in the paper, the 'Give Away' overtook the consultation process with the community. This was reflected in the report in the Riverine Herald on July 18 in 1997 being, that just a month before the announcement of the open day,

proposals by Murray Shire to give away land in Mathoura . . . outraged resident Tom Weyrich who described the move as shock horror for locals. Mr Weyrich said “no one in the town knew anything about it until it appeared on Channel Nine’s national news on Monday night. They got no right to do this type of thing without notifying ratepayers at least, let alone residents.” . . . Mr Weyrich was concerned about where these people would work and the possible devaluation of land in the Mathoura area. (1)

It seems that Tom Weyrich (who not only kept up the protestations and was prompted as a result to run – successfully - for Council) was not the only one who thought it was a bad idea. Another resident of the Mathoura recalled that ‘a lot of the hecklers like me . . . thought it was bullshit, I thought it was a mad idea at first. I just thought ‘oh this is going to be stupid’; you know no one’ll take it up.’ (Community Member 3)

The Council responded to the issues raised by the community publicly in the newspaper, in order to clearly put its position which was that

Details are not final, but at this stage the plan involves Council owned fully serviced residential blocks in the Mathoura Township being given away subject to a set of conditions. The land given away was passed in principle by Council on June 17. Shire officers are now in the process of further investigating the move. Greg Murdoch said that the aim was to generate new economic activity. . . . “The conditions might stipulate that applicants must build on the land within 12 months and that land could not be re sold until it has been built on. I also image that the successful applicant will be responsible for all legal costs” he said. If the conditions were not met then

the land would be returned to Council. (The Riverine Herald, 1, July 18, 1997)

Interpreting events of what was happening in the context of social capital was a challenge to the community's new found sense of identity, created by the bonding networks established in response to the economic threats of several years earlier. The land giveaway was going to introduce new residents into the area with unknown ideas, values and expectations; a clear threat to the status quo.

The Council continued to address objections in the public forum of the newspaper, and just before the open day in September an article appeared in the Riverine Herald on the progress of interest, applications and community objections, along with the Council's response. The Council was measured in its reactions and its response was generalised in tone, appearing successfully to keep personalities out of the debate. In response to the concern that there were inadequate employment opportunities for new residents or Council infrastructure, Greg Murdoch – Council General Manager at that time – was reported as saying that

while the Council had not guaranteed jobs through the scheme, there were opportunities for employment not just in Mathoura but also in Echuca, Moama and Deniliquin. With regard to infrastructure, with a new sewerage treatment plant and plans to introduce a raw water scheme there was no doubt that the town had the facilities. (Riverine Herald, 1, September 10, 1997)

These comments were further backed up by a subsequent report the following week on the proposed benefits and ability of the community to accommodate the project by the Mayor Brian Sharp (Riverine Herald, 2, September 17, 1997). Between this and the continued information that the Council endeavoured to

disseminate through the media and as the interest in the Land Give-Away increased, the Mathoura residents along with others in the Shire community changed their position on the worth of the Land Give-Away, saying that

I had to eat my words . . . there was people everywhere! It was just . . . I mean I was no different from a lot of others. But it didn't take long to get onto the thing of it because there was just I mean it was just like a madhouse, there was people everywhere - people ringing up from all over the blasted world almost! . . . a lot of people wanted it but in the end didn't come, so we just in the end it was just if you want to build a home there that'd be terrific and you'll pay our rates and that'd be great. So but they all buy milk and bread and buy a raffle ticket up the street. And there was ... most of them are older people or new couples or whatever, but they're still houses, they might still get sold and somebody else might come in. And some have been sold and other people have come in. So it was a great success. (Community Member 3)

Despite there being disagreement about the merit of the project at the outset (Riverine Herald, 'Giveaway under fire', 3, Feb. 23 1998), it is now reported as one of the most successful projects undertaken by the Council in the last fifteen years, with them receiving recognition for excellence from the Australian Local Government Information Service (1998). Greg Murdoch commented that 'You know all of the blocks of land have gone and there's twenty houses now that weren't there before you know it was a different way of looking at things and we had a go.' (May 2004)

The community's disagreement about the direction of the Council was publicly acknowledged and considered in the decision making process, even though in this

case it did not change the direction the Council took. The Council kept the project moving forward by actively engaging with the community rather than being defensive in response to criticism or questions regarding the process. It appears that this process of ongoing engagement combined with the success of the project brought the community around to a position whereby it was no longer felt that the project challenged the bonds of the community, and that the potential opportunities presented by the bridging relationships offered by new residents were worthwhile. The important point is that the Council appeared still to regard it as important to gain the community's agreement or forgiveness rather than to take the position of, 'they will get used to it' that could have been adopted. This also represents an implicit recognition of the community right to have a say which is recognised and responded to; an approach which builds the bridging and linking networks in the community to balance and mitigate detrimental effects of strong bonding ties.

7.2.3 Murray Shire bonding, bridging and linking

As illustrated by the Club activity and the land giveaway, the Murray Shire community can bond well within the boundaries of the two major communities. Both the Moama and the Mathoura communities feel a common identity within Murray Shire as demonstrated by the membership, diversity and level of activity in the community groups in the Shire. Only limited bridging between the communities of Moama and Echuca occurs, however, provided by group interaction. Even less bridging is evident between Mathoura and Moama, despite improvements since 1996, when greater Council focus was given to encouraging the interaction of the two communities (ex Council Member 1). Regardless of this, a sense of pride and identity with the Shire overall is evident amongst residents of both Mathoura and Moama, generated by the feeling of inclusion in Shire activities

and focus. This may be accounted for by the active bridging and linking that is undertaken by the Council and organisations such as the Echuca Moama Tourism, the Mathoura Chamber of Commerce and Citizens and the Echuca Moama Traders Association and, in the past, the Moama Community Development Committee. These organisations were, and are still, actively networking with other organisations and volunteers in the region, not only developing projects within the Shire and bringing in new ideas, but also in promoting the activities and features of the Shire within and beyond its boundaries.

7.2.3.1 Bonding in Murray Shire

The bonding relationships of the community appear to be well developed and established through common interest, be that the river, as in River Watch; children, through the establishment and maintenance of an adventure playground by the Moama Community Development Committee; or through previous experience with clubs and associations elsewhere, such as Neighbourhood Watch, Apex or Lions Clubs. Non traditional groups have also acted as strong bonding networks in the community. The Positive Thinkers Breakfast Club was established in August 1991 after a local business man, Alan Green, called for people to be more positive in the community. He was flooded with calls of agreement and interest (Riverine Herald, 1,31, July 17& 7, August 7, 1991), and the group was established to provide a positive central focus, vision and sense of purpose for the business community. The Group continued to feature in the paper until October 1993. It is notable that they met consistently for over two years during the time when the community was under the most pressure from changed circumstances in relation to gambling and tourism income. It is also noteworthy that the apparent demise of the Positive Thinkers Group coincided with the effect of the strong community uptake of the regional promotion by the Clubs and Tourism Association of the

Monte Carlo theme. This led to a community wide focus on the development opportunities of the community from 1993 onwards, with the active participation of the Chamber of Commerce in promotional events and the establishment of the combined Echuca Moama Tourism Association office in early 1994. The bonding developed in the Positive Thinkers Group had spread and bridged to a variety of different sectors in the community through common objectives and simultaneous efforts.

Following on from the activities of the Positive Thinkers and tourism activities, a need was identified in June 1995 by a group of Moama business people to focus community attention on the non infrastructure needs of the Shire (Riverine Herald, 3, June 21, 1995). The Moama Community Development Committee (MCDC) was set up with an initial contribution from the Shire Council of \$1000 (Ibid, 3, September 1, 1995). Although the activity of the Committee appeared low key, the group was committed to connecting with the community to identify issues and establish a mission statement and proposed plan for the group, which was open for public comment (Ibid, 3, September 18, 1995). Such an activity simultaneously connected relationship networks based on bonding, and also endeavoured to reach out to other disconnected individuals with different ideas in the community.

Bonding relationships in the community have been augmented by some Council activities which get very positive support. The annual Australia Day Breakfast, including youth week and senior citizens day, held alternatively in Moama and Mathoura each year in conjunction with Lions Club catering (Community Member 2 & 4) were cited as good examples. The Australia Day breakfast, as with all the other events organised by the Council, was reported as enjoying 'good support, well supported yeah, Australia Day breakfast is big' (Community Member 4 - Moama).

A Mathoura resident also noted that at the

Senior Citizens Day, . . . well they all come out of the wood work. So you can't get any more involvement in the Day there. Australia Day is always quite good actually. The Shire always put it on, they always put on breakfast with guest speakers dah dah dah. And they have it in the park here, or next year in Moama they alternate. And it's always well; it's always a very pleasant morning for those who go. I've been along to a couple and it's well attended its not nil attendance. (Community Member 3- Mathoura)

On the whole there are numerous activities run by the various organisations and committees in the Shire, both separately and in conjunction with the Council, to bring the community together. The noteworthy aspect is that all activities are relatively well supported, recognised and valued throughout the community for the groups that they do bring together.

7.2.3.2 Bridging in the community

In the process of the MCDC's activities the group inadvertently highlighted the ongoing tensions that occur between town centres and the broader community in Shires such as Murray, where the rural and urban sectors can be in conflict with each other. This conflict was clearly acknowledged in the public forum of the newspaper, in the report of the Moama Community Development Committee's successful proposal to refocus the Moama town centre with a rotunda.

Murray Shire Council will spend \$10,000 on a rotunda for Moama despite opposition from rural residents who felt the money would be better spent on roads, as it was supported by the Moama Community Development Committee, Echuca Moama Chamber of Commerce, the Moama Bowling Club and the Moama Motor Inn, and as the Council had already allocated

the money for the rotunda though it was only passed five to four to proceed, because of the rural concerns. (Ibid, 1, November 15, 1996)

This rural urban divide, accentuated by the traditional attitudes of Council obligations being to provide roads, rates and rubbish collection alone, caused a degree of the competition between Mathoura, the other smaller townships of Bunnaloo and Caldwell, and Moama - the most urban location in the Shire. Despite this conflict, however, the Council consistently worked with its rural based Councillors to bridge these differing perspectives. The Moama Community Development Committee continued to work in conjunction with the community to identify needs not traditionally met by local government priorities and in 1997 began to gauge community interest for a Children's Playground (Riverine Herald, 2, June 9, 1997). This project became a massive task that was completed entirely with voluntary labour and donations of funds and equipment from community events and tradespeople (Ibid, 3, 31, July 10: 3, September 30: 7, November 18, 1998). This activity was a solid example of bridging social capital building from bonding relationships, whereby totally diverse groups of people from all sectors of the community came together for the common good and found a new sense of identity and 'community' in the process. That common good was not only the direct benefit to children of the area but also in the support, by adding infrastructure, that it gave to the tourism industry. It was the last major activity reported on before the Committee went into recess in 2000,

due to a lack of interest from Moama people to become involved in the committee. However although the committee has gone into recess interested people will work with the Council staff to facilitate any worthwhile projects that arise in the future. It was noted that the original role of the Committee

had largely been taken over by the Moama Traders which is a group driven by themselves. (Ibid, 7, March 13, 2000)

Despite the very effective community bridging achieved by the MDCD, factions evolved in the group and it bonded into two distinct interest groups. One was focused on general community benefit and the other was intent on economic development. This turn of events was potentially exacerbated by the involvement of the Council, which had procured base funds for an economic development officer utilising the business plan of the Moama Community Development Committee to initiate development activities. The economic development focus that this then reflected on the MCDC raised the level of friction between the factions of the committee, increasing it to the point where interest in unravelling the problems and priorities was lost (Community Member 5; Council Member 1). This in turn resulted in the emergence of the Moama Traders Association in 1999, when the Moama businesses joined forces to boost trade in Moama, and the subsequent demise of the MCDC. The Moama Traders were developed with the aim of encouraging residents to support Moama business with its catch cry 'Your town, Your home, Your choice' (The Riverine Herald, 2, May 5, 1999). They were also reported at that time to be concerned with the plight of medical services in the town and sought to assist the Council in communication processes; activities which had been the original objectives of the Moama Community Development Group. This sequence of events demonstrates the potential negative outcomes from extreme bonding in community groups, which are not mitigated by adequate bridging relationships. Some members within the group had bonded so strongly as to have an exclusionary effect on other members, splitting the original group.

The Mathoura Chamber of Commerce and Citizens, as with the Moama Community Development Committee and subsequently Traders Association, has

taken up the task of not only promoting the businesses of the township but also the community's needs. Given the experience in Moama, it is noteworthy that the Mathoura Chamber of Commerce and Citizens made a point that, although it values the support and backing of the Council, it operates independently from Council (Community Member 3). The Chamber of Commerce and Citizens was instrumental in procuring funds from the Natural Heritage Trust to develop and build, with the input of extensive volunteer labour and equipment, a River Walk to promote Tourism in the town. This project has subsequently been expanded with support of NSW State Forestry and the Council. Along with the development of the Mathoura Fishing Classic, the Mathoura Muster, Cadell and Easter Fairs and the annual Duck Race (The Riverine Herald, 1991 - 2000), these activities are perceived by the Chamber to bring people and money into the community, regenerating it and providing a focus and sense of pride in the community, despite a lack of support from local main street businesses⁴⁰. Subsequent to the loss of essential services to the Mathoura community, such as banking, the Chamber championed the application for a Rural Transaction Centre (RTC) and subsequently worked with the Economic Development Officer of the Shire to submit an application (Ibid, 5, July 9 & 3, July 28, 1999), which was successful and the Community Transaction Centre was opened for business on the 4th of March 2003 (Mathoura CTC Redgum Branch, 2003). The Transaction Centre has reinvigorated the town and the community, through the reintroduction of essential services such as banking, library and new services such as internet access (Council

⁴⁰ Although Chambers of Commerce are usually composed of largely Main Street businesses (as is the case in Corowa) the members of the Mathoura Chamber of Commerce and Citizens are business operators and concerned citizens from the town in general and surrounding district.

Member 1). In the case of Mathoura, the Chamber has been successful as a community group because of its strong vision and focus which has been independent of, but synergistic with, that of the Council.

In the case of the MCDC, the initial strong bonding was the basis of a bridging relationship which facilitated the achievement of many activities that would not have been possible otherwise, including the Community Rotunda and an Adventure Playground that has since been copied by the community of Orange (ex Council Member 1). There was however, insufficient bridging to allow for divergent ideas and multiple objectives. In this case another group, the Moama Traders, grew out of that fracturing on the basis of a focus on economic versus community welfare, which has still worked towards community benefit⁴¹. This fracturing has been attributed by some in the community to the strong role which the Council asserts over the direction of development and external shire networks (Community Members 3 & 6, Ex Council Member 1).

The sequence of Shire group activities was the emergence of the Positive Thinkers in 1993, the Monte Carlo Campaign and combined tourism organisation established in 1994, the Moama Community Development Committee in 1995, and the Moama Traders in 1996. Since that time however, there are no reports of new groups emerging. This may be due to the perceived dominance of the Council in Shire development activities, potentially indicating that where Councils force influence rather than create interactive relationships (linking) based on trust, it can have detrimental effects.

⁴¹ As of February 2006 the Moama Traders had gone into recess (Council Member 1).

7.2.3.3. Linking within Murray Shire

In looking at the linking actions of the Council between both its community and with other levels of government, it has a credible public record of actively pursuing vertical linking relationships. Despite Murray Shire Council being criticised in the community for being stubborn and uncommunicative (Community Members, 3, 5 & 6), it is recorded as actively engaging with the community, not only to disseminate information, as is common with councils elsewhere, but also to procure community sentiment and ideas for planning and development objectives. As far back as 1992, it was reported in the Riverine Herald that the Council had organised a series of public meetings to advise people of current programs and priorities and obtain feedback on its performance and what the community sees as priorities (3, November 6, 1992). The criticism of Council's 'stubbornness' appears to arise from them not choosing interactive environments more often for meetings with community members, to facilitate active sharing of ideas. This is an option which is strongly favoured by the community as demonstrated by the number of community organised meetings and workshops that were held and reported as well attended in the years 1995 to 2000 by groups such as the Moama Community Development Committee, Moama Traders, Clubs and Tourism Association (Riverine Herald).

The Council has endeavoured to create interactive opportunities to share ideas and knowledge and some decision making on development focus. The first annual Business Breakfast held by the Shire appears in 1992 (Riverine Herald, 10, August 4, 1992). Designed to act as a forum for business people to network with the Council, each breakfast was free for all Shire residents and had a speaker or focus pertinent to the business interests of the community. Promoted through the local media, the Breakfast in 1992 focused on marketing and advertising businesses; in

1997 it was on business development (Ibid, 10, October 24, 1997), and in 1999 the speaker was from the Central Murray Area Consultative Committee (CMACC) (Ibid, 6, October 22, 1999). In 1994, instead of having a guest speaker at the Breakfast the Council used the opportunity to initiate discussion on identifying niche markets for the Shire (Ibid, 12, September 23, 1994).

The Council was also active in focusing on interacting with the community through a finance program designed to benefit rate payers in terms of decreasing Council interest costs, while giving the community an opportunity to make a sound investment in its own Shire. As was reported in the Riverine Herald on the 21st of July 1995, that the

Murray Shire Council has come up with an innovative scheme for its residents and ratepayers to invest in Council and it has met with a positive response. Interest rates on investments in Council projects vary from 8.47% to 9.89%. The rate was set half way between the commercial investment rate and the council's local government borrowing rate creating a win win for everyone in the community. Contact details for the scheme are provided. (5)

The Council also worked with the community in the non economic sphere by supporting the Home and Community Care (HACC) Officer, providing office space and funding application assistance not necessarily duplicated in other Shires (Community Member 2). Additionally, the Council worked in conjunction with the Lions Club and the youth of the community to negotiate the location and design of a skate park, to provide outlets for the youth of Moama (Riverine Herald, 2, September 5, '97). The Lions Club of Moama, which had identified a need for retirement housing, took it upon itself with the support of the Shire Council to build a number of units (Ibid, 1, January 31, 1992). However, due to the difficulties

of management, it became necessary to hand over the ownership and management of the units to the Council (Ibid, 11, October 9, 1992). The development of further units has continued and, despite strong initial disagreement between the Lions Club and Council over operating and management procedures through ongoing negotiation and dialogue, the two have come to a workable and productive arrangement to the benefit of the community (Community Member 4), which invariably involved sharing power and responsibility by all groups.

In addition to these activities, interviews with community group members highlighted that they were very aware and appreciative of a policy of a member of Council always being on each community committee. Although this is generally fairly standard procedure in most communities, it was notably commented on by interviewees as being very effective in connecting the Council and community, to keep each other abreast of developments and assist in active problem solving in both directions (Community Members 2, 4, 6, & 7). Although Council representation on a committee indicates internal bridging if ideas are actively shared, in this case it also served to develop otherwise weak linking ties in community relationships by bringing people together on a continued basis and building the trust to share responsibility and decision making – the relational element essential to linking ties. This was noted by one community group member who said that '[i]t's getting to know the people who you've got to see and being on these committees, they get to know me and where I'm coming from. There's a Councillor on most of the committees.' (Community Member 4)

From the Council's point of view, having a member of Council on the community's committees serves the purpose that

if there are any concerns about Council or to council, it can go directly through that rep. And that goes right from the Chamber of Commerce, your recreation reserve, even your tourism board, your cemetery committee; most of your public committees in town have a ... Council rep go along to meetings and can convey problems or well wishes or whatever and it comes directly back to Council and they feel they have some ownership of the Council then. I think it's a great way of involving people. (Council Member 2)

Upon members of committees being asked if Council attempted to influence committee decisions or processes, it was unanimous that this was not the case. It was noted that if the Committee's direction did not agree with Council's there would likely be problems in gaining cooperation and approval. This did not, however, prevent the activities of committees, but did slow down their processes at times (Community Member 6). Despite this, the community members interviewed felt strongly that the active involvement of members of Council on their committees was a positive thing and that it provided access to processes that they would otherwise not have.

These Council activities are a combination of direct recognition of the importance of community involvement and the creation of opportunities and of providing the opportunity to include the community in Council dealings. Despite comments that the Council can improve its relationships with the community, these factors are potentially instrumental in the high rates of community participation and volunteerism in the community in that the community are engaged enough by the Council to see their contribution as valued. This highlights the potential for the level and quality of community and government linking to be affected by the power exercised by councils and by communities. The balancing of that power

cannot be focused exclusively in either the community or government domain if positive outcomes are to be generated from government and community interaction. As discussed in chapter two, successful linking relationships are those vertical relational networks, based on trust and respect that allow the flow of information and ideas between parties of differing power levels, back and forth on an on going basis.

7.2.3.4 External linking relationships

The Council has also worked to build a strong and co-operative partnership with Campaspe Shire. Prior to 1990, there had been a notable level of rivalry, as commented on by a member of the Council who agreed that

Yeah look when I first arrived (1993) some of the Councillors said oh they haven't got the cannon pointing at us today and I'm sort of going oh yeah. But over the years it hasn't been that bad and like we've always sort of been in the library, tourism whatever. (Council Member 1)

Despite improvements in relations due to cooperative work with the Tourism Association and Chamber of Commerce, this situation was considered to have worsened when the Campaspe Shire Council was dissolved in 1993 as part of the Victorian Government's move forcibly to amalgamate Victorian councils. As part of this process, Councillors were replaced by State Commissioners until a new Council was elected for the Shire of Campaspe. During those two years there was a level of friction between Murray and Campaspe Shires, believed to be because the representatives of Campaspe Shire

were like puppets . . . from Mr Kennett's office; they used to report to him the first Monday of every month. Nothing was done unless it was signed off by the department. So therefore they were puppets in my opinion, they

were not elected members they really didn't have the community at heart at all. (Council Member 2).

Subsequent to the election of a Council by the Campaspe community in 1995, the Moama Shire Council made a concerted effort to engage with the new Council. This was largely because of the benefits offered by Campaspe's infrastructure and the mutual benefits that could be gained from sharing economic development and social planning processes; as noted 'the story is simple . . . they can put in a bigger infrastructure. . . . So it really is just matter of common sense and making it work for you.' (Council Member 2)

Since 1995, the Murray Shire Council has driven to promote itself and its activities within and outside the Shire largely with an economic focus, sometimes resulting in community criticism that too much focus is given to external networking. One such case was the Council purchase of a farm on the northern side of Moama to set up an industrial estate to attract industry to the area – almost all of which is now occupied (Council Member 2). However, from a social capital point of view this external bridging activity provided knowledge and the empowerment to utilise that knowledge, for the betterment of the community. It also created the opportunity to build on bridging networks and develop them into linking relationships with State and corporate organisations in areas of planning. According to Council members and the Riverine Herald, Murray Shire Council is not only active in connecting to other communities and government departments but also very successful in its objectives. The Council's membership of the

CMAACC⁴² and other regional bodies⁴³ and their active participation on their boards and committees, provides them with a level of access to, and role in, the power afforded these organisations, creating effective bridging and linking opportunities.

It would be unrealistic to argue that, through their linking relationships, Murray Shire Council has overcome its dependency on external relations. Its actions have however, ameliorated the impacts of uncontrollable events by taking an active role in building external relationships to become a partner in those relationship networks rather than a dependent recipient. The Riverine Herald reported these activities regularly during the period 1991 to 2000, which related directly to opening up a dialogue to resolve, or work towards resolutions of, problems (The Riverine Herald, 22/6/92, 8/8/00, 1/7/06, 21/10/96, 10/2/97, 14/3/97, 19/2/97, 18/3/98, 15/4/98, 22/7/98, 31/8/98, 19/2/99, 25/2/00, 14/4/00, 5/6/00). Some community members see external government and community linking activities as a detrimental attribute of the Council; however others see it as providing strong leadership. The Council itself sees these external bridging and linking activities as essential to its focus on developing the community, as was reported in the Riverine Herald that '[t]he Murray Shire is pro-development, encouraging new ideas because residents are keen to see the area develop' (2, July 31, 1996).

42 Administered by the Department of Transport and Regional Affairs, the Area Consultative Committees were set up by the Labour Federal Government in 1994 and were designed to Link business, government and community. The committees exist to gather information on the region, resolve problems and identify opportunities for its participant communities (DOTARS communication 13/1/96 & http://www.acc.gov.au/about_the_network/index.aspx; (Central Murray Area Consultative Committee, 1997)

43 The Mayor of the Shire is on the Executive Committee for the Murray Region Organisation of Councils (MUROC), the Murray Darling Association (MDA) and the NSW Local Government Council. His level of involvement has been criticized by community members for taking his focus away from community issues; however, it is clear evidence of active bridging and linking with external resources that could benefit the community. The General Manager of the Shire was also on the Murray Regional Development Board in 2004.

From a practical point of view, the Council regards its economic focus as part of the necessary foundations for the community in order to provide financial prosperity to develop further social infrastructure. Social infrastructure was however also considered by Council a necessary parallel component to economic infrastructure, both of which had to be developed simultaneously in order to attract development and further infrastructure. Therefore Council bridging and linking activity with the community to identify priorities was considered by Council to be equally as important as the external relationship networking in order to harness opportunities.

Overall, during the period 1991 to 2000, the community exhibited differing degrees of positive social capital relationship types. Those relationship networks that have dominated during that period however, have all, on balance, been positive in all four sectors of the social capital framework being analysed. Despite the balance between these having been upset at times, and may still be considered as weighted too heavily toward bridging and linking by some, relatively speaking, those relationships have been flexible enough to allow negotiation, change and growth that have been positive for the community.

7.3 Since 2001

7.3.1 Council knowledge and experience with social capital (bonding and bridging)

With the introduction of the requirement for Councils to undertake the development of a Social and Community Plan in the 1999 Management Plan, Murray Shire Council endeavoured to meet the requirements with the development of a Social Plan which was published as part of its Management Plan in 2000 (Council Member 3). This first plan was undertaken by the Council in 1997, working within the resources and visions of the community. As one external

consultant commented who became involved in the development of the second Social and Community Plan (2003 – 2008), Murray Shire Council had actually undertaken the initial plan on its own using internal Council resources at least to make a start on the process, even if it was not able to afford a comprehensive plan as prescribed by the Department of Local Government. The Council's consideration of social capital as an important element of the Shire's development was evidenced in their inclusion of it in their economic development focus in 1997 and with the Land Giveaway. The objective of both of which was not only to increase population but also diversity and with it an indirect increase in the level of bridging social capital in the community.

When the Council came to doing the second plan they knew not only what to do, but how they could maximise the process to get the most out of it, given that they had a complete understanding of the process. The first time around they

went and did all the interviews [themselves] and came up with a plan it meant that they'd thought it through. You know the plan had been to the council, they'd been through the process and they'd actually seen that they got something out of it, you know they'd made some plans and they could actually do some things and they did them. (Consultant 2)

When it came to funding the second formal plan, the Council found that the most efficient way was to work with Campaspe Shire 'Well they'd gone in with Campaspe and Campaspe had applied to get funding in Victoria and they had piggy backed onto Campaspe. So that's how they got the funding' (Consultant 1). Further, the process of developing and implementing a Social and Community Plan was considered to be much easier with Murray Shire Council as they

seemed to really cotton on to what we were doing quite quickly - it wasn't like a foreign language . . . of course they'd done one already, a social and community plan already, so we were coming back to it again and admittedly the guidelines had changed and become more rigorous, and so yeah they still had a good basic grasp of why they were there and what they should be doing with the plan. (Consultant 1)

This was not the first time that the Council had endeavoured to address the social aspect of the Shire's needs. Apart from developing its own social plan initially, the Council had also undertaken a youth needs analysis in 1997 to look at how to address this aspect of the Shire's population (Consultant 2). At that time it also worked with external consultants to establish a base line of needs and planning. The Council had a fundamental awareness of the necessity to not only have a common vision in the community, but an acceptance of diversity and means to introduce new ideas and approaches into the community. Although the Council did not see these elements of community in the context of bonding and bridging social capital, they are or can be seen that way, and the Council were inadvertently developing that element of their community's capacity to adapt to change.

7.3.2 Council working with surrounding communities (bridging and linking)

The Council did not see the Social and Community Plan as a stand alone activity, but one that fitted into their overall program and how they interacted with the Campaspe Shire. The Council had 'piggy backed' on Campaspe for the second Social and Community Plan, seeing that it was able to recompense Campaspe Shire by including them in a housing needs analysis undertaken by the NSW Department of Community Services. As it was relayed by a Council member the process had been one whereby

Campaspe Shire got a grant and they paid for our [Social and Community] plan, because they had to do a similar thing, so we got our plan for nothing. We just got \$90,000 to do a housing needs analysis. I've spoken to DOCs and said that we're going to have to do Campaspe Shire as well. So you know there's - we've got to work together and make sense. (Council Member 1)

There is little evidence of interaction with the Deniliquin Municipality, but this is accounted for by the fact that the major population centre of Murray Shire is closest to Echuca in the Campaspe Shire, and therefore an alliance with Campaspe Shire Council is a higher priority and more economically efficient for the Council. The culmination of the collaborative activity between the Campaspe and Murray Shires has been the announcement of an agreement in June 2004, which the two Councils had been working on for some twelve months. The event was reported in the press as formalising 'a historic cross border agreement to share infrastructure and services at a meeting with the NSW Local Government Minister Tony Kelly on June 23' (Grennan, 2004).

As noted earlier, members of the Council are very active as both members and in holding board positions on the Regional Organisation of Councils and Regional Development Committees, which bring them into contact with a broader range of Councils and associated activities, other than just the Campaspe Shire. The Shire Council has continued with this interactive focus by hosting a local government conference in the Shire in July 2005 - the 'Working Together Conference'. It was held in collaboration with the Department of Local Government, with a focus on the government's initiatives which local councils needed to be aware of, as well as strategic alliance issues (Murray Shire Council, 2006).

Between 1993 and 1998 Murray Shire gained momentum in creating its own identity and sense of importance in the regional tourism context when it undertook the extensive promotion of the region through the Monte Carlo tourism promotion and the Great Land Give-Away; momentum which was continued with the launch of the 'Inland Sea-Change' promotion in 2001. In April 2001 the Council was presented with a proposal to launch a media campaign aimed at increasing the population of Murray Shire (Council Member 3). This promotion was aimed at encouraging young families and people of working age into the region, in contrast to retirees to which the region had always appealed. The objective was to boost the diversity of the community and provide a work force for potential businesses considering relocation to the region. It reinforces the commitment of the Council to providing both social and economic infrastructure, so that one can support the other. Articles appeared in a range of newspapers under the headlines of 'River offers inland 'Seachange'' (Howard, 2001); 'Inland shire a new land of promise' (Potter, 2001) and 'Sea Change Without The Sea, Says Mayor on The Mighty Murray'(Grennan, 2001).

7.3.3 On going challenges

Continued positive population growth rates in the Shire point to the success of campaigns to attract new residents to the Shire. There is however, also a level of unhappiness in the community with the increased number of people and building that is occurring, indicated with comments that

the place itself though, its getting too big - there's too many people moving in. Yeah I keep on telling them people that come up weekends like that go home, its better at home. (Community Member 4)

This indicates the paradox presented by the different elements of social capital. A constant tension exists over achieving the right combination of bonding, bridging and linking networks to achieve the specific objectives of a community – be they aware of social capital or not – as these relationships are dynamic and always subject to change.

Contrary to the resistance to increased diversity in the community, there is also recognition in other quarters that new residents can have a more inquisitive attitude than long term locals, which assists local groups such as Landcare. It was commented about one particular couple who had moved up to the Shire from Victoria that

every time they see any sort of seminar they'll go to it, and they're always coming back and saying oh we did this. And then a few little seeds get dropped so they've been really good I reckon in terms of new ideas.
(Community Member 8)

The Mathoura Chamber of Commerce and Citizens has also continued actively to build on the enthusiasm generated by the Land Give-Away by developing a Mathoura Tourist and Services Directory. This was officially launched by Murray Shire Mayor, Mr Brian Sharp on October 30, 2004 at the Cadell Country Fair⁴⁴.

The community had worked with Council to procure funds through a grant from the NSW Department of State and Regional Development Towns and Villages Futures Program. The objective of the Directory is to provide information to both locals and visitors on local organisations, businesses and services that are available,

along with attractions, local history and identities, in a bid to encourage further involvement in the area of both locals and visitors. This activity is directly associated with developing bridging networks within the community and to resources outside it.

The social identity and pride of the community took a major step forward in 2004 with the recognition of Murray Shire's history with the listing of the Old Telegraph Station in Moama⁴⁵. It was classified by the National Trust of Australia (NSW) after it had been saved by community action, involving both individuals and the Lions Club (Community Members 4 & 5; Council Member 2). Such actions add to the community's sense of relevance and place in history, by having its own historical attributes to promote as part of the region. It provides further focus for tourism beyond just being an accommodation provider, and an opportunity for the community to connect to broader networks of resources, through the National Trust of Australia and other heritage organisations. Consequently, heritage activities have had benefits to both the bonding and bridging relationship networks in the community.

Another project designed to increase connections between Shires in the region is the 'Long Paddock' project, launched in 2004⁴⁶. Once more the Shire is focusing on the resources that it can tap into from its history, but giving it a more active and exploratory bent. 'Long Paddock' is the term used for a route or open road where stock can freely graze, and in this case refers to the traditional stock route that ran

44 http://www.inlandseachange.com/whatsnew_article.asp?ID=53

45 http://www.inlandseachange.com/whatsnew_article.asp?ID=54

46 http://www.inlandseachange.com/whatsnew_article.asp?ID=42

from Wilcannia to Moama; an important feature in Murray Shire's early development. Exclusively aimed at the tourism market, it is another activity that has required the Council and Tourism Authority to work with other Council and tourism organisations to the north, to pull the project together into a marketable commodity. Additionally, the Shire is working with other Shires in the region to identify and have recognised new industries suitable to the climate, soil and water availability of the region (Riverine Herald, 5, September , 1997). In May 2003, a feasibility study on the suitability of the region for viticulture was released which had been jointly commissioned by the Murray, Conargo and Deniliquin Councils. Viticulture has been a feature of Murray Shire for over ten years, but such reports help to entrench recognition of the area as suitable to horticulture. In December 2005 the Council also released, in collaboration with Campaspe Shire, its Echuca Moama Recreation Plan in recognition of the cross border partnership agreement (Stratcorp Consulting, 2005, 1).

Since 2001 the Shire Council has continued its drive to entice development to the region in the form of both industry and tourism. Despite this, the Council has also maintained a strong focus on social infrastructure, supporting community events and initiatives. The twenty three members of the community spoken to in the course of this component of the research generally expressed contentment and pride in the community and the progress that it had made in the past fifteen years, and had a strong positive feeling about the Shire's development and vision.

7.4 Summary

In reviewing the history and the data collected in this portion of the research the themes of negotiated access to resources and processes and a level of acceptance of diversity are evident. Historically, despite the Shire being located in a more

agriculturally marginal region, its rescue was its closer proximity to Melbourne. It is potentially this environmental hardship however that nurtured the initial necessity and subsequent willingness of the community to negotiate positive outcomes amongst all members, along with the proximity to Melbourne, trade routes and the gold fields that forced an acceptance of diversity in the community.

The community's response to the change in gambling legislation was amongst the most proactive of all the communities along the Murray River who were affected by the changes. In the context of social capital, what is particularly notable is the positive bonding amongst the Clubs which was also combined with bridging to other organisations, not only in the community, but also to surrounding regional resources that could assist them. This had the direct economic benefit of ensuring the survival of the Clubs through the economic changes of the 1990s, and the additional community benefit of reinvigorating its sense of identity and ability to drive its own future.

This review of Murray Shire's key activities since 1991 has also demonstrated the inclusion of bridging and linking relationship networks in the Shire. The Mathoura Land Give Away was an outstanding example of bridging between the Council and the community to achieve a positive outcome. Despite the fact that initially there were sectors of the community that did not support the project, at the conclusion of the process it was broadly endorsed and perceived as worthwhile. Not only did it challenge the community's relationship with the Council, with the resultant effect of endorsing the benefits of working with the Council and supporting its endeavours, it also forced outreach in the form of bridging to resources and people nationally and even internationally. The success of the project confirmed the worth of such activities and has therefore encouraged an outward looking mind set in the community. It could not have been achieved

however, without the preparedness of the Council to expose itself to a level of risk, albeit a well assessed one. Similarly there are also instances of Council activity and behaviours which have resulted in an erosion of social capital. This is in the form of linking social capital, where bridging relationships were established (with Echuca Moama Tourism) but were then perceived to be ignored in favour of achieving pre-determined outcomes by Murray Shire Council. These same community impressions were also reflected in the negative effect of Council becoming overly involved in community economic development activities detailed in relation to Moama Traders and the Moama Community Development Committee. However, the ability of the Council to create and nurture external bridging and linking relationships to a positive end for the community's economic benefit is without dispute.

It is also worth noting in regard to community bridging relationships the number of people who have moved into the area from elsewhere, be it from Melbourne or other rural locations, who automatically bridge in relationship networks often without realising it, by simply maintaining an outward looking focus on potential networks or the outcomes from them, facilitated by their previous experience outside the community. Two examples of this are the General Manager and Primary School principal of the Shire who previously came from other regions of New South Wales, and utilise their previous experience of networks and different ways of doing things as a matter of course in their daily lives. One example of this is the Council General Manager who brought experience from his previous position into play when looking at educational issues for the region.

But we've said to them why don't you come and see us and we'll go into bat for you, ...whereas I know with Cobar the Council wanted a multipurpose centre for the school and they were at it all the time. (Council Member 1)

A second example also involves the local school and the Principal's endeavours to achieve harmony between the white and Aboriginal children, also utilising his experience from his previous position.

[My previous position] was a fifty fifty school, ... this school advertised for a principal with Aboriginal experience which I knew all about, so while I didn't know anything about the area, it was that part of the ad that attracted me. (Community Member 1)

The community does not bridge well between the towns of the Shire, but this is compensated for by the level of bridging between the Shire Council and the community, providing a commonality between the two townships. Additionally, resident diversity benefits the Shire community through the apparent comfort with establishing or negotiating relationships with Council and with external organisations and resources beyond the community. This potentially relates equally to the high degree of new residents in the Shire as historical factors, in that people do not have a history of social norms that may preclude them from accessing different groups or positions of power. Lastly, in addition to establishing bridging and some scattered linking relationships with the community, the Council has also been successful at establishing bridging and linking relationships with other levels of Government. These have been created through the Council's partnering activities with regional organisations creating benefit to the Shire, exemplified in maintaining and increasing the Shire's prosperity and resilience in the face of changing economic circumstances.

The quotation at the beginning of this chapter in regard to not sticking to the rules underlines that members of Murray Shire community do not always operate within the guidelines; however such disregard for convention is a major

contributor to its success. The data collected in this part of the research indisputably place this Shire in a category of having more and different types of positive relationship networks between the local government, the community and external resources. Although all relationships which constitute social capital in the region may not in themselves always be commonly regarded as positive, the fact that their existence has been used to create a dialogue between different groups within and outside the community is the positive element that contributes to the community's prosperity. They are a community of 'can do' people, led by a very strong 'can do' Council, meaning that both community members and Council have high self esteem and a feeling that they are able to make a difference. The defining features of Murray Shire's social capital relationship networks are the level of equity that community members have in and their access to, the decision making processes, with the diversity of the community increasing the resources upon which they can draw.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Community Comparison of Resilience and Prosperity

A resilient community is one that takes intentional action to enhance the personal and collective capacity of citizens and institutions to respond to and influence the course of social and economic change. (Centre for Community Enterprise, 2000)

8.1 Community capacity and comparisons

The objective of this work was to uncover the connection between the concept of social capital and community resilience and prosperity in the face of their changing environments. As the quotation above directs, a resilient community is one that can have an effective role in its own future by responding to and influencing the course of change. That does not happen in a vacuum however, as the case studies here indicate; it also requires the intentional decision and action of the whole community – civic and government elements – in order to achieve influence. The nurturing of links and interaction between the civic community and levels of government - local, state and federal - make the difference in generating ideas and pro-activity in a community.

The case study findings suggest that using current quantitative measures of social capital as a means comparatively to assess the prosperity of communities is inadequate, supporting a weakness of quantitative assessment previously suggested by Onyx and Bullen (2001, 50). This research indicates quantitative instruments may however, be suitable to assess community ability to be resilient through levels of well being, as represented by bonding networks. The inability of quantitative assessments to identify the elements of social capital related to prosperity is due to the failure to detail the relational nature of external bridging

and internal and external linking networks. It is these which appear to be crucial to activating and increasing prosperity. The different methods employed in this work highlighted that, although the survey identified no differences in the level of social capital of the two communities, there were marked differences identified by the qualitative research in the internal and external bridging and linking elements of their social capital, and these were reflected in their different prosperity. I propose that it was the difference indicated qualitatively which relates to their relative ability to adapt and grow in the face of economic pressures and change, through the use of bridging and linking networks. The agency of communities concerned must be acknowledged, in comparing these two communities and in any other comparative circumstances. In this case the people of Corowa Shire did not, in the period under review, perceive any necessity to grow, nor did they make a decision to arrest any decline. They perceived that the Shire was in a good position which did not require any overt corrective action, which aligns with the dominant interpretations of social capital, being of strong bonding networks, mediated by some bridging networks in order to achieve a largely content community with high levels of perceived well being.

This chapter summarises the similarities and disparities between the two communities and then unpacks the disparities and their importance from the perspective of social capital. The discussion then moves to the main findings which have arisen from the research, namely; that communities can have a sense of 'well being', being represented by bonding ties without necessarily having developed those elements of social capital which contribute to increasing prosperity and growth (Baron, Field and Schuller, 2000; Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, 2005; Cuthill, 2003; Manderson, 2005; Onyx and Bullen, 2001; Woolcock and Narayan, 2006); that the possession of basic services and the regional context

of communities may affect how they develop and employ their social capital in response to the same economic stimuli; and lastly that the stimulation of growth and resilience in the face of economic pressures requires the dimensions of internal and external bridging and linking social capital in a community.

The research findings from these two communities suggest that the means by which social capital has previously been measured and assessed comparatively between communities in Australia tells us very little about the reasons for their relative prosperity. It is noteworthy that use of such measures as another means to assess policy effectiveness appears a fallacious pursuit, as current quantitative measures are not sensitive enough to assess the primary aspects of relationship networks (and therefore social capital) that respond to policy initiatives.

In order to achieve a mechanism that would effectively assess those aspects of social capital (internal and external bridging and linking) that are crucial in developing community capacity to adapt, new and emerging quantitative instruments (Grootaert, Narayan, Jones and Woolcock, 2004) need to be evaluated and developed in the Australian context. In the meantime, in order to make comparisons between rural communities in regard to their resilience and prosperity, this work indicates that qualitative research can identify those aspects of social capital that affect the capacity of communities to be prosperous in constantly changing environments.

8.2 Similarities and disparities

8.2.1 Similarities

Chapter five discussed the results from the survey research, and chapters six and seven discussed the history and development of each community. Chapter five revealed no statistically significant variation in the social capital of the two

communities, and that the four scales in the questionnaire were responded to in the same manner in both communities. Similarly, the historical review of both communities did not reveal extreme differences in their evolution and development, identifying both as being largely reliant on primary agricultural industry, supplemented by the introduction of tourism in the 1970s and 1980s, and more recently agricultural processing industries.

The similarity in factors underpinning motivations to develop internal and external relationship networks relate to the nature of the initial settlement of this part of inland NSW. This primary factor in this regard was the remoteness of both communities from the administrative centre of Sydney and, the consequent closer economic links they developed with Melbourne. Additionally, both communities have traditionally relied on agricultural production as the economic mainstay of Shire development; a circumstance that continued until the mid 1970s. After that time, both communities developed tourism purely in connection to the trade that could be generated from cross border (New South Wales and Victoria) poker machine gambling. Both communities equally came to rely on this revenue stream to support their economies and were consequently both affected by the changes in Victorian gambling legislation in 1992. Both communities also had the benefit of the introduction of agricultural processing industries.

There are two key similarities arising from the survey data on which I wish to focus. First and the most noteworthy instance, was the lack of statistical difference in the quantitative assessment of the social capital of these two communities. This was despite their disparity in prosperity, even when interpretations incorporating bridging and linking social capital were used. In the second instance, in both cases the small differences that did appear in the crude scores of the survey responses between the two communities bore little or no relation to the findings of the

qualitative data in either case. This lends weight to the suggestion that potentially the quantitative assessment of the range of social capital elements assessed in the survey were not sufficient to establish an association with prosperity, or that there is simply no association between social capital as operationalised and prosperity and therefore was not a failure of the instrument. A qualitative examination of bridging and linking relationship networks, however, reveals an association between elements of social capital and prosperity.

8.2.2 Disparities

The experience of the same economic downturn, brought about by the change in Victorian gambling legislation in 1992, is where the similarities of the two communities diminish and the disparities begin. A review of events in both communities between 1991 and 2001 highlight the commencement and an on going divergence in the way each community responded through their social networks to externally imposed economic changes, identifying differences in the construction of their social capital.

Contrary to the small variations that occurred between the communities in the crude scores of the data sets, the qualitative data identified quite large variations between the communities in the way their relationship networks operated. The bridging networks identified in the survey data were the same in both communities; however the nature of those relationships was shown to be quite different by the qualitative data. The survey data also indicated that external government linkages were higher in Corowa Shire than in Murray however, the reality was that the reverse was the case, with Murray Shire evidencing more active external bridging and linking relationships than Corowa, and with greater reach to different types of resources than that indicated by the survey data. This may be attributed to the differences in the quantitative and qualitative sample

respondents. Although survey respondents were rate paying residents of the Shire, who gave their impressions and opinions of community relationships, the qualitative research sought respondents who were in positions of power and knowledge about the bridging and linking relationships in the communities.

The qualitative research suggests that Murray Shire's levels of bridging and bonding in the community are more equally balanced than Corowa, allowing the expression of diverse opinions and problem solving approaches, which in turn has increased their capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. The following analysis is structured around the internal and external bonding, bridging and linking networks of the two communities and how these provide answers to issues of community capacity, resilience and adaptability to achieve prosperity.

8.2.2.1 Internal networks

The internal relationship networks of the two communities evolved from the same structural base of squattocracy. The slightly more diverse and itinerant worker history of Murray Shire's social milieu has potentially, however, been the source of a greater ability to balance the different elements of social capital relationship networks in the community to greater developmental advantage.

8.2.2.1.1 Bonding

Bonding relates to those ties in the community between members who see themselves as having the same values, aspirations and objectives. Corowa demonstrates these ties particularly well in the activities of the Chamber of Commerce, the Clubs and the Council. All of these groups are strongly bonded entities that are well established and respected in the community for the role that they fulfil. By contrast, although Murray Shire also has community bonding networks in the form of the Mathoura Chamber of Commerce, the Moama

Community Development Committee (MCDC) and the Tourism Committee, these are more loosely affiliated groups who are changeable. Although they have come about as a result of the common identity and purpose of community members, they have not bonded so strongly as to prevent their fracturing, change or dissolution over time, with changes in peoples' priorities and focus.

In the case of Corowa, their Chamber of Commerce has been a static body, run by the same group of members for some seventeen years. Although the Chamber perceives that it is very active in bridging across the community, members of the business community and external observers identify the Chamber as a very strongly bonded group that is exclusive and exists to promote the ideas and approaches only of its long term members. Members who did not agree with the status quo quickly moved on, as revealed by a tourism operator who, when asked about their participation in the Chamber of Commerce, commented: 'the Chamber of Commerce? No, no I got out of that. Well I felt that it was run by two or three people who did what they wanted no matter what the meeting decided' (Corowa Community Member 5). Such strong bonding constitutes negative or exclusionary social capital (Baum and Ziersch, 2003; Portes and Landolt, 1996). Comparatively, although the MCDC in Murray Shire also became very strongly bonded, the bridging it also facilitated led to distinct groups within it which gave rise to the new Moama Traders Association. This group continued to develop bridging and linking relationships with the Murray Shire Council, creating a positive outcome from a potentially negative one. The approach of the Corowa Chamber of Commerce was seen as simply representative of the community as a whole, as it was noted that, 'Ah well the bad thing is, the little country town attitude of the people who've been here for years and won't change their ideas' (Corowa Community Member 5). The lack of response to call for support of the 'Federation

Festival' Committee, an event established for twenty five years in Corowa, also demonstrates the strong bonding characteristics of the community which contributed to the inability of the Committee to obtain and retain adequate active support (Corowa Free Press, April 1, 1998). This was put down to that fact that 'young people don't want to join so much because the older people are there and are controlling and its like – Oh them and their old fuddy duddy ideas' (Corowa Community Member 6), demonstrating the negative effect of the strong bonding, which enforces rigid norms of behaviour and expectations, not indicated by the survey data. This indicates that Corowa is not gaining the benefit from 'the strength of weak ties' (Granovetter, 1972), which are prevented from developing by the embedded nature of the community's normative relationship networks.

The high levels of bonding identified by the survey in both communities would appear to relate to the feelings of well being and security that stem from these strong bonding networks, in its different forms in both communities.

Although the qualitative data indicate that the bonding in Corowa Shire potentially had more limiting than positive effects, the community perceives these networks as a sign that things are going well, and that nothing really needs to be challenged. This is illustrated in a comment made by another member of the community involved in industry and Council liaison noting that

we're lucky there and I think that's why people don't want to get involved because they see that things are running smoothly anyway and they think that there's no need for any more involvement, they only jump up and down when something's going wrong. (Corowa Community Member 7)

Murray Shire demonstrated less bonding than Corowa Shire, a situation that can be explained through the greater diversity of the community's origins and shorter

length of residence. Since the mid 1990s the population of Murray Shire has increasingly comprised 'tree changers' from Melbourne, more often than not retiring to the area after years of spending their holidays there. Although they do not see themselves as a wealthy and dominating class, contrary to the circumstances identified in Bradstow (Wild, 1974, 36), they are often perceived that way by long term locals due to the relative wealth created by the differences in house prices between Melbourne and Moama or Mathoura. As noteworthy, is that these community members are generally very active in voluntary organisations in the community, such as Lions, Rotary and Apex. They have brought these associations with them or use them as a way to make new connections in the community, and contribute differently to community interaction through their lack of regard for any long standing pre conceived notions of 'leaders'. This frees them up to act in ways that those more entrenched in community norms (bonding) may not. Bonding ties are developed through these voluntary groups, as well as the economically motivated retail traders' groups or groups developed through the commonality created by infrastructure needs.

This is not to say that Corowa has not enjoyed the benefits of new residents coming from outside the Shire, but rather that its strong levels of bonding have precluded effective bridging and the benefits that could be sourced from them for community regeneration. The bonding of the Corowa citizens is such that they do not believe their community is in need of new approaches and that Council has a positive effect on their interactions, as indicated by the comment that

You know, we've been lucky in the last, yeah in the 17 years that we've been here the town's progressed enormously, so its, because of a positive role that Council has. (Corowa Community Member 7)

The surface appearance of a 'laid back' acceptance and contentment in Corowa can be explained through the belief in the status quo, which has been created by the strong normative bonding relationships which discourage dissension. External observers of the Shire discussed the underlying and hidden discontent, about which community members felt powerless to change, noting that

So many groups really detested [Council employee]. They found him patronising and arrogant in the way he talks to them. [He] has too much power which is given to him by [the General Manager]. The General Manager and his assistants are born and bred in the community and this is part of the problem – as it has created an incestuous nature. (Consultant 3)

This is compared with Murray Shire which, although they still have issues of power control, these are openly discussed and criticised where appropriate. Murray Shire does not have the same long term domination of the power in the community by a small handful of, largely, men. Rather, Council members have had either, broad external community experience or external network bases on which to draw in regard to decision making, diversifying their approaches to problem solving and community relations. Consequently, how Councils are structured, as dictated by the Local Government Act, may have major implications for the nature of community development (New South Wales Government, 1993), in terms of the ability for Councils to remain insular and without external input.

8.2.2.1.2 Bridging

Murray Shire exhibited greater levels of internal bridging⁴⁷ networks demonstrated by groups coming together to resolve issues and address problems, such as the Moama Traders or the Adventure Park Committee. These groups lasted while there was a need for them or alternatively they formed, dissolved and reformed as needs demanded. At the same time the Clubs of the Shire, which prior to 1992 had had no need to work together and were ostensibly in competition with one another, understood that post 1992 their main competition was from Victoria and that retaining business in the region was a higher priority than previous local competitive boundaries. They understood that they had to work together despite their differences and evolve what had been adversarial relationships into bridging relationships both within the community and to other Clubs in the immediate region outside the Shire to address the economic pressure upon them.

One example of the effective bridging that has been developed in Murray Shire between the Clubs and the community is the relationship established between the Moama RSL and Lions Club, which was described by a community member:

What we're starting to do now too, which is thrown over into my role in Lions, I said to them look instead of us coming to ask you for a \$100 for carols by candlelight, why don't you buy five boxes of Christmas cakes off us and use them in the kitchen or whatever. And they said that's a good idea and sort of too with the Bowling Club now we've said to them OK we'll give you this money but at the end of the year you have to show us

⁴⁷ Bridging relationships are between heterogeneous group of people or individuals, who come together for a unique and common objective, but otherwise may have little to nothing in common.

that you've given us 10 new members, so we get something back off them.
(Moama Community Member 4)

In comparison, Corowa had less bridging relationships than the survey data for Corowa indicated, or compared with the qualitative data of Murray Shire. Despite this, the community of Corowa perceives itself to bridge well between different groups, with the comment being made that

there's members of most committees sit on other committees – you know what I mean? So you'd have their interpretation come to your meeting as well. Federation, the arts committee, the historical society there's bits and pieces of all those groups, tourism, all interacting. (Corowa Community Member 7)

The objective of effective bridging relationships however, is to introduce new ideas, challenge the standard approach and to create new ways of tackling problems and issues. Although people in Corowa are members of multiple groups the bonding, or the norms of behaviour, are so strong within the groups that ideas cannot be challenged and the introduction of new ideas is questioned as a challenge to the status quo. It also appears that where individuals do cross over between groups, they are not effectively sharing ideas as was noted by the Shire Mayor, saying that '[T]he thing that I want to see I think is that a gaps and opportunities analysis needs to be done in Corowa – there's too many people not knowing what each other are doing' (Corowa Council Member 3). This suggests that strong bonding social capital, which is underpinned by a well entrenched social status quo and economic stability, has stifled the development of effective bridging relationships and their attendant new ideas and brainstorming in the

community, despite the community believing there is effective sharing of ideas between different groups.

The achievement of effective bridging relationships occurs as a result of the relational nature of groups, not simply the presence of different types of people within groups. There must be active sharing and respect for a difference in opinion and experience which is engaged with and utilised to best advantage. I would suggest that it is the perception about and nature of leadership in the two communities that provides some explanation of the variation in the perception about the bridging activities in the two communities.

Reflections upon the nature of leadership identified in previous community studies are potentially helpful at this point to understand the nuances of the social capital elements in Murray and Corowa Shires. In the community study of Bradstow, Wild identified that leadership was associated with the status of certain groups in the community. The highest status was attached firstly to their or their family's longevity in the community and the level of property ownership; this was then followed by those who were successful merchants and businessmen (1974, 36-70). These people were, by assumption, accorded 'leadership' roles in the community. This circumstance was also reflected in Corowa in that the long standing families, (graziers and merchants) dominated the Chamber of Commerce and the Council. Graziers were also identified by Oxley in Rylstone/Kandos as the leaders in the community and were heavily involved in the affairs of Council and peak voluntary associations, though with mediating unwritten norms in regard to egalitarian behaviour, esteem and movement between social strata (1978, 86-101); a circumstance which again was reflected in Corowa Shire, but without the egalitarian norms required to be able to establish linking networks. In the case of Murray Shire however, the community status quo of the active groups and their

leaders incorporated individuals from much more diverse backgrounds, albeit still with the existence of issues of status based on longevity and profession, gender and age, but to a lesser extent. Of these, exclusion on the basis of gender was evident as an issue in the networks of both Shires. In Corowa Shire, although gender issues were never raised amongst long standing residents, external observers and recent arrivals in the community did note the dominance of men in the community and the fact that women were treated as workers, rather than decision makers, with less worth than the men in the Council or community:

Oh there are real gender issues in relation to pay rates for women versus men. The current tourism officer who was also given the additional duties of economic development when she was employed, has been employed on and remained at the same rate, as a guy employed in the same position in 1996 but who had less responsibilities. [Community member] went in and argued with the council on [her] behalf for a pay increase; he's really astute putting the community as the priority, but he's also very politically aware. The request was successful but only probably because it was challenged by a man. (Corowa Council Employee 4)

This compares with the Murray Shire, where not only were gender biases commented upon and therefore recognised, but were also noted as changing. An ex Councillor commented that the previous mayor had been the epitome of male chauvinism, creating a culture of excluding women from decision making on the Council, but it was also noted that this pattern had distinctly changed the last ten years, since the early 1990s (Murray Shire ex Council Member 1) . The difference in the treatment of gender in both communities is noteworthy in the context of social capital and the different relationship networks, and therefore resources, which women bring to communities compared to men. Murray Shire, as noted, resisted

women who sought positions of power in the community in the past, but the community has successfully managed to challenge the gender bias to varying degrees. This has been largely as a result of women who have moved into the community from larger cities, with different ideas of their relative ability and right to contribute to community processes. Murray Shire has, as a result, been progressively increasing its access to the resources provided by women's networks. At the same time, Corowa Shire is still resisting the recognition of women's equal value in their ability to provide access to a range of resources and abilities, albeit different from those of traditional male networks. This invariably affects the level of resources that a community has, particularly in these cases where such attitudes are promulgated at the Council level.

In Corowa the leaders, who were members of different groups, could also be identified as the 'directors' of the community, in that their main focus was in providing direction for the activities of the community, or telling others what needed to be done, resonating of the experiences of Bradstow (Wild, 1974). Most notably, they were accorded the power to do this by the community through the established norms of the community, who accept certain status and class groups in the community as automatically having this right. Consequently their membership of multiple groups is likely to reinforce the class structured bonding networks created by standardised values and norms of behaviour across the community, by continuing to provide direction based only on their experience rather than encouraging diversity and inventiveness. The community of Murray Shire, by contrast, has a situation whereby the community leaders were appointed not by their status, but by the esteem for their actions in the community rather than their prestigious positions (Oxley, 1978). Therefore the power they wield is related to their perceived ability to contribute to the community, rather than their family

status alone in the community. The responsibility for group formation and development was also more evenly spread throughout the community, encouraging dynamic thinking and openness to new approaches and Council /community relations.

8.2.2.1.3 Linking

Linking networks are described as those relationships which, although similar to bridging, are achieved where parties who are unlike come together with mutual respect, trust and equality of status in the relationship despite their manifest inequality of their respective positions (Szreter, 2002; Woolcock, 1999). Linking relationships do not have to be harmonious, although they are often more efficient if they are, but the element of mutual respect and an equality in status and responsibility for the task at hand, is essential for the relationship to have moved from being a bridging (simply the sharing of information and ideas) to a linking one.

Despite the survey data identifying largely equivalent levels of internal linking in both Corowa and Murray Shire, the qualitative research did not support this. In Corowa, vertical linking relationships – or the sharing of power – do not exist between community groups of different status. In fact the lack of co-operation and sharing of power has inadvertently created competition, such as in the case where the Federation Festival Committee

approached them (The Chamber of Commerce) and things like that but it was too hard, and it was extra time. It's too difficult, so I actually got a bit annoyed with them and so I said well lets put everything out of the street so next year we're not even going to have the talent quest down the street. And I said I know quite a few people with businesses in Rutherglen, so we

thought we might try and get and see if they are interested in coming in the parade. (Corowa Community Member 6)

Similarly, linkages in the form of power sharing with Corowa Council are largely non-existent. Although the Corowa Council and specific Councillors within it are seen as being hard workers and very helpful, they are not perceived as proactive in developing sharing and encouraging relationships within the community, as one community member noted that

when ever we take something to Council and say we'd like to do this and we want your support here, here and here, they're like yep sure, great and they're lovely, and they'll do it and that will be the end of it. They're not proactive ... but they are very obliging as far as requests. If they got more proactive in their support that would make a big difference, for sure. (Corowa Community Member 3)

Further examples of the absence of linking relationships were events involving the Clubs, the Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Association. The proposition that the Council and the RSL Club jointly take over the failing Corowa Sports and Citizens Club was rejected by the RSL who wanted to maintain sole ownership of all its activities. Interaction in the form of a relationship of shared power between the Council and the Chamber of Commerce with a view to achieving community development objectives was also absent. It was commented by one Councillor that he 'gave up after two years of trying to get Council and Chamber of Commerce together because of being 'bashed' ' (Corowa Council Member 3). The Tourism Association had been equally dissociated from the Council in the period between 1991 and 2004, with the Council repeatedly questioning the value of its support of tourism.

Despite Corowa community members knowing their Councillors (an extremely common occurrence in rural shires and to be expected) and feeling comfortable talking with them and trusting them to do the right thing, there is no interactive sharing of responsibility for development or direction of the Shire between the Council and civic community. The questions developed for the survey instrument were unable to reveal this but it is also relevant that the community would be unlikely to believe that they should have a role in that process given that they have no previous experience of it. Plowman outlined that the culture in local Councils makes a notable difference to the innovative nature of a community, saying that it is essential when assessing a community to ask if the Council are 'controllers of development, or encouragers of development' (McCutcheon, 2006). During the period of 1991 to 2004 Corowa Shire Council falls into the former rather than the latter of Plowman's categories, explaining the community's perception that they do not have a role in deciding the direction of development in the community.

It is suggested here that Corowa Shire Council's own understanding of its role, and the consequent community expectations of interactions and participation in decision making, is a determining factor in their relationship networks. It was stated that 'Council used to be only roads, rates and rubbish, but now there are a lot of things that might be happening in Corowa if the Council is smart' (Corowa Council Member 3). Previous to 2005, the Council saw its role as a provider of services and to respond to community requests; not as a driver, or equal partner in establishing the direction and further development with the community. It was an administrative, not a leadership body. As discussed extensively by researchers such as Alston (2002b), Gray and Lawrence (2001b), Lawrence (2005), Stoker (2005b), and Tonts (2000; 2005) amongst others, the neo-liberal policies of the 1990s have forced a change in behaviour and responsibilities on local governments that

many were unprepared for. Corowa Council presents as one of the unprepared councils. Since 2005, as suggested in this last quotation, the Council has begun to recognise that it must do more than provide roads, rates, rubbish removal, only responding to legislative requirements imposed by the State. Rather, that it must take control of its own future and that to fail to do so will result in amalgamations and a complete loss of local control. This being said, the traditional role of service provider has not positioned the Council well with the experience to be a leader in terms of creating the opportunity for dialogue with the community, or as a negotiator and sharer of decision making responsibilities. Such actions are the bedrock of good linking relationships to create prosperity generating social capital.

By contrast, Murray Shire Council has endeavoured to encourage linking relationships with its community through setting up breakfast meetings to discuss the directions that Council is taking, and obtain feedback, along with holding community workshop sessions on niche marketing opportunities for the region, as outlined in chapter seven. That is not to say that the road taken by Murray Shire Council has not been without its 'potholes' as evidenced by the failure to establish linking relationships with the community over the Mathoura Land Giveaway development from the outset. On the whole, however, more linking opportunities have been pursued between the Council and the community generally and with committees of community groups in Murray Shire than in Corowa.

Although individuals in both communities could ostensibly be seen to have participated in bonding, bridging and linking relationships, the nuances of those relationships highlight distinct differences. The relationships of Corowa Shire demonstrate little tolerance of challenges to standard approaches, negotiation or sharing of power and decision making - the defining features of effective bridging and linking relationships. In Murray Shire the relationships within the community

and with the Council do reflect the necessary elements to create effective bridging and linking relationships. Rather than simply a gathering of dissimilar individuals, discussion, dissension and negotiation are tolerated and encouraged in Murray Shire, resulting in more dynamic outcomes and development through engagement with initiatives. In terms of who has benefited from this in the Murray Shire, the interviews suggest that the benefit has trickled down to all sectors of the community. Murray Shire residents feel that they will be listened and responded to on all concerns and initiatives that they wish to put forward. Consequently, although the benefits to the community as a whole are being seen in economic terms in the registered growth in the Shire, they are also being acknowledged in the activities, knowledge dissemination and sharing that is undertaken throughout the community. This circumstance was evident from the information gained in the cross section of interviews undertaken and the discussions in letters to the editor and news articles in the Riverine Herald between 1991 and 2001.

8.2.2.2 External networks

At the same time that communities need be aware of their internal social capital, they also need to focus on those external relationships which can provide resources through networks. Creating internal bonding, bridging and linking social capital and realising the benefits of, a sense of belonging, the mediation of exclusionary groups and, allowing those with new ideas to be heard, needs to be complemented with external bridging and linking networks. This is in order for communities to obtain new ideas from external sources and, to facilitate participation in external decision making processes, to encourage their development and increase options (Tonts, 2000). The qualitative component of the research took the opportunity to explore more thoroughly these external relationship networks that could only be touched upon with the quantitative survey instrument. The noteworthy element

that arose from the qualitative research was not that relationships existed with external parties in both case studies, but that the relational nature of those in each case was quite different. This is in the same way that the internal relationships differed, to create either effective bridging networks, or simply to achieve a consistent presence between different community groups.

8.2.2.2.1 Bridging

The interesting common feature of both communities was the existence of a vibrant tourism community adjacent to each main Shire centre, in Victoria. This was Rutherglen / Wahgunyah in the case of Corowa Shire and Echuca in the case of Murray Shire. Despite this geographical similarity, the two Shires responded to the proximity of a partnership opportunity with an active and dynamic community quite differently, as discussed respectively in chapters six and seven. In Corowa, the adjacent Victorian communities were seen by the Council as being in another State and therefore totally unrelated and disconnected to Corowa Shire's objectives or activities. By contrast, the Council of Murray Shire actively sought to build relations with Echuca in Victoria, taking the position that if they are proactive in sharing resources, collaboration and planning at a regional level, then the Shire will remain viable, with a level of control over and awareness of external events that continue to affect them.

Murray Shire sees external networks as an insurance policy against unforeseen events, but Corowa Shire see external networks as only to be engaged with when there is a particular task to be achieved or major event to be responded to. Corowa Council attends and has had seats on the boards of their Regional Organisations of Councils and meetings of regional bodies such as the MDBC. Murray Shire, however, who also proposes Councillors for board positions, actively drives the

agenda of such organisations and organises meetings in their Shire to draw attention to local issues. Corowa Shire, by contrast, participates passively in such organisations responding to, rather than driving, agendas.

The communities of Murray and Corowa Shires respond similarly to their Councils in regard to external opportunities. Although Mulwala does interact with Yarrawonga, being the much smaller community of those two, the interaction is reactive rather than proactive. There are individuals within Corowa who do pursue networks with adjacent communities as demonstrated in the previous quotation from the Federation Committee where links were considered with Rutherglen to add a dimension to the Federation Festival. Notably, however, these were initiated and pursued by a member of the committee who was a relatively recent arrival in Corowa and had links with Wahgunyah through Uncle Tobys and has also since left for reasons of employment location. Such relationships were not pursued or encouraged by long standing members of the Corowa community as was evidenced by their lack of engagement with regional tourism opportunities prior to mid 1998 when, as discussed in chapter 6, the Tourism Manager attempted to create external partnerships (Corowa Free Press, July 3, 1991; September 16, 1992; March 10, 1993; June 23 & July 7, 1993; May 13, 1998; July 1, 1998;). Although the Corowa Council and community did support the joint funding of research (Corowa Free Press, June 24, 1994), there were no resources, in the form of personnel, committed locally to these activities in order to nurture bridging relationships outside the community. Corowa Shire relied on other regions and communities to liaise with researchers, attend travel shows, and liaise with state and federal funding bodies, a decision taken for reasons of resource availability. These are examples where, although members of both the Corowa Council and civic community interact with external parties through relationship networks,

there is no evidence of an exchange of ideas, information or proactive behaviour to create and nurture those relationships with the outcome of increasing their resource base. Consequently, although they believe they are connecting with external resources, these relationships could not be regarded as bridging or linking relationships as they neither mediate the effects of community bonding networks, nor increase their resource base through access to power relationships. Rather, Corowa has become involved in these relationship networks as the opportunities have been brought to them and in which they have continued passively to participate, without developing them to increase their access to power relationships and decision making forums, or proactively generating new relationships with these opportunities.

The communities of Moama and Mathoura do not perceive that they have a lot of interaction with communities surrounding them, but comparatively speaking, they are more engaged in their external networks than Corowa Shire. Many volunteer organisations, including Apex and Rotary for Moama, automatically integrate with Echuca, as an interview revealed that, 'there used to be an Echuca Apex and a Moama Apex . . . same with Rotary. Now they just call themselves Echuca Moama Rotary and Apex' (Murray Community Member 4). Additionally the community of Mathoura is willing to be proactive and interact with State departments and volunteer bodies in order to achieve the development objectives of the community. One particular case was the procurement of funding from the Natural Heritage Trust for a river walk through the collaboration of the community and with State Government representatives, which was described as being

just a matter of finding out the protocols and . . . we worked with the national NSW State Forest and what ever and it was a fantastic project, it got

all the community together and it was fantastic and it is well used. (Murray Community Member 3)

As was noted by this community member, 'it was just a matter of finding out the protocols', which indicates the 'taken for granted' perception that the Murray Shire community has of its bridging network activity. It is something they 'just do' without thinking about the process they are undertaking. They have developed the ability and the knowledge to the point where it becomes automatic rather than a hurdle to be overcome. The commonly identified leaders in the community were the 'doers' and had in the majority of instances come to settle in the region from elsewhere; a characteristic that is notable given the relationship networking skills and knowledge that they brought with them.

The Corowa community perceives itself as participating more actively now in potential bridging relationship networks than it has in the past, and Murray Shire community as a whole continues to view its activities with an eye on what it would like to achieve in the future, potentially explaining the similar survey profiles. When viewed in comparison with one another however, to identify elements of social capital that have contributed to their prosperity, the differences in the way each community's bridging and linking relationship networks are pursued, nurtured and used, is markedly different.

8.2.2.2.2 Linking

As discussed in the context of internal relationship networks, the linking relationships communities have with external parties are essential for creating the opportunity to participate in decision making and affect their external environment; generating and mobilising opportunities for protection of their

industries; or developing diversification opportunities. These linking relationships usually emerge from effective bridging relationships.

Given the inability of the Corowa community and Council to achieve either effective internal or external bridging relationships or internal linking relationships, it is not surprising that there were no identifiable external linking relationships either. In fact, there was almost hostility amongst some members of Council to other government levels, seeing interaction with them as leading to the imposition of more work and responsibility (Corowa Council Member 2). Externally, the Corowa Shire was seen as apathetic, which only sought outside interaction with government departments or the media when they had an issue or cause they wanted to promote. When State government representatives were asked about establishing relationships to assist in development opportunities it was reported that the Council responded with an attitude of '[W]e'll contact you when we need you' (Government Representative 1) and were, as a result, left to their own devices.

In contrast, and in active response to the increased responsibility being devolved to local communities for their own sustainability, the Council and community of Murray Shire have taken a counter position. They are reported as always nominating Councillors for positions on State boards and committees to facilitate their involvement in planning and decision making and for seeking help with development applications. Contrary to Corowa Shire, they are willing to take the risk that by being 'out there' involved and asking for help that they may lose projects to other better suited regions, but believe that to be connected with the benefits that it offers with the attendant risks is preferable to stagnation or decline, in the hope that they will increase their exposure to industry and opportunities. Although Murray Shire actively creates linking relationship opportunities, Corowa

Shire interpreted external relationships from an administrative perspective, being that they were onerous and only to be used when necessary.

A government representative put the difference between the two communities' external networking behaviour down to the fact that, with its hospital and schools, Corowa could be self sufficient and afford at this point in time to remain insular, whereas Murray Shire has been forced to reach out more since the economic downturn of the early 1990s. Fundamentally, he was explaining the differences in prosperity through the linking relationships the communities are either forced to have (Murray Shire) or, alternatively, have the luxury of not having to engage in (Corowa Shire). It is questionable with the continuing pressure on agricultural production and rural industries whether Corowa's ability to remain insular will be sustainable if they are to maintain their population – the gradual decline in their population since 1991 would suggest not.

8.3 The balance of relationship network types – internal and external

A discussion of the different types of relationship networks that constitute social capital needs to be understood, not only in the context of internal processes, but also the external resources that the community has access to. Discussion of development theory suggests that to have a combination of only internal, or only external bonding, bridging and linking networks is unlikely to be effective in achieving growth and development, given the discussions of synergistic social capital by Bebbington et. al. (2006), Evans (1996), Serageldin and Grootaert (1997), Szreter (2002) and Woolcock and Narayan (2000). The case studies here support this approach in the context of rural Australian communities.

The qualitative assessment of the two case studies' social capital highlights Corowa's low levels of internal bridging and linking social capital. It also

illustrates the minimal levels of external bridging that exist in the community and the lack of effective external linking relationships. The effect of this is to provide the community of Corowa Shire with a strong sense of well being, but few to no resources to modify their circumstances in the future should they wish to do so. Further, there are also implicit issues attached to the lower levels of bridging and linking relationships in the community of exclusion and power dominance by groups within the community, that further constrain any attempts to modify the dynamics of the community – creating a level of concealed negative or exclusionary social capital.

By contrast, Murray Shire has lower levels of internal bonding than Corowa, but near equivalent levels of internal community bridging social capital, offsetting the potentially negative effects of stronger bonding networks. Additionally, the Murray Shire community has comparable levels of external bridging and linking social capital networks, facilitating its greater reach of influence and ability to respond to external factors which affect them.

In line with development theory in the area of social capital (Bebbington, Woolcock, Guggenheim and Olson, 2006), this research suggests that a community that is capable of maximising its capacity to be resilient and to develop in the face of adversity will have largely equivalent levels of internal bonding and bridging, slightly less linking, and equivalent levels of external bridging and linking. Although neither Murray nor Corowa fit this ideal profile, the community of Murray Shire is closer to achieving that outcome than Corowa Shire.

It is suggested that, in the case of Murray Shire, the existence and strength of their external bridging and linking relationship networks combined with the internal bridging social capital in the community has made large differences to their

relative capacity to prosper in the face of the same regional economic pressures and change.

8.4 Distinctive features highlighted by the research into social capital

In the foregoing chapters I examined the features of relationship networks in these two communities to try to understand the contribution that the different elements of social capital make to community resilience and prosperity in rural Australia. There were three distinctive findings arising from the research being; that communities can be happy with a strong sense of well being (bonding) and therefore resilience without necessarily having developed those elements of social capital that contribute to increasing prosperity and growth; that the possession of basic services and the regional context of different communities may affect how they develop and employ their social capital in response to the same economic stimuli; and lastly that in order to stimulate and achieve growth in the face of economic pressures the dimensions of internal and external bridging and linking social capital are necessary elements which must exist in the dynamics of a community's social capital.

Theoretical discussions vary on the role power plays in community dynamics, and how it is both accessed and wielded. Dollery and Marshall (1997) identify that the role of local government Councillors, while covering internal responsibilities, does not include external liaison and communication to the benefit of the community; but their approach to the role that local and other levels of government plays in community, is a structuralist one, whereby government has the ability to shape and guide the conduct of citizens. By contrast, Herbert Cheshire (2000; 2003; 2004; 2001) has discussed the role of local communities and their empowerment or otherwise in the process of development and rural renewal, identifying that

community members are not powerless in the relationships which have an impact on the outcomes of communities. Using a Foucauldian approach, she identifies that members of rural communities do have agency to 'reshape the discourses and practices of government' (Herbert-Cheshire, 2003, 468), with the objective of avoiding the problems associated with dominant conceptions of power and community interaction. These conceptions of power see community agency as one of two ends of the spectrum; either passive acceptance of the status quo, where community members are victims of subjection; or alternatively, that instances of local agency are examples of negative reactive resistance to change. Herbert Cheshire points out, with reference to the work of O'Malley (1996), such a treatment of the nature of relations in rural communities leaves only two options for interpretation which is, domination or resistance, and does not recognise the spectrum of possible responses in between. These case studies of the dynamics of social capital support Herbert Cheshire's thesis, through indications that there are in fact a number of different states of relations between community and government along the sliding scale between the two extremes of domination and resistance. Additionally, the communities of Corowa and Murray Shires indicate that communities move along these scales at different times and at different rates, depending upon the nature and breadth of relationship networks through which power is being mediated.

8.4.1 Bonding and well being

Corowa is a community with a strong sense of identity and feeling of well being. It did not perceive that there was a pressing need to expand or develop its industry or economic opportunities, but rather that their past prosperity had positioned the community well and that the same path should continue to be pursued. Corowa saw itself as relatively safe from encroachment by surrounding Shires given its self

sufficiency and that it provides support to outlying areas with its schools and hospitals. Traditional measures of social capital as proposed by Putnam and developed in Australia by Onyx and Bullen, correctly rate Corowa as having high society centred or civically bounded (bonding) social capital, which has led to its solidarity and resilience in the face of changing circumstances. The community did not 'crash' as a result of the changes to the Victorian gambling legislation, though it did enter a slow decline in the period up to 2001.

By contrast, Murray Shire took an offensive approach to the externally induced economic pressures of the early 1990s. It understood itself to be vulnerable to the strengths and misfortunes of close centres, such as Echuca and Deniliquin, and as having a more tenuous hold on their own economic fortunes. The community has a comparatively lower level of bonding social capital to that in Corowa, but it still has a sense of identity and community with sufficient bonding social capital to generate the sense of belonging and well being required to hold the community together during stressful times. However, because of the greater levels of bridging and linking that exist in the community – continuing to grow through the diversity of new people moving into the community – the ability to respond more dynamically and proactively to changing circumstances has been developed, increasing their vivacity and prosperity. This dynamic environment has had its own level of stress associated with it for the community, given the continual adjustment required to cope with development and change. Therefore, although different elements of social capital and a balance of them are necessary for growth and increasing prosperity, this combination of elements may not always lead to the most content and harmonious communities. Consequently, there is a fine line in achieving the appropriate balance of social capital elements for an optimal outcome for a community at different stages in its evolution and development, and

no one element of social capital, such as bonding, should be sacrificed completely for the sake of another(s), such those of bridging and linking. Similarly, the acceptance or otherwise of their levels of social capital does not necessarily fall into the categories of only either resistance or subjection, as demonstrated here.

8.4.2 Regional context and basic infrastructure

The two case study communities also highlight that the possession of certain basic services and the regional context in which different communities exist, will affect how they develop and employ their social capital in response to the same economic stimuli. Corowa Shire has been lucky enough not only to have a hospital and both primary and secondary schools, but to have retained them in the last decade of shrinking public services (Tonts, 2000). This is a circumstance which substantially improves the Shire's ability to retain its community and other associated services. The possession of this type of infrastructure provides the community with a sense of independence and the ability to insulate itself from external circumstances. Murray Shire, by contrast, is dependent on neighbouring Shires for the provision of education and health, both in New South Wales and Victoria, and is forced to be outward looking in its planning and relationship networks in order to meet its basic infrastructure needs.

In 1992, when the economic downturn hit the New South Wales Murray River towns, those without basic infrastructure to sustain their community were more vulnerable to outflows of population – there being less reason for people to stay in the community - and were also therefore more vulnerable to being absorbed into surrounding centres. Corowa Shire did not have this concern or the attendant pressure to create new opportunities and avenues of income. With the hospital, aged care facilities, primary and secondary schools, Corowa Shire sought to fall back on the agricultural industry for economic stability. In comparison, Murray

Shire, without this infrastructure and in a less productive agricultural region was in a more tenuous position. Although legislatively Murray Shire could not be taken over by its Victorian neighbour, Echuca, being governed by a different State, the possibilities of being taken over by its more populous and immediately adjacent northern neighbour, Deniliquin, was not out of the question. Deniliquin has extensive infrastructure, but being only a municipality with a small footprint their ratepayer base is limited and consequently opportunities to increase that ratepayer base are always welcome. Faced with such economic and administrative pressures, Murray Shire is in a position of having to prove its ability to be a self sustaining, growth centre with the ability to maintain its independence. Consequently, the Council of Murray Shire was forced to become a leader in the community, to reach out and develop mutually beneficial relationships with surrounding administrative centres and to develop a strong alternative industry focus away from tourism, if they were to retain their independence. It was therefore natural for them to develop bridging and linking relationships within the community to identify and nurture skills and knowledge assets, as it was to develop bridging and linking relationships with surrounding centres, regional bodies and other levels of government to position themselves at the forefront of knowledge about opportunities, potential threats and alternative means of addressing problems or issues in the community.

Recent research undertaken by the Bureau of Rural Sciences (Brooks, Mobbs, Casey and Kelson, 2006) identified that, even where communities similarly experiencing economic stress, who all had the infrastructure of schools and hospitals, varied greatly in their levels of social capital which affected their ability to adapt to their changing environment. The variance in the ability to adapt in each case related specifically to the longevity of residence of members of the Council

and their administrative staff, and their experience and skills in developing bridging and linking relationships. This had been gained as staff moved into the area from other regions with differing economic and social circumstances, bringing with them new perspectives, networks and ability to reconceptualise current problems. This circumstance was also reflected in Corowa, where Councillors and staff were long term residents of the Shire with little other experience, compared to Murray Shire where staff and Councillors had originally come from elsewhere.

The research suggests that, despite the effect of infrastructure and regional context, the difference in the background and experience of Council staff has been a noteworthy factor in the response of these Councils to the economic pressures introduced in the 1990s. Therefore, although infrastructure may be one factor affecting a community's response to economic pressures, such as in the case of Corowa and Murray Shires, the knowledge and experience in the Council and community is an equally influencing factor on the development and deployment of social capital for economic benefit. This is also within the context of the linking relationships that the community has access to, which equally require co-operation and active participation by external parties. Therefore the economic development of communities remains equally dependent on the active engagement by external government and non government agencies and parties, with these communities.

8.4.3 The social capital of development and prosperity

In order to achieve prosperity through increasing economic and population growth, the existence of the dimensions of internal and external bridging and linking in a community's social capital are critical. This is contrary to Putnam's approach, which at best identified internal bridging in addition to bonding as necessary to create economically productive social capital; 'norms and networks of civic engagement contribute to economic prosperity and are in turn reinforced by

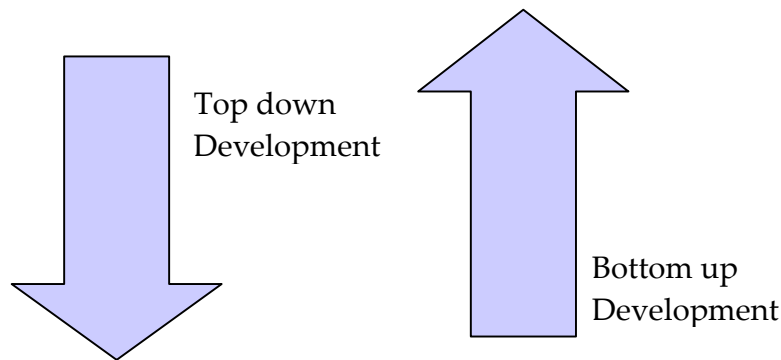
that prosperity' (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993). Onyx and Bullen propose the same inclusions in their work (2001, 46), where they suggest that a shift from 'getting by' to 'getting ahead' to achieve positive economic benefit entails a shift from bonding to bridging networks within the civic community. They argue that the macro environment of the state does not have any immediate or personal connections with people and events (Onyx and Bullen, 2001, 50). The qualitative data from this research would suggest that the reality for Australian rural communities is contrary to this assertion, as local government representatives – members of the civic community – need to be connected with the state through constructive and effective bridging and linking relationships, reflected in the nature of legislation and regulation enforcement, in order to achieve positive economic development for their communities.

As a result of Murray Shire's networks and linking relationships, it is respected for its economic acumen, participation and level of pro-activity and is consequently invited into discussions and decision making forums as a worthy contributor. By contrast, Corowa Shire, although not being seen as negative or detracting participant in regional activities or negotiations, has not had the profile or reputation of being a proactive facilitator or participant in regional issues significantly affecting their ability to influence external decisions that either directly affects the shire or the surrounding region. This has major effects on the opportunities available to the general community due to the decreased access afforded the Council to projects, grants and regional funds, through the lack of engagement with external bodies.

The responses of communities to development are often interpreted through traditional understandings of governance. Where a community waits for assistance and guidance, or the council adopts a 'roads, rates and rubbish' approach they are

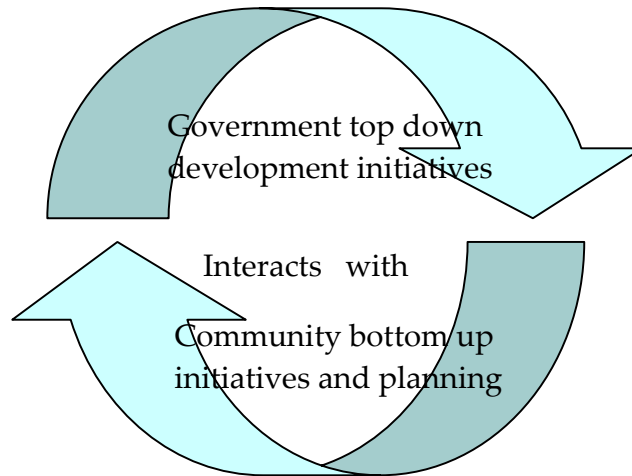
responding to the structure in which they exist, where 'top down' governance is imposed upon communities. By contrast, where a community only acts in isolation and without any collaboration, either by their own initiative or as an imposed circumstance, it could be referred to as 'bottom up' or grass roots development (Figure 8.1). Corowa, presenting as a traditional community during the study period, could be identified as a receptive community waiting for top down development, if it was deemed necessary given that they themselves did not perceive a need for development or growth.

Figure 8.1: Traditional development approaches



By contrast Murray Shire is not simply the reverse – a community of bottom up development - but the community has pursued an approach which seeks to integrate with other levels of government, where bottom up and top down development aspirations meet in an interactive process (Figure 8.2) which, (as a result of power struggles to varying degrees at different points of time dependent on circumstance,) shares knowledge, access to resources and decision making, and is not simply the devolution of funding and responsibility.

Figure 8.2: Development approach using bridging and linking social capital in both the civic and government domains



This comparative research indicates that the existence of both internal and external bridging and linking in a community's social capital are critical to facilitating an interactive development approach. The research here suggests this scenario to be more effective in generating prosperity in rural Australian communities, affirming the relevance in the Australian context of a synergistic interpretation of social capital. Further, it casts doubt upon some of the high level comparative uses which have been made of social capital measures developed in Australia (Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, 2005; Onyx and Bullen, 1997) in relation to identifying successful or prosperous communities. Although these measures have identified variances between urban and rural communities, they fail to identify the nuances and variation in relationship networks that account for differences between the prosperity of rural centres that are otherwise ostensibly comparable.

8.5 Summary

The data from both communities indicate that narrow traditional assessments of social capital tell us little of a community's ability to connect with and employ resources for the benefit of its prosperity. The dominant usage of the term social capital in Australia tends to restrict its interpretation to the networks of the civic

community alone, which, although important for a community's sense of well being and resilience, are of less importance to their development. It is in fact the elements of linking and external bridging networks, in the broader understandings of social capital (Evans, 1996; Szreter, 2002; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000), which facilitate growth and development. The indications are however that these are not able to be assessed using current quantitative social capital instruments. Consequently, it is a fruitless exercise to attempt to understand policy efficacy in relation to the social aspects of rural prosperity with the single measure of a quantitative assessment of social capital. Despite this, a qualitative assessment of all the dimensions of social capital (internal and external bonding, bridging and linking) does have a large contribution to make to our understanding of policy efficacy in connecting with rural development issues.

Although current quantitative instruments can measure the bonding elements of social capital, identifying the level of well being and resilience perceived in a community, bonding social capital on its own, does not explain the social aspects of a community's development capacity.

Despite a difference in community infrastructure in the case studies undertaken here, it is suggested that the experience and skills possessed by both elected and administrative members of local government to create and nurture external relationships have a noteworthy effect on the ability of a community to develop all elements of their social capital. These staff skills can be externally augmented or facilitated through mentoring and exchange programs. Under the current paradigms, however, of minimisation of local government expenditure which do not necessarily prioritise external training and experience, the ability of well entrenched and traditionally styled local governments' are restricted in their ability to break out of those moulds and access the resources to regenerate themselves.

In order to achieve a mechanism that would effectively assess those aspects of social capital (internal and external bridging and linking) crucial to developing a community's capacity to adapt and regenerate itself in the face of changing circumstances, quantitative instruments need to be further researched and developed. In the meantime, in order to make comparisons between rural communities in regard to their resilience and prosperity, qualitative research can identify those elements of social capital that affect the capacity of communities to be resilient and prosperous in constantly changing environments, and their ability to interact with and maximise the benefits from government programs and policies.

CHAPTER NINE: Social Capital - A dynamic, double edged instrument

This thesis offers research findings that identify relevance in an alternative interpretation of social capital, which affects our understanding of the ability of rural communities to regenerate and be prosperous. As importantly, it also identifies that the dominant paradigms (society centred) of social capital in Australia are limited and open to political misuse.

With increasing references to, and use of, the concept of social capital in the Australian policy domain, the objective of this thesis was to identify if the interpretation of social capital predominantly used to date has something to offer in terms of understanding social relationship processes. This was specifically in the context of how they interact with government and can affect a community's ability to be resilient and prosper in the face of changing economic pressures. It was also to explore if an alternative interpretation of the concept of social capital as put forward in development theory, was of more assistance in understanding social relationship networks in this context. In the light of the findings from these investigations, the further objective was to identify what future directions might be required into social capital research and the development of measurement and assessment instruments.

What we have found is that current dominant interpretations of social capital only offer a baseline understanding of a community's well being, which appears to relate to their resilience, but not of their ability to rejuvenate themselves and be prosperous. We have also found that interpretations of social capital as used elsewhere in development circumstances are far more useful in understanding the

dynamics of resilient as well as prosperous communities. In combination these findings have ramifications for the use of social capital in Australia. That is, in relation to policy a broader interpretation of social capital, utilising qualitative as well as quantitative techniques is required to gain an understanding of the social relationships that relate to community prosperity. This is suggested on the basis of this research indicating that bridging and linking social capital can not be measured well enough, with the current instruments available, to identify the relational differences in social networks between communities.

9.1 Overview

This thesis began with examining the development of the concept of social capital, demonstrating that there are a number of ways of interpreting it. Up until the turn of this century (2000), those interpretations were predominantly society centred, focusing on the social relationships of civic communities alone and ignoring power relations or external information resource networks. More recently, developments have occurred around the concept as discussed in chapter two, to address the downsides of the concept. More recent interpretations of social capital expand the scope of the relationship networks considered in its application to include government and external resources to communities. This addressed the lack of recognition of the effects of power in relationships, and the imprisoning nature for communities of the interpretations (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1993) most commonly adopted.

With these developments and the expansion of how social capital is interpreted, chapter three discussed how the concept has been utilised here in Australia. Most particularly it looked at government use of the concept, both in theoretical policy approaches (Productivity Commission) and Federal and State government uses of

the concept in particular portfolios or programs. It also discussed the interpretations used in the empirical research undertaken here in Australia by non government bodies and where the weaknesses of those are, given the developments in the concept that were identified in the previous chapter. Chapter three identified that, to date in Australia, the interpretations of social capital adopted have been society centred ones, excluding government networks or other external community factors from the relationships considered. It also identified the use of the concept in relation to explaining resilience and prosperity in communities, for which there was little empirical foundation in Australia. From a political perspective, the dominant interpretations of social capital can also be linked with neo-liberal political paradigms of individualism and 'hands off' government policies. Consequently, the chapter established that exploring an alternative interpretation of social capital may not only offer further insights into how this concept can improve our ability to assist communities to prosper, but also how such an interpretation may also pose challenges for current Australian political paradigms.

Given this use of the concept in Australia and the conceptual and empirical developments of it beyond society centred interpretations elsewhere, chapter four turned to outlining a methodological approach for examining the concept in the context of prosperity, using two rural Australian communities. It identified that, in order to understand the relevance of both the dominant paradigms of social capital and more recent interpretations of it to community resilience and prosperity, a combination of research techniques was best suited to the purpose. Both a quantitative measurement, preferred by government departments despite (or because of) the fact that it abstracts social capital and community relations from government, and qualitative techniques were deemed most appropriate to test the

new approaches to the concept. Media reviews and the use of interviews were also identified as being essential to elucidate those aspects of social capital to which survey instruments may not be sensitive. It outlined the basis for community selection, the choice of survey instruments, and the way in which media types and interviewees were selected in order to gain the broadest understanding of the community from both the internal and external point of view.

The survey results from the two communities, which were analysed in chapter five, provided quite unexpected results. There was no statistically significant difference between the two communities, despite the variance in their relative prosperity in the period between 1991 and 2001. In order to ensure that there was no difference between the communities, the data were also analysed by significant demographic factors for variance in the way that the questions had been answered in each community. Again, however, there were no differences between the communities in how they had responded to the survey. This was despite the fact that the survey questions were also categorised into society centred and synergistic interpretations of social capital; but this still provided no notable differences between the two communities in any of these categories. This raised two suggestions in relation to the research question. The first being, that there was no connection between society-centred or a synergistic interpretation of social capital and prosperity, which would have been demonstrated by a difference in scales between communities. The second was that, was it only a quantitative measure (regardless of type of social capital) that failed to show a connection between social capital and prosperity? I would have to admit that at this particular juncture in the research I wondered if I should just walk away and accept that there was no link between social capital and prosperity despite the assertions of it. But that was just the point; intuitively it makes sense for there to be a link and others had

established this link in other countries; could Australia really be that different? As the discussion of the findings in chapters six and seven revealed, no, Australia is not that different and yes, there is a link between social capital and prosperity. It is important to recognise however, that if only a society centred interpretation of the concept is used or if only a quantitative instrument is employed, a link between social capital and prosperity does not appear to exist.

Chapters six and seven looked at the findings for each of the case study communities from the perspective that a ten year review of the local newspapers gave and also provided by the nineteen and twenty four interviews with residents, government representatives and community consultants associated with each community. The data from these sources were analysed thematically by the type of relationship network that events, incidents or accounts of interaction related to; be it bonding, bridging or linking social capital. Although each chapter discussed these relationship networks in a slightly different manner according to the way in which events occurred or were responded to, both communities demonstrated a similarity in their heritage and levels of community bonding. The sense of belonging and well being in each community was largely the same, reflected in the bonding type of relationship networks. By contrast, the elements of bridging and linking social capital in each community were notably different. Murray Shire, the community that has experienced exceptional levels of growth in the period since 1991, exhibited much higher levels of internal and external bridging relationships in the community. This has generated the type of overall social capital which has allowed the community to come together to create new opportunities since the economic downturn of 1992. It has also facilitated the ability to tap into external resources and support, in the form of regional organisations and businesses, to lobby for improved circumstances. In terms of linking social capital, the

relationship networks of Corowa Shire did not reveal any effective linking relationship networks, either within the community or to groups or organisations external to the community. Murray Shire, in contrast, has limited internal linking relationships, but notably evident external linking networks with surrounding Councils, State government representatives and regional organisations, allowing them pro-actively to have input on the events surrounding them and therefore plan their futures.

In reviewing the qualitative findings of the two case studies, the survey results become more comprehensible. What the survey did quite correctly reveal is that both communities had strong levels of bonding social capital, allowing each a sense of identity and feelings of well being. Such connectedness is the basis upon which members of a community feel secure, enabling them to initiate and participate in bridging relationship networks and which, in the appropriate and necessary circumstance, can be further developed into linking social capital. Two things affect the ability to develop bridging and linking social capital, aside from external economic or other pressures. The research here suggests that these are the existing infrastructure in a community and, the experience base of the leaders of the community. These case studies demonstrated that where a community can remain self sufficient in terms of its infrastructure (schools, hospitals and industry), there is less, to no imperative, to revise the nature and function of social relations in the community. In such cases there is nothing that needs to be 'fixed', even if the community is declining in terms of population, age and employment, as long as that decline is small and gradual. In cases however, where a community has this infrastructure and sufficient community decline to raise awareness of the need to improve social and economic conditions, if community leaders have no experience in establishing or maintaining bridging and linking relationships, creation of these

elements and the resultant benefits they can bring will remain out of their reach. Of the case studies here, Corowa Shire, which presented with little to no bridging and linking relationship networks but did not perceive this as a problem in this case, will require a major cultural shift to acquire the community skills in the area of bridging and linking social networks, should they decide an alternative approach is needed to address their prosperity in the future. Most noteworthy, given the use of social capital to date in Australia, Corowa Shire has strong (bonding) social capital and should therefore, according to existing dominant paradigms, be doing well in terms of growth and prosperity. It is however the inability, or choice not, to develop bridging and linking networks, that is the crux of the connection between social capital and prosperity.

This second finding, that the ability to develop bridging and linking social capital must also exist within a community in order to generate prosperity, has the potential for some to say that I have returned, full circle, to the criticisms of Putnam's approach, where communities were deemed masters in control of their own futures. More worryingly, such a finding may be used to support the suggestion that those communities who do not possess the social network skills to negotiate improved futures are trapped in their current circumstance. The third finding however, which also evolves from this research largely mitigates that point. That is, the most productive relationship networks between community and government (at all levels) that lead to community prosperity are interactive ones. Additionally, the work undertaken by Herbert Cheshire (2003) suggests it may also be the case, that citizens of these communities simply choose not to exercise their agency to modify these relationship networks and increase the interactive nature of them, as they do not see the current nature of them as being an issue. In either case, successful approaches to community renewal combine both grass roots

development and top down relations in an interactive and iterative process of negotiation and development assistance, which recognises community agency in the knowledge, access to resources and the devolution of decision making with support to communities, rather than funding alone.

Consequently, this research strongly suggests that encouraging the type of social capital that is going to assist communities to regenerate and prosper is not achieved by policies related to a withdrawal of services and government support, in efforts to increase (bonding) social capital. It also does not support notions that these communities need paternalistic treatment in the form of welfare 'hand outs' generated by 'top down' power relations, which ignore the benefits of self determination. What the research does identify is that while bonding social capital underpins resilience, communities that prosper are encouraged and assisted in looking beyond their boundaries to develop bridging and linking networks. This is not only in terms of human capital in the form of skills and resources for their communities, but also for opportunities to participate in knowledge, information and decision making forums that relate to their futures. This requires government departments at all levels to revisit the nature of their relational interaction with communities, to ensure that policies are developed as a result of an interactive information sharing and feedback processes, and that communities are given not only the opportunity for input to issues and events affecting them, but are also actively incorporated into the decision making processes relating to them.

9.2 Summary

The concept of social capital is undeniably useful in providing a means to understand the overarching social structure of a community, however the more beneficial contribution is in the way it has put the social issues of equality and

equity into the policy debate. The elements of bonding within communities that allow strong groups of resources to develop such as within Council, citizens groups, youth groups and the corporate organisations of a region, must be combined with bridging relations between the civic members of these groups, between community groups, with their internal government structures and with groups and organisations external to the community. Additionally, the vertical linking relations between members of a community, civic and government and external government and regional organisations, which allow access across power boundaries, are the third essential ingredient to developing dynamic social capital that generates the ability to affect circumstances. The use of the concept however, without clarification of the interpretations of it – that is which of these elements are being included – then becomes one open to misuse and consequently, assertions of being a meaningless concept.

To use an interpretation of social capital, which only incorporates civic bonding and bridging relationship networks, will provide interesting information about a community's sense of security, well being, and internal connectedness – their resilience. It will not however, tell policy makers anything about the ability of a community to solve problems, assert its needs in the policy domain, or raise concerns of issues affecting their ability to respond to economic pressures. Ultimately, such an interpretation of social capital tells us nothing of communities' social networks and how they are being used to generate prosperity.

That being said, such interpretations of social capital are not useless. Similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, if a community is not well grounded, with feelings of safety, trust, well being and connectedness, they do not have the base materials with which to develop bridging relationships. Similarly, without the ability to relate to those dissimilar to themselves, community members do not have the basic

skills to negotiate power boundaries. Therefore, it is suggested that bridging relationships are the precursors to linking relationship networks.

Consequently, the narrow interpretation of social capital incorporating simply civic bonding and bridging networks is not irrelevant, but it has only one place in the matrix of understanding how social relations contribute to various outcomes in our communities. Such a limited interpretation of social capital does not, however, have any role to play in the dialogue of community and government interactions and policy development, and therefore should not, at any time in any conditions, be connected to a community's actions or abilities to renew, regenerate or be prosperous. Rather, only interpretations of social capital which incorporate the additional elements of external bridging and linking social relationship networks can have legitimacy when used in this context.

As a result, it also becomes clear that social capital has the ability to be hijacked and used to make assertions about communities that are baseless, but are politically expedient, if limited interpretations of it are employed where responsibility for the generation of resources through social networks are laid solely at the feet of civic communities. As highlighted by Edwards (2005, 187), Putnam, in his work on social capital, sought to both tap into people's discontent with neo-liberalism, and to explain it in a manner which appealed to the neo-liberal establishment. This has, however, created the ability for the concept to have been adopted and misused if interpreted according to his work. This example underpins the necessity to acknowledge the political paradigms behind the use of the concept, which may also explain the choice of interpretations of it that are used.

It is particularly interesting that the interpretation developed and explored here is that being used by a neo-liberal organisation to assist third world development

(Grootaert, 1998; Grootaert, Narayan, Jones and Woolcock, 2004; Narayan and Cassidy, 2001; Szreter, 2002; Woolcock, 2001). To explore the politics behind this choice is an interesting task, and not one that is going to be delved into here, despite the temptation to do so given discussions by Bebbington et al (2004). In the context of Australia, however, it does raise the very pertinent question, that if a neo-liberal institution such as the World Bank finds merit in this integrated approach and given the positive findings here for the application of such an interpretation of social capital to the prosperity of rural Australia, should not the Australian Government and its departments also recognise the benefits of such an approach? To be fair, some government departments are suggesting that intuitively the concept has more to offer than the approach that is currently being put forward, which does not readily connect the concept of social capital to the policy framework.

This thesis set out to develop an understanding of whether a more comprehensive interpretation of social capital could offer a meaningful alternative to the discussion and use of this concept in relation to rural, and perhaps the broader Australian community. In the process, the research has highlighted and added texture to a number of issues surrounding social capital. It is a complex conceptual means to understand what are simply social relations and the purposes they have in our communities; it is a concept, the interpretation and use of which, are affected by the political paradigms that underpin its employment (human action and the location of power and responsibility are politically loaded concepts that are inextricably linked with social capital); and lastly, the use of social capital has been dominated by those interpretations which allow it to be manipulated and are better suited to individualistic notions of societal interaction and success. In order to convert the concept of social capital to a truly useful one in the policy domain, a

shift in the dominant interpretation of it must occur, towards one that recognises the three and interacting elements of social capital. This allows the concept to be related not only to the policy dimension, but also to address many of the conceptual flaws in its interpretations up until the turn of this century.

Lastly, social capital is a concept that, when used in a comprehensively interpreted manner for the purposes of policy input, community regeneration and government interaction, can offer a rich understanding of the dynamics occurring both in and with communities that affect their ability to be resilient and prosperous.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Community Survey

Instructions for filling out the survey

Most questions are answered by circling a number; e.g. (1), or ticking a box. Please ensure you circle or tick a number, even if it means choosing an alternative that only most closely approximates your feelings. In some questions you are also asked to provide an explanation of your choice. If a question is not relevant to you, please circle 'not applicable'.

Are you the right person to be filling out the questionnaire?

Are you the person in the household, aged 18 years or over, who has the first birthday after January 1st this year?

YES – please continue and complete the survey

NO – please ask that person to complete the survey

For example, if there are two adults in the household, and one has his/her birthday in March and the other adult has his/her birthday in August then the adult with the birthday in March should complete the survey.

It is very important that this person completes the survey or seeks assistance in order to do so (i.e. a reader and/or scribe). This ensures that the survey is a random sample of residents. If for some reason this person cannot complete the survey (is away and un-contactable), only then is it acceptable that the adult with the next birthday in the calendar year completes the survey. This is essential to ensure an objective random sample for the survey.

In the following questions please circle the most appropriate response 1, 2, 3, or 4

Your Community

1. Do you feel valued in your community?

No, not much	A bit	Reasonably	Yes, very much
1	2	3	4

2. Some say that by helping others you help yourself in the long run. Do you agree?

No	Not much	I agree	Yes, very much
1	2	3	4

3. Do you help out a local group as a volunteer?

No	Not often	Yes	Yes, very often
1	2	3	4

4. Do you feel safe walking down your street after dark?

No	Not much	Yes	Totally safe
1	2	3	4

5. Do you agree that most people in your community can be trusted?

No	Not much	I agree	Yes, completely
1	2	3	4

6. Do you know the neighbours in your street?

No, none	on one side	on both sides	both sides & others in the street.
1	2	3	4

7. Can you get help from neighbours when you need it?

No, never	maybe	on occasions	any time at all
1	2	3	4

8. Can you get help from friends when you need it?

No, never	maybe	on occasions	any time at all
1	2	3	4

9. Does your area have a reputation for being a safe place?

Not at all	Usually not	Yes	Yes, completely
1	2	3	4

10. Do you feel happy to help out people in your community?

Not at all	Usually not	Yes	Yes, always
1	2	3	4

Why do you feel this?.....

11. Have you attended a local community event in the past 6 months (eg Church fete, school concert, craft exhibition, and/or area show?)

No	One	Two	Yes, several (at least three)
1	2	3	4

12. Are you a member of a local organisation or club? (eg Sport, craft, social or other club?)

None	One	Two	Yes, several (at least three)
1	2	3	4

If you are not a member of any organisations/clubs please skip to Question 17.

13. How active are you as a member of your local organisation(s) or club(s)?

Don't attend	Rarely Attend	Often attend	Attend every meeting
1	2	3	4

14. How many different types of organisations/clubs do you belong to?

One	Two	Three	Four or more
1	2	3	4

15. Are you on the management committee or organising committee for any of the organisations/clubs you belong to?

None	One	Two	Three or more
1	2	3	4

16. Does your organisation/club interact with other clubs in the area?

No	Rarely	Often	Regularly
1	2	3	4

17. Does your local community feel like 'home'?

Not at all	A bit	Reasonably	Yes, completely
1	2	3	4

18. In the past week, how many phone conversations have you had with friends in the area?

None	1 to 3	4 to 5	Many (at least six)
1	2	3	4

19. When you go shopping in your local area are you likely to run into friends and acquaintances?

No, never	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
1	2	3	4

20. In the past three years, have you joined a local community action to deal with an emergency?

Not applicable	No, never	Once or twice	Yes (3 or more times)
1	2	3	4

21. In the past three years have you ever taken part in a local community project or working bee?

No, never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	Yes, frequently (at least 5 times)
1	2	3	4

22. Have you ever been part of a project to organise a new service in your area? (eg youth club, scout hall, child care, recreation for disabled etc?)

No, never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	Yes, frequently (at least 5 times)
1	2	3	4

23. If you disagreed with what everyone else agreed on, would you feel free to speak out?

No, never	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
1	2	3	4

24. Do you think that multiculturalism makes life in your area better?

No, never	Rarely	Often	Yes, definitely
1	2	3	4

25. Do you enjoy living among people of different lifestyles?

No	Rarely	Often	Yes, definitely
1	2	3	4

26. If a stranger, someone different, moves into your street, would the neighbours accept them?

No, never	Rarely	Often	Yes, definitely
1	2	3	4

Inter Community

27. Do you go outside the local community to visit family and friends?

No, never	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
1	2	3	4

28. How many *non-family* people do you know that you interact with on a regular basis (at least every two to three months) *outside* your immediate community?

None	One	Two	Three or more
------	-----	-----	---------------

1 2 3 4

29. Do you listen to radio, watch television programs, get information via the internet or newspaper about what other communities are doing? (e.g. about projects; dealing with social, environmental, political problems; the development of new techniques or approaches)

No, never Rarely Often Yes, always

1 2 3 4

30. Do you undertake training or attend education programs outside your local area?

No, never Rarely Often Yes, always

1 2 3 4

31. Do any of the organisations or clubs that you belong to interact with others outside your area?

Not applicable No, never Once or twice Yes (3 or more times a year)

1 2 3 4

32. Would you attend events outside your area? (e.g. Shows, concerts, field days, exhibitions)

No, never Rarely Often Yes, always

1 2 3 4

33. In the last 12 months how often have you attended an event outside your local area?

Never Once Twice Three or more times

1 2 3 4

Local Government

34. Do you know who the elected members are for your Council?

No, none One or two Several Yes, all of them

1 2 3 4

35. Have you ever personally spoken to any of your Council Members?

No, none One or two Several Yes, all of them

1 2 3 4

36. Are you aware of how the Council operates in your Shire?

No, not at all A bit Reasonably familiar Yes, comprehensively

1 2 3 4

37. Do you feel that the Shire council representatives change often enough?

Definitely not. No Mostly Yes, definitely

1 2 3 4

Why?

.....

.....

38. Do you feel that the local Council acts effectively on community concerns?

No Rarely Often Yes, always

1 2 3 4

39. Do you feel Council actively seeks community input on issues affecting your community?

No Rarely Often Yes, definitely

1 2 3 4

40. Do you feel Council consults with your community about the input it receives on community issues, to negotiate agreed actions and community directions?

No Rarely Often Yes, definitely

1 2 3 4

41. Does your local government communicate effectively with you about its activities in the local area?

No, never	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
1	2	3	4

42. Do you trust your local Council to act in your best interests?

No, never	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
1	2	3	4

Inter Government

43. Does your Council have effective communication with the State Government representative in your electorate?

Don't know	No	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
1	2	3	4	5

44. Does your Council have effective communication with the Federal Government representative in your electorate?

Don't know	No	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
1	2	3	4	5

45. Is your Council proactive in addressing State or Federal issues that affect your local area?

Don't know	No	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
1	2	3	4	5

46. Do you feel that your Council is effective in looking after the interests of the local area, by interacting with State and Federal government bodies where necessary?

No	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
1	2	3	4

47. Does your local government interact with surrounding local councils to exchange ideas, set up programs or develop solutions to regional problems?

Don't know	No	Rarely	Often	Yes, constantly
1	2	3	4	5

48. Does your local government communicate with you about progress it has made on regional issues involving government departments?

No, never	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
1	2	3	4

The following five questions are for those in paid employment. If you are not in paid employment, please go to Question 54.

49. Do you work in the local area where you live?

No	Sometimes	Yes
1	2	3

50. Do you feel part of the local geographic community where you work?

No	Rarely	Often	Yes, definitely
1	2	3	4

51. Are your workmates also your friends?

No	One or Two	three or more	Yes, all of them
1	2	3	4

52. Do you feel part of a team at work?

Not Applicable	No	Rarely	Often	Yes
1	2	3	4	5

53. At work do you take the initiative to do what needs to be done even if no one asks you to?

No	Rarely	Often	Yes, always
----	--------	-------	-------------

1 2 3 4

About Yourself: (Please tick the appropriate box)

54. What is your gender? 2. Male 1. Female
55. Are you employed? 1. Yes. How many hours per week?
 2. No
56. What is your age in years? years
57. What is your address postcode? postcode
58. Are you living in: 1. Private House, flat, unit
 2. Public housing
 3. Other
59. Are you renting your accommodation?
 1. Yes. 2. No
60. How long have you lived in your local area? years
61. Who do you live with? 1. alone
 2. Just my partner
 3. Just my children
 4. Partner and children
 5. Extended or blended family
 6. Friends
 7. Other
62. Do you have children under 18 years of age?

1.Yes. How many *under* school age?.....

How many of school age?

2. No

63. What is the main source of income for your household?

1. Wages or Salary

2. Pension or benefit

3. Other

64. What is your current income?

1. Less than \$5,000

2. \$5,001 to \$14,999

3. \$15,000 to \$24,999

4. \$25,000 to \$34,999

5. \$35,000 to \$44,999

6. \$45,000 to \$54,999

7. \$55,000 +

65. What are your educational qualifications?

1. Less than Year 12 or equivalent

2. Year 12 or equivalent (High School completed)

3. TAFE Certificate or Diploma (or equivalent)

4. Undergraduate Degree qualification

5. Post graduate qualification

Please accept my sincere thanks for taking your time to complete this questionnaire, as your responses while remaining anonymous, are highly valued.

Please ensure that you return the complete questionnaire in the enclosed envelope or fax to: (02) 6125 2222, Attention: Kate Brooks

NB: If you are faxing the questionnaire, please ensure you fax BOTH sides of each page.

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Personal Interview Overview and Questions

A list of proposed interviewees is in the process of being developed. These identified persons will then be sent the attached letter of introduction and request for participation, accompanied by a consent form.

The interviews will be qualitative and semi structured in nature, with the following representing the list of questions that will be asked as the structural basis of the interview. The questions have been developed on the basis of the interview running for a maximum of one and a half hours. The interviews will be taped, which again will be subject to the approval of the interviewee.

1. How well do you perceive your community members interact within the community? What makes you say this?
2. How well do you perceive your community members interact with surrounding communities? Again why do you think/feel this?
3. Are there groups in the community that don't interact either within the community or resist external interaction? If so, what stops these people from interacting?
4. Can you list the number of community groups or government departments you interact with in the course of your business? Both within the community and external to it? (e.g. Neighbouring towns, regions, groups, state or interstate bodies or government departments).
 - 4a. How often would you have contact with these listed groups?
 - 4b. Why were these contacts initiated?
 - 4c. How were these contacts initiated – through you or another party?
5. How many major community events do you know of per year in your community?
6. In your experience how would you rate the participation by the community in council/community/ issue group activities? Using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very high levels of participation and 1, no participation at all.
 - 6a. Does it vary between event types and if so why do you think this is the case?

7. How difficult is it to gain this participation in events? How do you go about it for your events?
8. Are there a small number of key people in the community who are the 'leaders'?
9. Are these key people members of the council? If so do you see this as being a contributing factor to them being a key person, or is it unrelated?
10. Are the responsibilities for community action quite well spread across all sectors of the community or confined to a specified sector(s)?
11. How far do people travel to participate in events that you are aware of?
12. How often does the council promote getting involved in activities with surrounding areas (next town, region)?
- 12a. How do they promote these activities?
13. Are there any multicultural (of international or indigenous nature) events in your community?
- 13a. Who organises these and with how much general community participation?
- 13b. How broadly are they patronised?
14. What amount of contact do you have with State and Federal representatives (members of parliaments and departmental representatives) in your areas?
- 14a. How worthwhile do you feel this contact is?
- 14b. How are the contacts established – was there a prime motivator?
15. Are there activities/issues that the community is championing but which are being confounded by red tape?
16. What sort of consultation has occurred in your area about community issues?
- 16a. What were the opportunities for input?
- 16b. Why did /didn't you participate?
17. Are you informed /know of how other communities have respond to changing rural circumstances and if so how did you come about this information?

18. How often do contacts in government departments that you deal with change and how are you informed of these changes?

19. How many groups or networks do you participate in within your community? (Include family, community, government based, community managed but government funded)

19.a How many groups or networks do you participate in that operate outside your community? (as above).

Appendix 3: Consent Form



Kate Brooks
Ph.D. Candidate, Room 1170
School of Social Sciences
Haydon Allen Building Number 22

Canberra ACT 0200 Australia
Telephone: +61 6125 6787
Facsimile: +61 2 6125 2222
Email: kate.brooks@anu.edu.au

Dear XXXXXXXXXXXX

I am writing to request your assistance in doctoral research I am currently undertaking. at the Australian National University in the area of relationship networks in rural Australian communities. Relationship networks in this case is being used to refer to social capital. social capital constitutes the relationships that allow communities to work together for mutual benefit. The objective of the research is to develop a methodology for identifying and assessing government actions in communities that may enhance social capital.

I have selected you for the interview phase of the research, due to the position you hold in the community and the potential network of relationships you either have, or are aware of. The interview itself consists of nineteen questions (please see attached) and is estimated to take approximately one and a half-hours. If you do agree to be interviewed, I would arrange a time and location that is convenient to you. To signal your agreement, please read and sign the attached consent form and either fax or send a copy of it back to me. This ensures that you are aware not only of the objectives of the research, but of my commitment to you in regard to your rights for privacy and ethical protection. This interview phase is combined with a general community survey (distributed through the mailings from the Council,) of every resident ratepayer, to assess the levels of social capital in the community.

Ultimately, the study aims to be able to make observations, and possibly recommendations, as to the requisite actions by government agencies at specific levels, that contribute to positive social capital in their associated communities. The research is designed to inform policy decision-making and policy effectiveness, at the local, state and federal levels of government. I do hope that you will consider assisting me by being part of this study. If you have any queries or would like to discuss any aspect of it prior to making up your mind, please feel free to contact

me on WK: 02 6125 6787; Mobile 0412 091143; HM: 02 6239 4137 or
Email:Kate.Brooks@anu.edu.au. Alternatively, if you feel that this research raises
issues you would prefer to speak about with someone of authority in ANU, please
feel free to contact the Head of the School of Social Sciences, Dr. Frank Lewins on
(02) 6125 4523, or the Sylvia Deutsch, Human Research Ethics Officer at ANU on
(02) 6125 2900 (full contact details below). Should you be happy to agree to being
part of this research, I would ask you to return the consent form to me by Monday
the 8th of February, 2004 so that I can contact you to arrange a convenient time for
you, for the interview. Many thanks and hoping to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Brooks
(Date)

Human ethics Officer,
Research Office Chancellery 10B
The Australian National University,
ACT 0200; Fax: 02 6125 4807
Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au



Kate Brooks
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Canberra ACT 0200 Australia
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Facsimile: +61 2 6125 2222
Email: kate.brooks@anu.edu.au

Consent Form

The role of government in building social capital in rural Australian communities:
– based on research undertaken at the ANU.

The Research

The objective of the study is to explicitly identify the government role in the generation and activation of social capital. Social capital is the networks and relationships that exist both within a community, and between a community and outside parties, that facilitate community action for mutual benefit. The benefits of establishing and maintaining social capital are in building community resilience, viability and a community's ability to adapt to change (economic, environmental or social). The research will involve the following components:

Community Profiling – using Australian Bureau of Statistics data.

Personal Interviews - of leaders and identified significant active members in the community.

Community Survey – this is to be an anonymous survey to all resident ratepayers, distributed once via the council regular mailing. In this way the confidentiality of all recipients and respondents is maintained.

The Researcher

The research is being undertaken by Ms Kate Brooks who is currently undertaking PhD research with the School of Social Sciences, at the ANU. Kate can be contacted by ph: 02 6125 6787; Fax: 02 6125 2222; Mobile: 0412 091 143 or Email: Kate.Brooks@anu.edu.au. Kate has a Masters degree in Sociology and has been involved in social research for over four years both in the academic and applied fields.

Privacy

The information gained from both personal interviews and completed (anonymous) surveys will not be accessible to anyone but Kate Brooks herself. The interviewee information, will be kept separate from the completed interview data, in locked cabinets in different locations. Additionally, in the final data, in both the cases of the interviews and surveys, at no time will individual participants be identified unless they have expressly consented to this. This identification will only be sought in extreme cases where the information significantly provides insights to the findings of the research.

Your Consent to be part of this research

I have read the research information sheet and I give my consent to Kate Brooks to use the information that I will provide by interview for research purposes. I understand that my results will not be used in any way that would allow me to be identified, without my express and written consent.

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail address: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please keep the attached copy of this document for your own records and return a signed copy back to: Kate Brooks, at School of Social Sciences, Room 1170, Haydon Allen Building, ANU ACT 0020 by Monday the 8th of February 2004, or by Fax to 02 6125 5222.. If you do not wish to be part of this research please let me know so that I do not send you a follow-up reminder notice.

Thank you,



Kate Brooks