

CHAPTER 9: LOCATIONAL DIFFERENCES

It must be expected that survey localities selected specifically because they exhibit a variety of demographic, cultural and socio-economic characteristics would produce distinctively varying results in a study such as this. In part this is due to the different mix of characteristics. It can also be caused by the self-defining nature of localities, evolving not necessarily through an ability to control their own destinies but certainly actively involved in their own transformations. Cooke (1989b, p. 296) described localities as 'centres of collective consciousness' and, as such, they are neither passive nor residual. It is important for inter-locality variations to be recognised in case aberrations from general trends in one or more localities point to alternative or additional interpretations of results to those previously suggested. This chapter explores and discusses reasons for variations.

Locational distinctions might be presented in a number of ways. For example, tests for statistical significance could be performed in the same manner as occurred for the combined data set. This option was rejected because of the size of each location's data matrices. These varied considerably not only because there were different numbers of participants from each location but also because responses selected from the presented options to survey questions at times varied markedly between locations. To permit meaningful analysis and also to meet the requirements of those statistical tests which demand a minimum number of observations in certain cells in the relevant data matrix, modifications to data from original to condensed responses would have been required in different ways, thus negating appropriate inter-locality comparison. In addition, the sheer volume of trans-location variables would have made interpretation of results indigestible and extremely repetitive.

Instead, a strategy was devised which enabled the main inter-locational differences to be highlighted without a burdensome amount of documentation. The strategy referenced responses condensed in the same way as for analysis of the combined data set but focused on the predominant forms of responses. Values for these key responses were generally percentages. These values were converted to standard scores (Z-scores) to enable the calculation of a single score for each of the main areas of investigation. (Z-scores calculated for key responses references in this discussion are presented in Appendix 12.) Thus, inter-location comparisons through Z-scores could be made. Where responses were

relative weightings rather than percentages, calculation of Z-scores was deemed unnecessary.

This chapter is structured in the same sequence as results presented in the preceding four chapters. Therefore, explored topics commence with issues relating to identification of neighbourhood, followed by use of neighbourhood, social networks and, lastly, belonging to neighbourhood. Each of the four topics provides a summary of observations, highlighting apparently distinctive factors. In this way, varying impacts upon different neighbourhood communities of the elements being examined can be appreciated.

9.1 Identification with neighbourhood

Identification with neighbourhood areas was discussed in Chapter 5. Key responses that highlight differences in the extent to which neighbourhood identification occurred in each of the six survey locations are:

- Neighbourhood area in km²
- The percentage of respondents who claimed “home” was where they lived
- The percentage of respondents who would be very or somewhat unhappy to move
- The percentage of respondents who definitely or probably would not move within (a) six months or (b) five years
- The percentage of respondents who quite often or occasionally shared common interests with neighbours
- The percentage of respondents who never or only sometimes travelled outside neighbourhood areas for paid work
- The percentage of respondents who usually travelled more than ten kilometres for mainstream pursuits

Earlier results showed that a number of factors influenced identification with neighbourhood areas including, to varying degrees, education, income, home ownership, hours worked, age, gender and length of residence. These profile characteristics and the extent to which they varied between locations (summarised in Appendix 5) are important reference points for this discussion. In addition, variations in size of neighbourhood areas between locations as shown in Table 9-1 were considered relevant, particularly with respect to aspects of neighbourhood use and networking. Therefore, where appropriate,

the impact of neighbourhood sizes on locational responses is factored into the exploration of apparent differences in subsequent sections.

Table 9-1: Size of neighbourhood areas by survey location

Size of neighbourhood	Survey location responses %					
	Collaroy Plateau	River-view	Strath-field	Rose-lands	Kings-grove	Maroubra
Smaller than 1 km ²	37.5	24.4	17.5	45.0	53.3	25.0
1 – 2 km ²	30.0	33.3	15.0	20.0	30.0	18.8
2 – 4 km ²	7.5	31.1	27.5	5.0	3.3	12.5
4 – 8 km ²	10.0	8.9	27.5	25.0	6.7	18.8
Larger than 8 km ²	15.0	2.2	12.5	5.0	6.7	25.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n =)	40	45	40	20	30	32
Average area in km ²	4.0	2.5	4.6	2.9	2.1	6.9

Variations in the key responses for each locality with respect to identification with neighbourhood areas are presented in Table 9-2. Whereas the selected responses for most criteria have positive or “good” implications for identification, travel away from neighbourhood for work and greater distances travelled for mainstream pursuits are considered to have “bad” or negative impacts by comparison with the alternatives of remaining within neighbourhood areas or in close proximity to them. For this reason, before calculating Z-score totals, the sign on values for the two travel away criteria were reversed (refer to Appendix 12).

Table 9-2: Selected responses for identification with neighbourhood by location

Criteria for identification with neighbourhood	Collaroy Plateau	River-view	Strath-field	Rose-lands	Kings-grove	Maroubra
	Survey location responses %					
“Home” is where they live	85.0	95.6	87.5	75.0	82.1	90.6
Very or somewhat unhappy to move	80.0	68.9	62.5	35.0	44.8	62.5
Definitely or probably won’t move:						
within 6 months	85.5	85.0	86.1	93.8	76.2	81.5
within 5 years	52.8	53.5	56.8	47.1	56.5	48.1
Quite often/occasionally share interests	78.4	73.3	80.0	50.0	58.6	63.3
Travel away:						
for work	79.3	95.2	78.6	100.0	88.9	85.0
10km or more for mainstream pursuit	62.9	58.5	48.6	38.9	46.4	60.0
	Survey location Z-score totals					
Combined result (Z-scores)	2.16	1.29	4.30	-4.14	-2.08	-1.54

Criteria for identification are summarised in this section for each location not only because the emphasis is on locational differences but also due to the nature of the results.

Moreover, the convention established earlier of discussing the survey locations in order of their north-south position is followed. This ensures that no one area is privileged in the discussion.

Collaroy Plateau

The “youngest” respondents were in Collaroy Plateau. In addition, more either owned or were purchasing their homes. The mean neighbourhood area more closely represented the overall average, with demarcation lines probably determined to some extent by the geographic characteristics of the location – the north- and east-facing escarpment and the proximity of the Tasman Sea to the east and Narabeen Lakes to the north. Collaroy Plateau respondents tended towards the “middle ground” with respect to the extent to which they identified where they lived as “home”. This is possibly a function of age and length of residence, as discussed in Chapter 5. In spite of this, a high proportion of respondents from this location, by comparison with all others, were unhappy at the prospect of moving.

After Strathfield, Collaroy Plateau participants were most likely to share common interests with neighbours. This could be related to the fact that most participants in this location were females (77.5%). In addition, average hours worked per week by those in the paid workforce were lower than elsewhere, with arguably more leisure time available for recognising or seeking out neighbours with whom common interests could be shared. Family type was typically “married with school-aged children”. The commonality of children might be a catalyst for finding common interests with others.

More participants from this location than any other usually travelled ten kilometres or more for mainstream pursuits. The relative geographic remoteness of the locality from areas recognised as prominent business centres might influence travel patterns. Total Z-score for Collaroy Plateau was 2.160, the second highest score (Table 9-2), suggesting high levels of identification with neighbourhood by comparison with other survey locations.

Riverview

Riverview respondents had a small average neighbourhood area by comparison with other participants. The location had high levels of home ownership and the highest average age

of all survey locations (refer to Appendix 5). Overall results suggest that these factors, together with a high proportion of long-term residents, influenced more respondents from this location by comparison with those from any other location to think home was where they lived. In addition, they were generally very unhappy about the prospect of having to relocate elsewhere. However, they appeared to take a pragmatic view about the prospect of having to move in the longer term (within five years, by comparison with six months), perhaps having regard for advancing age and the changes this often dictates.

Respondents from Riverview who were in the paid workforce were more likely to travel outside their neighbourhood areas for work than those from other areas. Although this would have in part been a function of small neighbourhood areas, an additional consideration is that more than half usually travelled at least ten kilometres for mainstream pursuits. Whilst these tendencies point to geographic distancing from neighbourhood for some activities, their levels of identification were overall comparatively high (Z-score of 1.29, Table 9-2).

Strathfield

Strathfield had above-average Z-scores for all key responses considered for identification with neighbourhood, leading to its highest ranking overall (score of 4.30, Table 9-2). An outstanding feature was that, more than in any other locality, participants shared common interests with their neighbours. This occurred even though most respondents were in the workforce, a factor suggested in Chapter 5 as an apparent negative influence on interest sharing. However, this factor could have been counteracted by the large average size of households, with children living at home in all age ranges (if having children is indeed a catalyst for sharing common interests with neighbours). Household composition might have also influenced Strathfield's comparatively large average neighbourhood area.

Respondents from Strathfield were least likely, by comparison with those from other locations, to travel away for work or to be contemplating relocation elsewhere in the longer-term (within five years), suggesting commitment to their neighbourhood, a feature also likely to facilitate identification with the area. They were relatively less likely to travel out-of-area for mainstream pursuits.

Roselands

Roselands respondents had a comparatively small average neighbourhood area, seemingly a function of lowest levels of education by comparison with other survey locations, and also having regard to pensions or social security benefits being identified from the results as main income sources. One respondent did not acknowledge a neighbourhood area. The smallest proportion of participants from this location thought that where they lived was home and most were happy or at least ambivalent about the prospect of relocating.

Respondents from Roselands were least likely to share common interests with neighbours compared with those from other locations. This might be in part a function of the fact that a high proportion of those who were in the workforce travelled away for paid work. However, a greater proportion from this survey location, by comparison with the others, were not in the paid workforce and therefore did not travel to work as a mainstream pursuit. This could be considered one reason for Roselands having the smallest proportion of respondents, by comparison with those from other survey locations, who travelled at least ten kilometres for mainstream pursuits.

These factors have combined to point to Roselands respondents having comparatively lower levels of identification with their neighbourhood areas by comparison with those from other areas and this is reflected in the low total Z-score (-4.14; Table 9-2).

Therefore, plans for relocation elsewhere might have been anticipated. Conflicting results have been produced in this respect. Most (93.8%, the highest proportion for the six locations) had no plans to move within six months whilst a minority (47.1%, the lowest result recorded) expected still to be there in five years' time. Earlier results have pointed to housing tenure as influencing people's plans to move from neighbourhood areas (83.3% of respondents were home owners). The Roselands responses suggest a pragmatic approach by many who would perhaps like to move but could not realistically contemplate this happening within the immediately foreseeable future, perhaps due in part to the existing property market not favouring exchange. At the same time, many apparently hoped changing circumstances might make relocation possible further into the future.

Kingsgrove

The small average neighbourhood area for Kingsgrove is in part the result of five respondents saying that they did not have a neighbourhood area. In addition, fewer

participants from Kingsgrove had received post-school education than elsewhere, a factor shown earlier to influence people towards small neighbourhood areas. Whilst fluency in English did not appear to impact upon size of neighbourhood area, perhaps in part because a degree of proficiency in English was essential in the first instance for participation, it is noteworthy that the population of this survey location had more people from non-English speaking backgrounds in the 2001 Census than any other location. The presence of large proportions of neighbours from different cultural backgrounds might concentrate rather than disperse the geographic spread of neighbourhood activities.

Kingsgrove respondents were second to Roselands in ways that suggest diminished levels of identification with neighbourhood. Overall, this location scored the second lowest Z-score (-3.08; Table 9-2). The area had comparatively fewer people than in most other locations who thought home was where they lived, who were unhappy about the prospect of moving away, or who shared common interests with neighbours.

A greater proportion of respondents from Kingsgrove than elsewhere thought they definitely or probably would relocate within six months but, at the same time, relatively few (compared with other locations) planned to move within five years. Thus it appears a section of the location's respondents has strong inclinations to relocate whilst a larger proportion were satisfied with their situation and had long-term intentions to stay put. Home ownership levels, at 93.1%, were comparatively high. This can act as an anchor if capital losses are anticipated with relocation elsewhere. However, these results suggest that Kingsgrove residents feel that they have greater flexibility and command over future decisions regarding place of residence than those in Roselands.

Maroubra

Respondents from Maroubra had, on average, larger neighbourhood areas than elsewhere. In part as a function of this, many worked within their neighbourhood areas or close to home but a comparatively high proportion (second only to Collaroy Plateau) usually travelled ten kilometres or more for mainstream pursuits. This is perhaps a reflection of job opportunities in Sydney's eastern suburbs. A below-average percentage of Maroubra participants shared common interests with neighbours.

Whilst home was where they lived for a comparatively high number of respondents from Maroubra (above the overall average), when short- and long-term views on relocation were

combined, relatively high numbers had plans to move elsewhere, indicative of lower levels of neighbourhood identification. This was possibly a reflection of fewer homeowners here than in any other location. Maroubra had a below-average Z-score of -1.54 for neighbourhood belonging (Table 9-2).

Overview of neighbourhood identification

Z-scores for Strathfield, Collaroy Plateau and Riverview suggest relatively high levels of identification with neighbourhood areas within these locations. Conversely, Z-scores for Roselands, Kingsgrove and Maroubra point to lower levels of identification. The importance of housing tenure is evidenced in the Maroubra result. Participants from Roselands and Kingsgrove were less likely to think of where they lived as home, were less unhappy about the prospect of moving elsewhere, and were less likely to share common interests with neighbours than people from the other four locations. It is probably relevant that these were the two locations at the bottom end of the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage scores. Large proportions of the population in these locations spoke languages other than English, although this factor also applied in Strathfield. Locational differences appear to generally support the interpretation of results for the combined data set offered in Chapter 5.

9.2 Activities in neighbourhoods

Activities that took place in neighbourhood areas were discussed in Chapter 6. Differences between the six survey localities are addressed in the same sequences as overall results were analysed:

- Types of activities
- Frequency of activities

Types of activities

Assessment of use of types of shops and facilities was based on whether general perceptions of neighbourhood areas appeared to be influenced by the location of certain types of facilities. Stated use of local facilities was weighted as described in Chapter 6 and total scores calculated for each category of facility. A higher score indicated a greater use of neighbourhood facility than a lower score. A score of more than two suggested that the

type of facilities was generally used within identified neighbourhood areas (more than 50% of the time) rather than elsewhere. Differences in relative weightings for each survey location, grouped according to categories used in Chapter 6 (food and household supplies; other general services and supplies; schooling; and discretionary activities), are presented in Table 9-3.

Table 9-3: Weighted responses for use of types of neighbourhood facilities by location

<i>Category of shop, service or facility</i>	<i>Responses by survey location (relative weightings*)</i>					
	<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	<i>River-view</i>	<i>Strath-field</i>	<i>Rose-lands</i>	<i>Kings-grove</i>	<i>Maroubra</i>
<i>Food and household supplies:</i>						
# <i>Daily basics</i>	3.62	2.77	3.03	2.67	2.57	3.29
<i>Basic household supplies</i>	0.50	2.29	1.28	2.42	0.41	2.77
<i>Purchased meals</i>	1.89	1.90	1.50	1.07	0.96	2.62
<i>Other general services and supplies:</i>						
<i>Banking</i>	1.00	1.82	1.52	1.75	1.68	2.52
<i>Small home purchases / services</i>	1.00	0.62	1.64	1.20	1.76	1.97
<i>Personal care</i>	0.77	1.07	1.21	2.21	1.03	2.78
<i>General health services</i>	1.03	2.09	1.97	1.84	1.57	1.97
# <i>General government services</i>	1.83	2.09	2.42	2.16	2.59	2.72
# <i>Schooling for children</i>	2.95	2.00	2.77	0.29	2.20	2.91
<i>Discretionary activities:</i>						
<i>Church services / spiritual care</i>	2.08	1.56	1.45	0.00	2.29	2.15
# <i>Recreation, sport or hobbies</i>	2.20	2.49	2.66	2.00	1.86	2.42
<i>Culture or entertainment</i>	0.74	0.03	0.65	0.00	0.10	1.19
<i>Combined weightings for:</i>						
<i>Facilities linked to definition of neighbourhood boundaries</i>	10.6	9.35	10.88	7.12	9.22	11.34
<i>All facilities</i>	19.61	20.73	22.10	17.60	19.02	29.31

* See Chapter 6 for details of calculation of scores

Denotes facilities which are linked to definition of neighbourhood boundaries

Results in Chapter 6 pointed to use of four different types of shops, services and facilities being particularly prominent within neighbourhood areas. People usually accessed basic daily supplies, schooled their children, pursued recreation, sport or hobbies and used general government services within their local areas. Results for each survey location generally supported these overall levels of usage. For example, shopping for daily basic supplies occurred in neighbourhood areas more so than elsewhere in all survey locations, with scores ranging from a high of 3.62 for Collaroy Plateau to a low of 2.57 in Kingsgrove. Roselands was the only survey location where schools for children were usually located out of area although use of local schools was “borderline” in Riverview. Respondents from Kingsgrove did not generally use neighbourhood facilities for recreation, sport and hobbies whilst in Roselands, they generally went elsewhere for these

activities 50% of the time. The only other type of activity that had been identified as usually occurring within neighbourhood areas overall was use of government services. People from Collaroy Plateau usually travelled elsewhere to access these types of services.

Maroubra was the only survey location where most types of local shops, services and facilities generally accessed by respondents were within identified neighbourhood areas. It does not seem that greater use of neighbourhoods for a wider range of activity types by respondents from Maroubra strongly influenced other aspects of neighbourhood identification given that people in Riverview, Collaroy Plateau and Strathfield apparently had higher levels of identification with their local areas (as shown in Table 9-3). Participants from Roselands were least likely to generally perform normal activities locally. For those types of facilities suggested as contributing towards definition of neighbourhood areas, with the exclusion of Maroubra, the order of most use is the same as the Z-scores rankings for neighbourhood identification (refer to Table 9-4). For example, Strathfield has the highest Z-score and relative weighting, Collaroy Plateau has second highest, followed by Riverview, Maroubra, Kingsgrove and, lastly, Roselands. Similar trends are apparent between Z-scores and use rates for *all* types of shops and facilities. This provides support for the premise that use of local facilities is to some extent related to neighbourhood identification. Whether locational differences for frequency of use, rather than type of use, of local areas follow a similar pattern is investigated next

Table 9-4: Comparative results for neighbourhood identification and use by location

<i>Combined values for all criteria</i>	<i>Responses by survey location</i>					
	<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	<i>River-view</i>	<i>Strath-field</i>	<i>Rose-lands</i>	<i>Kings-grove</i>	<i>Maroubra</i>
<i>Z-scores for identification with neighbourhood (refer to Table 9-2)</i>	2.16	1.29	4.30	-4.14	-2.08	-1.54
<i>Weighting for "neighbourhood defining" facilities (refer to Table 9-3)</i>	10.6	9.35	10.88	7.12	9.22	11.34
<i>Weighting for all facilities (refer to Table 9-3)</i>	19.61	20.73	22.10	17.60	19.02	29.31

Frequency of activities

Trip diary entries for each respondent documented the frequency (as opposed to type) of activities that occurred away from the home, whether within neighbourhood areas or elsewhere, during a normal seven-day period. Entries in social contact diaries described the intensity of social contacts made and received whilst respondents were at home. The outcomes from analyses of these data in Chapter 6 strongly pointed to activity and social

contact being linked to perceptions of neighbourhood areas. Patterns were identified which illustrated greater levels of out-of-area activity and social contact for those with smaller neighbourhood areas by comparison with those who had larger areas. Conversely, the larger the areas recognised as neighbourhood, the more likely it was that functions were performed within perceived neighbourhood areas and contacts were made with others in the same area. Hence, for those with larger areas, activities and interaction involving other locations occurred to a lesser extent than by those who had smaller areas.

Given these overall results, this investigation of locational differences regarding frequency of activities and social contacts in neighbourhood areas was primarily concerned with determining if any major pattern variations were evident for each of the six different locations from that already described for the consolidated whole (refer to Tables 9-5 and 9-6 respectively).

As might be expected, the pattern was not uniformly evidenced for each of the locations although in general there were no obvious contradictions. In other words, less activity and social contact was inclined to occur in neighbourhood areas for those respondents with small areas and greater activity for those who had perceived their neighbourhood areas to be large. (The results were not tested for statistical significance because Chi-squared assumptions could not be met.)

One of the most noteworthy outcomes from analysis of results in Chapter 6 was the apparent propensity for females to have more social contacts with others than males. This pattern also appears to apply on a locational basis, as illustrated in Table 9-7. There were comparatively low proportions of female respondents in both Strathfield and Kingsgrove; overall rates of contact were less in these two locations.

The four locations with comparatively high numbers of female respondents (Collaroy Plateau, Riverview, Maroubra and Roselands) had greater rates of telephone usage than the other two (refer to Table 9-7). (Earlier results suggested that females were about 2.4 times more likely than males to have social contact with others when at home, with the telephone overwhelming other methods of contact.)

Table 9-5: Activity patterns within neighbourhood by size and location

Size of neighbourhood	Number of daily activities within neighbourhood areas %				Total (n =)
	None	One	Two	Three or more	
Collaroy Plateau:					
Smaller than 1 km ²	54.3	18.1	19.0	8.6	100 (105)
1 – 2 km ²	40.5	29.8	16.7	13.1	100 (84)
2 – 4 km ²	9.5	28.6	28.6	33.3	100 (21)
4 – 8 km ²	53.6	21.4	14.3	10.7	100 (28)
Larger than 8 km ²	26.2	26.2	16.7	31.0	100 (42)
Total responses	42.5	23.9	18.2	15.4	100 (280)
Riverview:					
Smaller than 1 km ²	54.5	22.1	14.3	9.1	100 (77)
1 – 2 km ²	54.3	31.4	7.6	6.7	100 (105)
2 – 4 km ²	51.0	33.7	9.2	6.1	100 (98)
4 – 8 km ²	39.3	35.7	14.3	10.7	100 (28)
Larger than 8 km ²	–	28.6	28.6	42.9	100 (7)
Total responses	50.8	30.2	10.8	8.3	100 (315)
Strathfield					
Smaller than 1 km ²	78.6	14.3	7.1	–	100 (42)
1 – 2 km ²	88.1	9.5	2.4	–	100 (42)
2 – 4 km ²	54.0	17.5	19.0	9.5	100 (63)
4 – 8 km ²	46.8	29.9	11.7	11.7	100 (77)
Larger than 8 km ²	17.1	34.3	22.9	25.7	100 (35)
Total responses	56.4	21.6	12.7	9.3	100 (259)
Roselands:					
Smaller than 1 km ²	74.5	23.5	2.0	–	100 (51)
1 – 2 km ²	50.0	39.3	10.7	–	100 (28)
2 – 4 km ²	57.1	28.6	–	14.3	100 (7)
4 – 8 km ²	47.1	23.5	5.9	23.5	100 (34)
Larger than 8 km ²	28.6	57.1	14.3	–	100 (7)
Total responses	58.3	29.1	5.5	7.1	100 (127)
Kingsgrove:					
Smaller than 1 km ²	81.1	14.2	3.8	0.9	100 (106)
1 – 2 km ²	61.9	25.4	12.7	–	100 (63)
2 – 4 km ²	28.6	42.9	28.6	–	100 (7)
4 – 8 km ²	14.3	42.9	35.7	7.1	100 (14)
Larger than 8 km ²	21.4	35.7	21.4	21.4	100 (14)
Total responses	64.7	22.1	10.8	2.5	100 (204)
Maroubra:					
Smaller than 1 km ²	78.6	8.9	12.5	–	100 (56)
1 – 2 km ²	40.5	28.6	11.9	19.0	100 (42)
2 – 4 km ²	57.1	14.3	7.1	21.4	100 (28)
4 – 8 km ²	31.0	26.2	16.7	26.2	100 (42)
Larger than 8 km ²	30.4	17.9	25.0	26.8	100 (56)
Total responses	47.8	18.8	15.6	17.9	100 (224)

Table 9-6: Social contacts within neighbourhood by size and location

Size of neighbourhood	Number of social contacts within neighbourhood areas %				Total (n =)
	None	One	Two	Three or more	
Collaroy Plateau:					
Smaller than 1 km ²	60.0	25.7	5.7	8.6	100 (105)
1 – 2 km ²	53.6	22.6	13.1	10.7	100 (84)
2 – 4 km ²	38.1	28.6	9.5	23.8	100 (21)
4 – 8 km ²	71.4	17.9	7.1	3.6	100 (28)
Larger than 8 km ²	33.3	38.1	11.9	16.7	100 (42)
Total responses	53.6	26.1	9.3	11.1	100 (280)
Riverview:					
Smaller than 1 km ²	64.9	15.6	14.3	5.2	100 (77)
1 – 2 km ²	66.7	21.9	2.9	8.6	100 (105)
2 – 4 km ²	75.5	18.4	5.1	1.0	100 (98)
4 – 8 km ²	67.9	25.0	7.1	–	100 (28)
Larger than 8 km ²	57.1	28.6	14.3	–	100 (7)
Total responses	68.9	19.7	7.0	4.4	100 (315)
Strathfield					
Smaller than 1 km ²	69.0	31.0	–	–	100 (42)
1 – 2 km ²	90.5	4.8	4.8	–	100 (420)
2 – 4 km ²	65.1	28.6	4.8	1.6	100 (63)
4 – 8 km ²	62.3	19.5	13.0	5.2	100 (77)
Larger than 8 km ²	48.6	28.6	14.3	8.6	100 (35)
Total responses	66.8	22.4	7.7	3.1	100 (259)
Roselands:					
Smaller than 1 km ²	90.2	9.8	–	–	100 (51)
1 – 2 km ²	60.7	21.4	10.7	7.1	100 (28)
2 – 4 km ²	57.1	28.6	14.3	–	100 (7)
4 – 8 km ²	47.1	29.4	14.7	8.8	100 (34)
Larger than 8 km ²	71.4	28.6	–	–	100 (7)
Total responses	69.3	19.7	7.1	3.9	100 (127)
Kingsgrove:					
Smaller than 1 km ²	80.2	16.0	2.8	0.9	100 (106)
1 – 2 km ²	76.2	20.6	–	3.2	100 (63)
2 – 4 km ²	57.1	14.3	14.3	14.3	100 (7)
4 – 8 km ²	64.3	28.6	–	7.1	100 (14)
Larger than 8 km ²	78.6	21.4	–	–	100 (14)
Total responses	77.0	18.6	2.0	2.5	100 (204)
Maroubra:					
Smaller than 1 km ²	75.0	21.4	1.8	1.8	100 (56)
1 – 2 km ²	50.0	26.2	11.9	11.9	100 (42)
2 – 4 km ²	89.3	10.7	–	–	100 (28)
4 – 8 km ²	52.4	28.6	14.3	4.8	100 (42)
Larger than 8 km ²	39.3	32.1	10.7	17.9	100 (56)
Total responses	58.9	25.0	8.0	8.0	100 (224)

Table 9-7: Gender and preferred methods of contact by location

<i>Survey location</i>	<i>Gender of respondents %</i>		<i>Average daily method of contact</i>			
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Face-to-face</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>Letter</i>
<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	22.5	77.5	0.36	2.28	0.15	0.03
<i>Riverview</i>	35.6	64.4	0.39	1.85	0.40	0.07
<i>Strathfield</i>	55.0	45.0	0.27	1.24	0.11	0.03
<i>Roselands</i>	45.0	55.0	0.20	1.88	0.27	0.01
<i>Kingsgrove</i>	60.0	40.0	0.23	1.29	0.28	0.04
<i>Maroubra</i>	43.8	56.3	0.25	1.84	0.13	0.05
<i>Overall</i>	42.5	57.5	1.70	10.38	1.34	0.23
<i>(n =)</i>			422	2,459	59	318

Respondents from Roselands had proportionately less face-to-face contact with people when they were at home and more by telephone. Whilst combined results for all survey locations indicated that respondents received more social contacts than they made (overall, 1.67 times more likely; Table 9-8), this was less so for those from Roselands than others (ratio of 1.27:1). By comparison, Maroubra participants received more than twice as many incoming social contacts compared with outgoing ones. Reasons for differences in levels of directional flow of social contact are not clear but might be associated with the amount of time spent at home.

Table 9-8: Summary of inward- and outward-bound social contacts by location

<i>Survey location</i>	<i>Direction of social contact</i>		
	<i>Inward</i>	<i>Outward</i>	<i>Ratio – in:out</i>
<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	1.73	1.11	1.56
<i>Riverview</i>	1.75	0.96	1.82
<i>Strathfield</i>	1.07	0.58	1.84
<i>Roselands</i>	1.32	1.04	1.27
<i>Kingsgrove</i>	1.16	0.68	1.71
<i>Maroubra</i>	1.52	0.75	2.03
<i>Overall</i>	8.55	5.12	1.67
<i>Total activity</i>	n = 2,052	n = 1,206	

Within the limitations of investigation of inter-locational differences for frequency of activities and social contacts that happen within local areas, these outcomes support the interpretation of the combined results as discussed in Chapter 6.

9.3 Social networks

Social networks involving close social ties were examined in Chapter 7. The varying degrees to which social networking occurred within the six different survey localities are addressed in the same sequence under which the combined results were analysed and discussed in Chapter 7:

- Neighbourly interaction
- Membership in formal groups
- Close friends and social contacts

In addition to responses to survey questions, “spoke” diagrams illustrating spatial distributions of respondents’ formal groups, close friends and social contacts in the Sydney metropolitan area but *outside* neighbourhood areas are presented in Appendix 13.

Neighbourly interaction

Results discussed in Chapter 7 suggested that levels of neighbourly interactions are influenced by a number of factors, with tendencies for interaction to be more limited for those who have less than five years of residence, those who did not own their own homes, those who did not have a job, those who generally worked long hours in paid employment, those who are single and those who usually speak languages other than English.

Differences in the way respondents from each locality identified with their neighbourhood areas are presented in Table 9-9.

Table 9-9: Selected responses for neighbourhood interaction by location

<i>Criteria for neighbourly interaction</i>	<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	<i>River-view</i>	<i>Strath-field</i>	<i>Rose-lands</i>	<i>Kings-grove</i>	<i>Maroubra</i>
<i>Survey location responses %</i>						
<i>People always or mostly get along</i>	95.0	77.8	90.0	45.0	76.7	93.8
<i>People often exchange favours</i>	25.0	24.4	22.5	0.0	27.6	12.5
<i>Know adults in at least 10 households</i>	52.5	42.2	38.5	10.5	33.3	25.0
<i>Survey location Z-score totals</i>						
<i>Combined result (Z-scores)</i>	2.71	1.03	1.24	-5.22	0.66	-0.43

The most prominent inter-location feature of this aspect of social networking is the consistently low levels of interaction apparent in the results for Roselands. Identified characteristics of the Roselands respondent profile which have possibly contributed to this are the high proportions that did not work or, conversely, worked long hours. In addition, short-term residents who were Roselands respondents were generally tenants rather than homeowners. Tenants comprised 16.7% of respondents from this location. A comparatively high proportion of the population of Roselands speak languages other than English. Only 51.3% spoke English only at the time of the 2001 Census. This feature also applied to Kingsgrove and Strathfield (where 43.7% and 48.7% respectively speak English only). In some situations, lack of a common language within these survey locations might contribute to lower levels of interaction.

In Roselands and Maroubra, 25.0% of respondents were single; in other locations, greater proportions lived with partners. This could account for the low levels of neighbourly interaction in these two locations. In addition, Maroubra had the highest proportion of short-term residents (less than five years) and tenants (18.8% were not homeowners) by comparison with other locations.

The comparatively high levels of interaction between Collaroy Plateau neighbours are noteworthy. This might be a reflection of high levels of both home ownership (instead of tenants) and employment in part-time jobs (rather than no jobs or long hours worked) on the part of respondents from this locality.

Membership of formal groups

Results discussed in Chapter 7 suggested that household size was indicative of the extent of membership in formal groups of various types, with members of either large (at least

five people) or, to a lesser extent, small (one or two persons) households having greater levels of membership. Single people were more prolific joiners than those with partners. In addition, females were more likely than males to volunteer their time to organisations related to other people or to ones that were work-related. Table 9-10 summarises the locational differences for membership within formal groups.

Table 9-10: Selected responses for memberships in formal groups by location

<i>Formal group characteristic</i>	<i>Survey location responses</i>					
	<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	<i>River-view</i>	<i>Strath-field</i>	<i>Rose-lands</i>	<i>Kings-grove</i>	<i>Maroubra</i>
<i>Mean membership number</i>	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.1	1.1	0.8
<i>Nil membership %</i>	27.5	28.9	32.5	60.0	46.7	65.6
<i>Type of organisation %:</i>						
<i>Other people</i>	24.3	28.4	13.3	9.5	15.2	18.5
<i>Work or self</i>	14.3	10.8	18.3	14.3	6.1	7.4
<i>Leisure</i>	54.3	51.4	55.0	61.9	57.6	59.3
<i>Personal beliefs</i>	4.3	8.1	11.7	14.3	21.2	11.1
<i>Other</i>	2.9	1.4	1.7	0	0	3.7
<i>Total % (n =)</i>	100 (70)	100 (74)	100 (60)	100 (33)	100 (27)	100 (285)

Comparatively high levels of involvement are apparent for respondents in Collaroy Plateau, Riverview and Strathfield. The fact that these three locations are less disadvantaged than the other three (based on SEIFA indexes for disadvantage) could be a factor. In a study of four Adelaide suburbs, residents of the suburb of “white collar families” had generally more organised patterns of life and took part in more formal social activities, including memberships of associations, than those from “middle- or working-class” suburbs (Martin 1967: p. 45). A study in the US also found that professionals were more likely than others to have voluntary group affiliations (Litwak 1960). Of course, the Adelaide and US studies were 40-50 years ago and society has changes a lot since then.

The presence of active associations or groups within or proximate to each survey location could, of course, influence membership levels. Chapter 7 hinted at there being a connection between perception of neighbourhood area and people’s involvement in formal groups in that neighbourhood boundaries embraced a similar proportion of groups (around 30%) irrespective of neighbourhood size. As a consequence, it was relevant to see if any major variations were evident in membership pattern for each of the six different locations from that described for the combined data set (refer to Table 9-11).

Table 9-11: Membership in formal groups by neighbourhood size and location

Size of neighbourhood	Location of memberships in formal groups %		
	Neighbourhood	Elsewhere	Total (n =)
Collaroy Plateau:			
<i>Smaller than 1 km²</i>	31.8	68.2	100 (22)
<i>1 – 2 km²</i>	41.7	58.3	100 (24)
<i>2 – 4 km²</i>	50.0	50.0	100 (8)
<i>4 – 8 km²</i>	33.3	66.7	100 (6)
<i>Larger than 8 km²</i>	30.0	70.0	100 (10)
Total responses	37.1	62.9	100 (70)
Riverview:			
<i>Smaller than 1 km²</i>	30.0	70.0	100 (20)
<i>1 – 2 km²</i>	23.5	76.5	100 (17)
<i>2 – 4 km²</i>	23.5	76.5	100 (17)
<i>4 – 8 km²</i>	30.8	69.2	100 (13)
<i>Larger than 8 km²</i>	28.6	71.4	100 (7)
Total responses	27.0	73.0	100 (74)
Strathfield			
<i>Smaller than 1 km²</i>	44.4	55.6	100 (9)
<i>1 – 2 km²</i>	11.1	88.9	100 (9)
<i>2 – 4 km²</i>	23.5	76.5	100 (17)
<i>4 – 8 km²</i>	27.3	72.7	100 (11)
<i>Larger than 8 km²</i>	14.3	85.7	100 (14)
Total responses	23.3	76.7	100 (60)
Roselands:			
<i>Smaller than 1 km²</i>	12.5	87.5	100 (8)
<i>1 – 2 km²</i>	16.7	83.3	100 (6)
<i>2 – 4 km²</i>	–	–	0
<i>4 – 8 km²</i>	14.3	85.7	100 (7)
<i>Larger than 8 km²</i>	–	–	0
Total responses	14.3	85.7	100 (21)
Kingsgrove:			
<i>Smaller than 1 km²</i>	11.1	88.9	100 (18)
<i>1 – 2 km²</i>	28.6	71.4	100 (7)
<i>2 – 4 km²</i>	–	–	0
<i>4 – 8 km²</i>	33.3	66.7	100 (3)
<i>Larger than 8 km²</i>	–	100.0	100 (5)
Total responses	15.2	84.8	100 (33)
Maroubra:			
<i>Smaller than 1 km²</i>	100.0	–	100 (1)
<i>1 – 2 km²</i>	60.0	40.0	100 (10)
<i>2 – 4 km²</i>	66.7	33.3	100 (3)
<i>4 – 8 km²</i>	66.7	33.3	100 (3)
<i>Larger than 8 km²</i>	20.0	80.0	100 (10)
Total responses	48.1	51.9	100 (27)

Results for Maroubra and, to a lesser extent, Strathfield appear to be at odds with the overall trend identified in Chapter 7 in that those with small neighbourhoods were more likely to have local affiliations whilst those with larger areas seem to travel even further than respondents from other locations to their formal groups. In other words, people in

these locations who had small areas are more likely to be influenced in their interactions in formal groups by propinquity whilst people with large areas apparently have more links with CWPs. However, there were comparatively low levels of membership for respondents from Maroubra and, therefore, results should be treated with caution. Lack of involvement in formal groups by many might be linked to Maroubra's mix of elderly long-term residents and younger short-term ones (both as tenants and as home owners). Types of membership in Maroubra were related more towards the pursuit of leisure than volunteering in organisations directed towards other people or work.

The single survey location with results that suggest there might be a relationship between size of neighbourhood and location of formal groups is Kingsgrove where people with larger areas have more neighbourhood memberships than those in smaller ones. However, the Kingsgrove results need to be interpreted with caution due to the small volume of data and because five respondents in this survey location could not define any area as neighbourhood. Participants from both Kingsgrove and Roselands had affiliations more so with organisations involved in the pursuit of leisure and personal beliefs than with other types. These locations had comparatively high levels of respondents who spoke languages other than English. Although languages spoken did not appear to exert a significant influence on types of organisations to which people belonged, this factor might camouflage some people's desires to seek community within organisations where familiar culture or language might co-exist under other guises.

Both Collaroy Plateau and Riverview results (and, to a degree, results for Roselands, although actual numbers of memberships are small) follow the trend identified in Chapter 7 which pointed to a link between neighbourhood boundaries and where formal group memberships were located. In addition, Collaroy Plateau and Riverview had comparatively greater memberships associated with helping other people than other locations. These results might be linked to the large proportion of female respondents from both locations (larger than the other four). In addition, Collaroy Plateau was noteworthy for family households (couples with children) and the number of people in part-time work (less than 20 hours). Riverview had the highest number of respondents not in the workforce (many as retirees).

These views on memberships on a locational basis present three quite different ways of interpreting results. Because a definite preference has been demonstrated for informal

connections rather than for interaction within formal groups, limited additional consideration should be given to these results.

Close friends and social contacts

Results discussed in Chapter 7 showed that when the distribution of respondents' close social ties was cross-tabulated against neighbourhood area, there was minimal variation in patterns of distribution, irrespective of size. The results indicated that around 20% of close friends and 25% of recent social contacts were located within neighbourhoods. About 59% of close friends and social contacts in other parts of metropolitan Sydney, irrespective of the size of the neighbourhood area.

When distribution of close friends and social contacts within different survey locations was investigated, there were anticipated variations in distribution patterns for each location, as shown in Tables 9-12 and 9-13, by comparison with the pattern for the composite data set. (Tests for statistical significance could not be performed because assumptions for Chi square could not be met.) In spite of this, differences in proportions of close social ties who lived within the same neighbourhood at the higher and lower ends of the spatial scales did not vary to such an extent as to suggest a different interpretation of results. This was best exemplified in Strathfield where respondents with the smallest size category of neighbourhood area (less than one km²) had 35.5% of close friends and 25.8% of social contacts living in neighbourhood areas by comparison with 37.5% of close friends and 25.0% of social contacts for those who identified with the largest sized areas (larger than eight km²).

However, the important feature of these inter-location results is the difference in the overall proportion of close social ties within neighbourhood areas *between* locations. For close friends, this varied from highs of 32.8% for close friends and 36.2% for social contacts in Collaroy Plateau to lows of 7.4% and 6.8% for close friends and social contacts respectively in Roselands.

Table 9-12: Distribution of close friends by neighbourhood size and location

Size of neighbourhood	Location of close friends %			Total (n =)
	Neighbourhood	Other Sydney	Elsewhere	
Collaroy Plateau:				
Smaller than 1 km ²	36.6	46.5	16.9	100 (71)
1 – 2 km ²	23.7	54.2	22.0	100 (59)
2 – 4 km ²	53.3	33.3	13.3	100 (15)
4 – 8 km ²	35.0	45.0	20.0	100 (20)
Larger than 8 km ²	30.0	50.0	20.0	100 (30)
Total responses	32.8	48.2	19.0	100 (195)
Riverview:				
Smaller than 1 km ²	32.1	50.9	17.0	100 (53)
1 – 2 km ²	13.7	58.9	27.4	100 (73)
2 – 4 km ²	13.8	53.8	32.3	100 (65)
4 – 8 km ²	–	80.0	20.0	100 (20)
Larger than 8 km ²	40.0	40.0	20.0	100 (5)
Total responses	17.6	56.9	25.5	100 (216)
Strathfield				
Smaller than 1 km ²	35.5	58.1	6.5	100 (31)
1 – 2 km ²	11.8	70.6	17.6	100 (17)
2 – 4 km ²	18.8	68.8	12.5	100 (48)
4 – 8 km ²	25.5	64.7	9.8	100 (51)
Larger than 8 km ²	37.5	54.2	8.3	100 (24)
Total responses	25.7	63.7	10.5	100 (171)
Roselands:				
Smaller than 1 km ²	3.3	83.3	13.3	100 (30)
1 – 2 km ²	15.0	55.0	30.0	100 (20)
2 – 4 km ²	–	20.0	80.0	100 (5)
4 – 8 km ²	9.5	57.1	33.3	100 (21)
Larger than 8 km ²	–	100.0	–	100 (5)
Total responses	7.4	66.7	25.9	100 (81)
Kingsgrove:				
Smaller than 1 km ²	9.2	58.5	32.3	100 (65)
1 – 2 km ²	20.5	71.8	7.7	100 (39)
2 – 4 km ²	60.0	40.0	–	100 (5)
4 – 8 km ²	10.0	80.0	10.0	100 (10)
Larger than 8 km ²	10.0	70.0	20.0	100 (10)
Total responses	14.7	64.3	20.9	100 (129)
Maroubra:				
Smaller than 1 km ²	12.8	69.2	17.9	100 (39)
1 – 2 km ²	25.0	53.6	21.4	100 (28)
2 – 4 km ²	11.8	58.8	29.4	100 (17)
4 – 8 km ²	26.7	53.3	20.0	100 (30)
Larger than 8 km ²	12.5	67.5	20.0	100 (40)
Total responses	17.5	61.7	20.8	100 (154)

Table 9-13: Distribution of social contacts by neighbourhood size and location

Size of neighbourhood	Location of social contacts %			Total (n =)
	Neighbourhood	Other Sydney	Elsewhere	
Collaroy Plateau:				
Smaller than 1 km ²	43.5	42.0	14.5	100 (69)
1 – 2 km ²	32.8	51.7	15.5	100 (58)
2 – 4 km ²	40.0	40.0	20.0	100 (15)
4 – 8 km ²	18.8	75.0	6.3	100 (16)
Larger than 8 km ²	33.3	50.0	16.7	100 (30)
Total responses	36.2	48.9	14.9	100 (188)
Riverview:				
Smaller than 1 km ²	39.2	51.0	9.8	100 (51)
1 – 2 km ²	23.3	65.8	11.0	100 (73)
2 – 4 km ²	28.1	56.1	15.8	100 (57)
4 – 8 km ²	10.0	70.0	20.0	100 (20)
Larger than 8 km ²	40.0	60.0	–	100 (5)
Total responses	27.7	59.7	12.6	100 (206)
Strathfield				
Smaller than 1 km ²	25.8	74.2	–	100 (31)
1 – 2 km ²	22.2	50.0	27.8	100 (18)
2 – 4 km ²	22.9	56.3	20.8	100 (48)
4 – 8 km ²	35.4	52.1	12.5	100 (48)
Larger than 8 km ²	25.0	58.3	16.7	100 (24)
Total responses	27.2	58.0	14.8	100 (169)
Roselands:				
Smaller than 1 km ²	13.3	80.0	6.7	100 (30)
1 – 2 km ²	–	80.0	20.0	100 (20)
2 – 4 km ²	–	80.0	20.0	100 (5)
4 – 8 km ²	–	64.3	35.7	100 (14)
Larger than 8 km ²	20.0	40.0	40.0	100 (5)
Total responses	6.8	74.3	18.9	100 (74)
Kingsgrove:				
Smaller than 1 km ²	11.7	68.3	20.0	100 (60)
1 – 2 km ²	8.8	85.3	5.9	100 (34)
2 – 4 km ²	66.7	33.3	–	100 (3)
4 – 8 km ²	30.0	60.0	10.0	100 (10)
Larger than 8 km ²	40.0	50.0	10.0	100 (10)
Total responses	16.2	70.1	13.7	100 (117)
Maroubra:				
Smaller than 1 km ²	10.8	75.7	13.5	100 (37)
1 – 2 km ²	34.6	46.2	19.2	100 (26)
2 – 4 km ²	23.5	70.6	5.9	100 (17)
4 – 8 km ²	39.1	52.2	8.7	100 (23)
Larger than 8 km ²	20.0	57.5	22.5	100 (40)
Total responses	23.8	60.8	15.4	100 (143)

Earlier results suggested that a number of profile characteristics influenced where close friends and social contacts lived. For example, it appeared that long-term residents and the elderly were among those who were more likely to have stronger neighbourhood connections. However, analyses by survey location present a different perspective

altogether. For example, the two survey locations where respondents had the lowest average number of years of residence, Collaroy Plateau and Strathfield (refer to Appendix 5), had the greatest number of close friends within their local areas. Collaroy Plateau respondents also had the lowest average age. Conversely, respondents in Roselands were ranked second behind Riverview for both average age and length of residence but Roselands residents apparently avoided having close friends or social contacts from their neighbourhoods. In contrast, people from Riverview exhibited a distinct preference for socialising with neighbours.

Results presented in Tables 9-12 and 9-13 point to Roselands and Kingsgrove as the two locations having lowest levels of close social ties within their neighbourhoods. These were the two most disadvantaged survey locations in that they had worse SEIFA indexes of disadvantage than the other four. The two locations with the best SEIFA scores (Riverview and Collaroy Plateau) seemingly had higher social contact levels with neighbours than others. Collaroy Plateau also had the most respondents with close friends in the same neighbourhood. Locational characteristics apparently override individual profile characteristics with respect to propensities to have close social ties with neighbours. It seems people in “communities of opportunity” (after Baum et al. 1999) are more likely to have neighbours as close friends and social contacts than those who live in survey locations which are in “vulnerable” or “marginal” suburbs.

This interpretation is further illustrated in Tables 9-14 and 9-15 which show tendencies for respondents in each location to nominate close friends and recent social contacts who lived in their neighbourhood areas. For example, with the exception of Roselands and Kingsgrove, the majority of people had had recent social contact with at least one neighbour. Additionally, more than one in four people from Collaroy Plateau chose to nominate neighbours as at least three of their maximum of five recent social contacts.

When profile characteristics identified in Chapter 7 as apparently influencing location of close friends and social contacts were cross-tabulated against survey location, the characteristics that Roselands and Kingsgrove respondent profiles had in common which, at the same time, distinguish them from the other locations (although not necessarily to a statistically significant degree) were education, number of hours worked, internet use at work and language spoken. In particular, there were greater proportions of respondents in these two locations than in the other four who did not have university degrees, who worked

at least 40 hours per week (although marginally more Strathfield respondents worked 40 hours or more than those from Roselands), whose job did not involve use of the internet and (after Strathfield) who spoke languages other than English. Because results presented earlier in this thesis pointed to the presence of some close friends and social contact as being important in neighbourhoods, this investigation of locational differences suggests a complex combination of these four elements in particular might be most influential with respect to neighbourhood connection.

Table 9-14: Number of close friends in neighbourhood by location

<i>Survey location</i>	<i>Number of close friends in neighbourhood %</i>				<i>Total (n =)</i>
	<i>Nil</i>	<i>One</i>	<i>Two</i>	<i>Three or more</i>	
<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	30.0	25.0	15.0	30.0	100 (40)
<i>Riverview</i>	55.6	22.2	13.3	8.9	100 (45)
<i>Strathfield</i>	52.5	17.5	10.0	20.0	100 (40)
<i>Roselands</i>	80.0	10.0	10.0	–	100 (20)
<i>Kingsgrove</i>	63.3	23.3	3.3	10.0	100 (30)
<i>Maroubra</i>	50.0	31.3	6.3	12.5	100 (32)
<i>Overall</i>	52.7	22.2	10.1	15.0	100 (207)

Table 9-15: Number of social contacts in neighbourhood by location

<i>Survey location</i>	<i>Number of social contacts in neighbourhood %</i>				<i>Total (n =)</i>
	<i>Nil</i>	<i>One</i>	<i>Two</i>	<i>Three or more</i>	
<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	27.5	25.0	20.0	27.5	100 (40)
<i>Riverview</i>	35.6	31.1	20.0	13.3	100 (45)
<i>Strathfield</i>	45.0	22.5	17.5	15.0	100 (40)
<i>Roselands</i>	85.0	5.0	10.0	–	100 (20)
<i>Kingsgrove</i>	63.3	16.7	10.0	10.0	100 (30)
<i>Maroubra</i>	40.6	28.1	18.8	12.5	100 (32)
<i>Overall</i>	45.4	23.2	16.9	14.5	100 (207)

Other selected locational differences for close friends, shown in Tables 9-16 and 9-18, and for social contacts (Tables 9-17 and 9-19), inform the following additional comments. In most survey locations, patterns observed followed those for the composite data set although stronger connections were apparent in some locations than others, as already illustrated. Comments are made with respect to apparent noteworthy digressions.

Table 9-16: Selected locational differences for close friends by location

Survey location	Average number of friends	Types of contact %				Located in neighbourhood %
		Face-to-face	Phone	Letters	Email	
<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	4.8	83.6	86.7	5.6	14.4	32.8
<i>Riverview</i>	4.8	75.5	82.9	4.2	23.1	17.6
<i>Strathfield</i>	4.3	88.4	83.1	0.6	14.5	25.7
<i>Roselands</i>	4.1	71.6	81.5	12.3	19.8	7.4
<i>Kingsgrove</i>	4.3	79.1	81.4	5.4	16.3	14.7
<i>Maroubra</i>	4.8	72.7	87	5.8	16.2	17.5
<i>Overall</i>	4.6	79.2	84.1	4.5	15.9	19.1

Table 9-17: Selected locational differences for social contacts by location

Survey location	Average number of contacts	Types of contact %				Located in neighbourhood %
		Face-to-face	Phone	Letters	Email	
<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	4.7	87.2	73.4	4.3	10.6	36.2
<i>Riverview</i>	4.7	85.4	65.5	2.4	18.4	27.7
<i>Strathfield</i>	4.3	83.5	74.7	0.6	10.6	27.2
<i>Roselands</i>	3.7	73.0	77.0	0.0	6.8	6.8
<i>Kingsgrove</i>	3.9	88.0	69.2	3.4	12.8	16.2
<i>Maroubra</i>	4.5	74.8	75.5	2.8	15.4	23.8
<i>Overall</i>	4.4	83.1	71.9	13.1	2.4	25.5

Table 9-18: Types of relationships with close friends by location

Survey location	Relationship %					Average number of years known
	Relative	Friend	Work colleague	Acquaintance	Very close %	
<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	31.3	63.1	5.1	0.5	68.2	20.8
<i>Riverview</i>	35.6	56.9	4.2	3.2	65.7	31.9
<i>Strathfield</i>	26.7	56.4	11.0	5.8	69.2	19.4
<i>Roselands</i>	50.6	37.0	12.3	0.0	71.6	24.6
<i>Kingsgrove</i>	43.4	48.1	7.0	1.6	70.5	24.3
<i>Maroubra</i>	40.9	51.9	7.1	0.0	62.5	26.4
<i>Overall</i>	36.3	54.4	7.2	2.1	67.5	24.8

Table 9-19: Types of relationships with social contacts by location

Survey location	Relationship %					Very close %	Average number of years known	Also close friend %
	Relative	Friend	Work colleague	Acquaintance				
<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	28.7	61.2	9.0	1.1	56.4	18.5	66.0	
<i>Riverview</i>	26.7	65.0	3.9	4.4	54.9	26.1	51.5	
<i>Strathfield</i>	30.0	51.8	11.2	6.5	52.7	17.5	54.7	
<i>Roselands</i>	51.4	40.5	8.1	0.0	63.5	22.8	45.9	
<i>Kingsgrove</i>	45.3	41.9	11.1	1.7	60.7	22.1	63.2	
<i>Maroubra</i>	38.5	47.6	8.4	5.6	57.7	22.7	71.3	
<i>Overall</i>	34.1	8.4	53.9	3.6	56.7	21.5	59.4	

Respondents from all locations recorded contact details for an average of at least four close friends. Particulars were provided for fewer social contacts than close friends in all locations, with Roselands and Kingsgrove participants averaging fewer than four social contacts. Respondents from the three survey locations with highest proportions of people who spoke languages other than English had, on average, lower numbers of friends and social contacts. (Overall, language did not present as being statistically significant in influencing the number of close friends or social contacts.) It could be expected of course that people from non-English speaking backgrounds might have disrupted life-long associations with relatives and friends with migration to Australia. Earlier results pointed to friendships and associations formed during early years as often being the basis for long-term close friendships.

Collaroy Plateau

Respondents from Collaroy Plateau had comparatively high levels of face-to-face meetings. This was possibly as a result of propinquity, with relatively high proportions of friends and social contacts living in the same neighbourhood area. Networking characteristics could in part be a function of more participants from this location being members of households of at least three people than occurred in any other location.

Whilst emailing was of little consequence overall, this method of communication was used least of all by participants from Collaroy Plateau for contact with close friends in spite of the fact that these respondents had higher levels of computer literacy and internet use than any other survey location. High incidences of face-to-face contact in this location possibly reduced the necessity of email communications for getting in touch.

By comparison with other locations, Collaroy Plateau respondents had the highest proportion of close relationships with friends (as opposed to, for example, kin or work colleagues) and a comparatively low component that were kin. Respondents from this location had the youngest average age. Having probably more recently left the family home in which they grew up, they might have been more interested in establishing or maintaining friendships with members of their generation, perhaps with other households with similar compositions. They had relatively more close friends who were also social contacts than persons in other locations.

Riverview

In most respects, respondents from Riverview tended to occupy the middle ground, particularly with respect to close friends, with an obvious exception concerning number of years, on average, over which relationships had been established. This factor is possibly a reflection of the more senior age of Riverview participants. (Average age of 58.6 years was higher than for any other location.) They had relatively fewer close friends among their social contacts by comparison with respondents in other locations, possibly associated with the high proportion of close friends who lived away from the metropolitan area (higher than elsewhere). They used the telephone to keep in touch with social contacts less than respondents in other locations and maintained contact with both close friends and social contacts using email more than elsewhere, possibly also a factor of higher SEIFA scores and the geographical dispersal of close friends.

Riverview respondents had the highest proportion of recent social contacts who were friends and the lowest proportion who were relatives, quite likely associated with the nomination of kin who lived away from Sydney as close friends and the efficacy of propinquity for social contact.

Strathfield

Respondents from Strathfield had a high proportion of face-to-face meetings with close friends. One in four of their close friends lived within the same neighbourhood area, suggesting propinquity encouraged visits.

Strathfield participants had fewer relatives who were close friends than in any other location, perhaps due to more being immigrants (results indicated that over half the respondents were born in other countries). Work colleagues were more likely to be nominated as both close friends and social contacts than in most other locations. They were less likely to have very close relationships with social contacts than respondents from any other location. This could be associated with the fact that they had known both close friends and social contacts for fewer years on average than participants from other locations, possibly also a feature of friendships formed earlier in life having been terminated as a result of migration.

Roselands

Roselands respondents recorded the lowest average number of both close friends and social contacts. They also had the lowest number who also lived within the same neighbourhood areas (less than 10% in both cases).

Whilst close friendships in the combined data set were 50% more likely to be formed with friends than kin, the reverse of this pattern applied in this location. Instead, Roselands respondents were 40% more likely to have provided particulars about relatives than close friends. Kin were also more strongly represented than friends as social contacts albeit to a lesser extent than for close friends. Perhaps for this reason, Roselands relationships with both friends and social contacts were described as “very close”, more so here than for participants from other locations. In addition, although work colleagues did not figure prominently overall as close friends, a slightly higher proportion of Roselands respondents, by comparison to respondents from other locations, had work colleagues as close friends. However, work colleagues figured less prominently as social contacts. There was less repetition of social contacts having also been nominated as close friends within Roselands than elsewhere.

Roselands respondents had slightly lower proportions of face-to-face meetings with both close friends and social contacts than respondents in other locations. Interestingly, emailing close friends figured more prominently here, although this form of communication was not so prevalent for social contacts. Roselands had only 40% of participants who had been Australian born. This might be one reason for use of the internet to keep in touch, particularly with so many nominated close friends living away from Sydney, perhaps in another country. Roselands participants also used the telephone to keep in touch with social contacts more than those in any other location.

Kingsgrove

Information about close friends of Kingsgrove respondents tended to parallel that provided in respect of Roselands but generally to a less pronounced extent. Perhaps the most noteworthy factor in respect of this location was that respondents recorded the highest level of face-to-face meetings with social contacts, albeit by a small margin, in spite of the fact that relatively few lived within the same neighbourhood areas.

Maroubra

Although Maroubra respondents had, on average, larger neighbourhood areas than other locations, they did not have more close friends and social contacts located within them (as might have been anticipated). In fact, they had below-average proportions of nominated friends and contacts living within the same neighbourhoods. That many lived away from respondent home patches, mostly in other parts of Sydney, could be one reason for comparatively low incidences of face-to-face meetings by Maroubra participants.

In many respects, particulars provided about friends and social contacts produced outcomes that occupied the middle ground (and thus similar to Strathfield) but with different interpretations apparently applicable (based on respondent profiles). The lower average age of Maroubra respondents (more respondents were less than 40 years of age than in any other survey location), combined with the high average number of years that they had known both close friends and social contacts, suggest that many of the recent residents to Maroubra still maintained close relationships and social contact with friends or relatives of long-standing. At the same time, they had comparatively few very close relationships with friends compared with respondents in other locations. More than in any other location, close friends were also nominated as social contacts.

Overview of social networks

With respect to social networking and close social ties, similarities exist between Collaroy Plateau and Riverview and, to a lesser extent, Strathfield. These locations had relatively high levels of neighbourly interaction and memberships in formal groups. In addition, friendships and social contacts were less dependent on kinship ties than in other locations.

Face-to-face meetings with social contacts were a feature of Kingsgrove respondents. In other respects, Kingsgrove could be likened to Roselands, albeit with less pronounced characteristics. Roselands had the lowest numbers of close friends and social contacts, and respondents from there were relatively more dependent on kin as both friends and social contacts (although not predominantly so in respect of actual numbers). This supports results from earlier studies that indicated people from suburbs disadvantaged in terms of socio-economic status have more contacts with kin than friends (Martin 1967).

Maroubra respondents demonstrated relatively fewer social networking characteristics overall by having lesser inclinations to interact with neighbours than people from other

locations, low levels of affiliations with formal groups, low face-to-face meetings, and comparatively high out-of-area associations (these also tended to be less close). After Roselands and Kingsgrove, Maroubra respondents were more likely to have relatives as close friends. Friends were also more likely to be social contacts.

The results point to Riverview and Collaroy Plateau respondents having spatially dispersed social networks. At the same time, they had high levels of social interaction within neighbourhood areas, thereby both supporting and contradicting Webber's concepts relating to CWP. Strathfield also had relatively high numbers of friends, social contacts and neighbourhood connections. Conversely, Roselands and Kingsgrove participants had low inclinations overall to be involved in various aspects of social networking and low levels of contacts within neighbourhood areas. Their connections external to the neighbourhood appear to be related to kinship ties. A variety of characteristics displayed by respondents from Maroubra also show reduced levels of interaction, particularly with respect to memberships in formal groups, by comparison with apparently more sociable participants in some other locations.

9.4 Belonging to neighbourhood

Differences in the extent to which people felt that they belonged to neighbourhood areas were discussed in Chapter 8. Locational differences are addressed under the same three sub-headings used to analyse and discuss overall results:

- Neighbourhood satisfaction and safety
- Social capacities and civic qualities
- Salience of issues

Some of the patterns that emerged in this exploration of locational differences for belonging cannot be explained. Therefore, the following discussion involves some speculation in the sense of suggesting possible reasons for relationships, implicitly promoting topics for further research.

Neighbourhood satisfaction and safety

Overall results pointed to respondents generally experiencing high levels of satisfaction with, and safety in, the neighbourhoods in which they lived. However, when results are analysed on a locational basis, quite striking disparities exist. Responses for selected results for each location are shown in Table 9-20.

Table 9-20: Selected responses for satisfaction and safety by location

<i>Criteria for satisfaction and safety</i>	<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	<i>River-view</i>	<i>Strath-field</i>	<i>Rose-lands</i>	<i>Kings-grove</i>	<i>Maroubra</i>
	<i>Survey location responses %</i>					
<i>Very or somewhat satisfied with neighbourhood</i>	97.5	90.9	95.0	60.0	85.7	90.6
<i>Always or mostly feel safe walking in street after dark</i>	82.5	97.7	76.9	40.0	73.3	78.1
<i>Think neighbourhood is very or mostly safe</i>	100.0	97.8	90.0	60.0	86.7	96.9
	<i>Survey location Z-score totals</i>					
<i>Combined result (Z-scores)</i>	1.97	2.14	0.82	-5.69	-0.27	1.03
	<i>Survey location average age in years</i>					
<i>Average age of respondents</i>	45.7	58.6	50.2	54.2	52.8	47.4

Results for Roselands appear to be at odds with all other survey locations, with respondents from Roselands indicating that they were considerably less satisfied with, and also feeling less safe within, their neighbourhood areas. For example, only 40.0% felt safe walking in neighbourhood streets after dark. Because gender apparently had a significant influence on perceptions of safety (refer to Chapter 8), it could be argued that Roselands results were influenced by a majority of female respondents in this location (55.0% were females). However, even larger female majority representations were apparent in Collaroy Plateau (77.5%), Riverview (64.4%) and Maroubra (56.3%), all of which presented positive Z-scores for questions about perceived levels of safety. Furthermore, only 60.0% of participants from Roselands thought their neighbourhood had a reputation as a “very” or “mostly” safe place to live, compared with 91.3% of all respondents thinking their neighbourhood was safe (refer to Chapter 8).

Whilst there was not a statistically significant difference apparent for perceived levels of safety when composite results were cross-tabulated against age of respondents, exploration of locational differences suggests that this profile characteristic could be relevant.

Respondents of Kingsgrove, Strathfield, Maroubra and Collaroy Plateau (in descending

order of average age of respondents) had diminishing perceptions of safety with age (refer to Table 9-20). The contrasting results of the two locations with the greatest average ages – Riverview (highest safety perceptions) and Roselands (lowest safety perceptions) – might mask the relevance of age for perceived levels of overall safety. Additionally, income was a factor suggested in Chapter 8 as influential in perceptions about safety and neighbourhood reputation. This inter-location comparison supports this contention, reflecting the relative situations in Riverview and Roselands, locations which represent the opposite poles on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage for the six survey locations.

Social capacities and civic qualities

Analysis of social capacities and civic qualities in the combined data set left no clear indication of the extent to which these factors existed. Selected results from each location are set out in Table 9-21. A similar pattern emerges as in the previous section, with Riverview having the highest positive result, followed by Collaroy Plateau, and Roselands at the low end of total Z-scores for all criteria, well behind Kingsgrove with the second lowest score.

Table 9-21: Selected responses for social capacities and civic qualities by location

<i>Criteria for social capacities and civic qualities</i>	<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	<i>River-view</i>	<i>Strath-field</i>	<i>Rose-lands</i>	<i>Kings-grove</i>	<i>Maroubra</i>
	<i>Survey location responses %</i>					
<i>Generally trust neighbours %</i>	97.5	95.6	85.0	55.0	70.0	68.8
<i>Often or occasionally greet familiar faces %</i>	94.9	91.1	95.0	85.0	93.3	93.8
<i>Neighbour usually or sometimes collects mail %</i>	84.6	88.9	75.0	65.0	63.3	65.6
<i>Usually or sometimes leave key with neighbour %</i>	42.5	55.6	38.5	15.0	30.0	50.0
<i>Different/new neighbour would be accepted %</i>	87.5	84.4	84.6	55.0	60.0	93.8
<i>Participated in civic affairs %</i>	30.0	66.7	40.0	25.0	30.0	12.5
<i>Volunteered unpaid help %</i>	62.5	60.0	50.0	25.0	56.7	31.3
<i>Assessment of neighbours (mean rating):</i>						
<i>Generally motivated by self interest %</i>	40.0	40.9	52.5	60.0	40.0	40.6
<i>Generally prepared to volunteer help %</i>	55.0	52.3	40.0	15.0	30.0	34.4
	<i>Survey location Z-score totals</i>					
<i>Combined result (Z-scores)</i>	6.27	7.80	1.50	-12.26	-2.36	-0.95

Examination of locational differences provides some insights but not necessarily further clarification of influencing characteristics. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence gathered in survey instruments and personal observations made during the survey period offer some different perspectives. For example, analysis of results in Chapter 8 pointed to profile characteristics such as long years of residence, seniority in age and relatively high levels of socio-economic status generally contributing to more positive outlooks. Alternatively, those from non-English speaking backgrounds, people not in the workforce (excluding retirees), persons without any form of tertiary education, and tenants, seemed to be less connected with their neighbourhood areas than others. These comments require further elaboration.

Longer periods of residence within neighbourhood areas were shown to have a notable positive influence on some aspects of trust and trustworthiness. However, conflicting results are presented on a locational basis. Whilst Riverview respondents had the highest average number of years of residence and generally exhibited high levels of trust, the two locations ranked second and third for average length of residence of respondents, Roselands and Kingsgrove, were less inclined than all others to trust neighbours.

Maroubra participants also presented some inconsistent results. They were most likely (after Riverview participants) to leave house keys with neighbours, a function regarded as demanding considerably high levels of trust. Conversely, they were less likely than Kingsgrove respondents to think that their neighbours could be trusted and were comparatively reluctant to ask neighbours to collect mail.

The indicator used to gauge tolerance (tendency for new and different neighbours to be accepted) also presented some conflicting outcomes. Results from consolidated data pointed to household size as influential, with persons from small households (one or two persons) and also large households (at least five members) less inclined to think different people would be accepted. In addition, tenants were less sure about acceptance than homeowners. However, participants from Roselands and Kingsgrove were relatively less inclined to think that new and different neighbours would be accepted. These two locations had different configurations of household sizes. In addition, their levels of home ownership were marginally higher than for Maroubra, the location where participants were most likely to think positively about neighbourhood tolerance. Whilst this suggests some other elements were more influential, the consolidated results do not point to any other

profile characteristics meriting investigation. Roselands and Kingsgrove had comparatively high levels of ethnic mix within their CD populations but so also did Strathfield. The fact that Roselands and Kingsgrove had the two lowest scores in the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage (meaning they were the two most disadvantaged locations) is most likely relevant. Also prominent among other factors not assessable here might be the local sub-culture that could characterise a place (perhaps leading to pressure to conform to neighbourhood norms or alienation).

Respondents from Riverview were more likely than others to have recently (within the preceding 12 months) participated in civic affairs. It could be argued that this was in part because recent issues generating controversy and community action had motivated people to be involved (for example, changes to bus routes, redevelopment of local shopping facilities and parking). However, this also applied within the Maroubra locality, which had conspicuous and contested examples of controversial medium density redevelopments. Results for Maroubra suggested very low levels of civic participation (refer to Table 9-21). The difference may relate to factors such as time availability, levels of commitment to community, and empowerment. Retirees who are long-term residents and those with high levels of socio-economic status (such as is apparently the respondent profile in Riverview) might be spurred into action more so than non-homeowners and younger gentrifying people or short-term residents as seems to be the case in Maroubra.

Support for this view is provided by results that point to Maroubra respondents also being less likely to have recently participated in voluntary unpaid help (second only to participants from Roselands). Collaroy Plateau respondents were most likely to have volunteered help, in spite of average years of residence being comparatively short and average age low in this survey location, two characteristics that were identified as being significant when the combined results were analysed.

Overall results for the measurements of altruism and reciprocity presented in Chapter 8 appeared contradictory to some extent. It seemed there was a general lack of involvement in, or awareness of, local concerns and activities but, at the same time, there was the suggestion that people would be willing to contribute in positive ways if asked or made aware of need. Whilst respondents in two locations (Collaroy Plateau and Riverview) appeared to reflect this view, in the other four locations, a minority of respondents thought people would be prepared to volunteer help for a community project.

It seems that interpretation of inter-location results for altruism and reciprocity adequately summarise the complex topic of social capacities and civic qualities in that there is generally low worth for such capacities and qualities in most metropolitan areas, although more advantaged areas possibly have comparatively higher values than those that are disadvantaged.

Salience of issues

Within the survey instrument, participants had been asked to nominate levels of importance to them of eight issues for advancing a sense of belonging to a place, with “place” not necessarily being the neighbourhood in which they currently lived. Responses were scored according to importance, mean scores calculated, and rankings allocated (detailed in Chapter 8). The eight characteristics together with resulting scores and rankings are repeated in Table 9-22.

Table 9-22: Relative weightings for importance of indicators for belonging

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Belonging indicator</i>	<i>Score *</i>
1	<i>Family</i>	2.645
2	<i>Local shops, facilities and services</i>	2.345
3	<i>Friends</i>	2.313
4	<i>Good neighbours</i>	2.296
5	<i>Local physical environment</i>	2.197
6	<i>Knowing and mixing with local people</i>	1.864
7	<i>Location of work or main interest</i>	1.646
8	<i>Local clubs or groups</i>	1.258

* See Chapter 8 for details of calculation of scores

Similar calculations were performed on data for each survey location, providing inter-location interpretations of the importance of the eight different indicators. These are summarised in Table 9-23. Relative weightings shown for each location have a possible value range of three down to zero. A high score indicated a greater level of importance than a low score. A score of two or greater means the indicator was between “very” and “somewhat important” overall. Where the score was less than two, the characteristic was relatively unimportant.

Table 9-23: Weightings for indicators of belonging by location

<i>Belonging indicator</i>	<i>Survey location response scores</i>					
	<i>Collaroy Plateau</i>	<i>River-view</i>	<i>Strath-field</i>	<i>Rose-lands</i>	<i>Kings-grove</i>	<i>Maroubra</i>
<i>Family</i>	2.625	2.511	2.675	2.600	2.786	2.733
<i>Local shops and facilities</i>	2.400	2.267	2.316	2.556	2.286	2.355
<i>Friends</i>	2.400	2.400	2.289	1.944	2.296	2.333
<i>Good neighbours</i>	2.400	2.222	2.289	2.500	2.321	2.133
<i>Local physical environment</i>	2.325	2.267	2.342	2.000	1.963	2.067
<i>Knowing/mixing with locals</i>	2.000	1.867	1.947	1.889	1.704	1.700
<i>Location of work/main interest</i>	1.875	1.067	1.789	1.556	1.741	2.000
<i>Location of formal groups</i>	1.625	1.067	1.211	1.222	1.037	1.333

“Family” was the most important characteristic in all survey locations, supporting an earlier study of class differences in Adelaide that showed a great deal of kin solidarity and inter-dependence at all class levels (Martin 1967). Within this current study, it was rated highest relative to other locations in Kingsgrove (with a weighting of 2.786) and lowest in Riverview (2.511). This accords with earlier results in this thesis that pointed to respondents from Kingsgrove having more close friends who were kin, and Riverview having fewer, than the overall norm for these research results. Therefore, in this respect, the results suggest that there could be a degree of balance between personal experiences and the relative importance of family for impacting in a positive sense upon wellbeing. Having regard for the apparent perception recognised earlier in this chapter for people in Kingsgrove to also have a strong preference for face-to-face meetings for keeping in touch, this might not be the case if kin were geographically dispersed to an extent that inhibited regular visits.

With family ranked so highly in Kingsgrove, “friends” did not assume the same level of importance here, indicated by the second lowest weighting for this indicator (2.296) by comparison with other locations. However, this score was not as low as for Roselands (1.944) where friends were generally regarded as unimportant. As was apparent earlier in this chapter, people in Roselands had fewer close friends and social contacts within their neighbourhood areas than people from any other location. This suggests that an apparent deficiency in neighbours as close friends might not impact in a negative sense as much upon the wellbeing of respondents in Roselands as might be expected if this were the situation in other survey locations.

By comparison with other locations, friends were relatively important for a sense of belonging in Collaroy Plateau and Riverview (both locations had weightings of 2.4 for

friends). Collaroy Plateau respondents had indicated more close friends and social contacts as neighbours than those from other locations. This factor possibly also contributed to respondents from this location, indicating that knowing and mixing with locals was important to them (weighting of 2.0). This issue was unimportant in all other locations.

Good neighbours are seemingly considered important for a sense of belonging to place in all locations. Other inter-locational results examined in this chapter, particularly with respect to the location of close friends and social contacts, as well as opinions on social capacities and civic qualities, point to respondents from Roselands and Kingsgrove having reduced levels of favourable experiences with their neighbours by comparison with the norm for all survey locations. For example, levels of trust, tolerance and perceptions about the preparedness of neighbours to help others were low in these two locations. This suggests negative impacts upon wellbeing for people living there. Further support for this view was offered by written comments in survey booklets. For example, one respondent from Kingsgrove who had rated good neighbours as very important added: “[b]ut don’t have them”. Conversely, people living in Riverview and Collaroy Plateau in particular apparently enjoy generally good relationships with neighbours, presumably enhancing wellbeing and place attachment.

Local shops and facilities were seemingly important to respondents from all survey locations. Few people indicated that they had any level of difficulty accessing the types of facilities and services normally used by them, pointing to expectations generally being satisfied in this respect. An exception would be for some who did not own motor vehicles, who acknowledged some difficulty with accessibility (as discussed in Chapter 6).

Shops and facilities were of greater importance to respondents from Roselands, Collaroy Plateau and Maroubra than for others (refer to Table 9-23). Results from this research discussed in Chapter 6 pointed to availability of only some types of shops and facilities as being important in neighbourhoods. For example, the only services that seemed to be important were the corner shop (or its equivalent), schools for children and local government services such as the library or post office. Additionally, pursuance of recreational and sporting activities and hobbies were linked to a degree with neighbourhoods. However, for respondents from Maroubra in particular but also from Roselands, some other types of facilities were also more frequently used in their

neighbourhood areas than others (refer to Table 9-3). This suggests that, in these survey locations, greater levels of importance were ascribed to local shops and facilities, an interpretation that is validated by responses to issues that are important for a sense of belonging.

The results point to the local physical environment being relatively more important for people from locations with higher SEIFA indexes than for those at the lower end of the SEIFA index range. For example, it was important in Collaroy Plateau, Riverview and Strathfield but unimportant in Kingsgrove and a borderline issue in Roselands. Not unexpectedly, higher levels of overall residential amenity appeared to exist in the survey locations with higher SEIFA indexes (as described in Chapter 4). With higher levels of advantage and, presumably, a number of other more basic needs such as those relating to safety having been met, it might be that the environment assumes for these residents a greater level of importance than for those from Kingsgrove and Roselands. An additional consideration is that variations in levels of importance accorded to the physical environment might also be linked to cultural differences.

According to interpretation of results presented in Chapter 6, recreational and sporting activities and hobbies can be important components of neighbourhood life (refer also to Table 9-22). Venues for recreation (including activities such as picnics) and sport can often be associated with the local physical environment through the presence of, for example, parks, nature reserves, walking and cycle paths, playing fields and neighbourhood streets suitable for jogging or other forms of exercise. However, as suggested earlier in this chapter, these facilities were seemingly not important for respondents from Kingsgrove or Roselands (see Table 9-3). For this reason, a sense of belonging to the place where they currently live might not be as adversely affected with respect to perceived “shortcomings” within the local physical environment for the people in Roselands and Kingsgrove, as might be envisaged by persons for whom this issue was important.

The only other issue warranting comment (due to a weighting of 2.0) is the importance of the location of work or mainstream pursuit for respondents from Maroubra. Locational differences with respect to where people travelled for work (refer to Table 9-2) indicated that people from Maroubra were more likely than those from other locations to work within their identified neighbourhood areas. Therefore, with respect to this indicator, it

seems that location of workplace within their neighbourhood areas could impact favourably upon wellbeing. Conversely, a greater proportion of respondents from Maroubra than from any other location except Collaroy Plateau travelled at least ten kilometres for mainstream pursuits (this also includes work). This could impact in a negative sense upon wellbeing for residents of Maroubra.

This section has compared differing viewpoints between respondents from the six survey locations about what they considered salient issues for engendering a sense of belonging to a place. During this process, differing types of responses that have been discussed elsewhere in this chapter for each survey location were also referenced. This has permitted comments about impacts on wellbeing to be offered.

It appears that opinions expressed through response options to questions about other aspects of neighbourhood examined in this thesis (identity with and perception of area, the relevance of neighbourhood interaction and local social networks, safety, social capacities and civic qualities) generally either reflect viewpoints about the relative importance of belonging issues or, alternatively, these views have been adjusted to compensate for the realities of living in each different location. As a consequence, the impact of some factors that might, at the outset, appear to affect wellbeing in a clearly negative sense might be diminished. For example, Roselands respondents seemingly have few close friends within their local areas by comparison to people in other locations. However, examination of salient issues for belonging points to friends being generally unimportant for these respondents.

There does, however, seem to be one obvious example of conflict between what people say is important for a sense of belonging and what is experienced. This is with respect to the importance of good neighbours. It appears people in all locations view good neighbours as an important element for belonging and place attachment. The results also clearly point to people in some locations, namely Roselands and Kingsgrove, having substantially negative views about their neighbours.

Examples of differing opinions about what is important for belonging that apparently mitigate potentially negative impacts upon wellbeing have been provided within this section. Whether these views do, in fact, reflect reality, thus demonstrating the inherent resilience of humans to adapt and “make the best of one’s lot”, or whether they camouflage

other sentiments altogether that, when investigated, would reveal negative impacts upon wellbeing according to the perceived norms of society, might be the topic for future research.

Overview of belonging issues

Locational differences for belonging to neighbourhood have been explored through examination of neighbourhood satisfaction and safety, social capacities and civic qualities, salience of issues and impacts on wellbeing. As a result of this process, some distinct patterns emerged pointing to higher tendencies towards belonging in some locations than others.

Specifically, Collaroy Plateau and Riverview exhibited consistently positive signs of general levels of wellbeing through belonging and place attachment whilst Roselands had low levels of affinity. Kingsgrove also had relatively low levels although not to the same extent as Roselands. Strathfield and Maroubra did not exhibit distinctive signs in either positive or negative respects. Both these locations have more recently undergone, and are continuing to undergo, considerable changes in population mix and types of development, seemingly to a greater extent than the other survey locations. Possibly for these reasons, the messages are quite mixed, with results pointing to established members of the population and more recent arrivals apparently having differing responses to neighbourhood issues and belonging. A greater proportion of participants from Strathfield, by comparison with respondents from any other survey location, spoke languages in addition to English when at home. Perhaps mixes in ethnic origins might provide conflicting views about aspects of belonging in this location as well as in Roselands and Kingsgrove.

Conclusion

The six survey locations were chosen to represent different socio-economic, cultural and demographic configurations for place-based communities within well-established suburbs of the Sydney metropolitan area. Therefore, it is not surprising that different responses by location with respect to belonging to neighbourhood are readily discernible. In those less disadvantaged locations (indicated by higher SEIFA Indexes of Disadvantage), such as Collaroy Plateau and Riverview, the results point to stronger tendencies for participants to identify with neighbourhood and belong to neighbourhood than for the other locations. In

addition, social networking with neighbours by respondents from these locations was more active than in some other locations. These positive attributes were generally also apparent within Strathfield. In Maroubra, categorisation was more difficult, perhaps due in part to this being an area in transition with respect to both population mobility and residential development. Kingsgrove and Roselands were, based on SEIFA indexes, the two most disadvantaged locations surveyed. Results for both locations seemingly show that there was less inclination for identification with neighbourhood areas or for having a sense of belonging to them.

Other factors examined for locational differences suggest varying distinctions. Respondents from the more disadvantaged localities were more dependent on family members for social networking. This appeared to be most applicable within Roselands and Kingsgrove, but also in Maroubra, where kinship ties played comparatively more important roles in social networking. Respondents from Kingsgrove had high levels of face-to-face and telephone contacts with kin, possibly reinforcing in this location the importance of the indicator “family” for a sense of belonging.

It seems relevant at this point to revisit response rates to the survey within each location that were initially provided in Chapter 3 (Table 3-5). When number of completed survey booklets was assessed as a percentage of eligible dwellings in the sample for each location, it became apparent that higher response rates were achieved in Riverview (51.7%) and Collaroy Plateau (40.8%) by comparison with Roselands (23.3%). Strathfield, Kingsgrove and Maroubra had similar response rates to each other (38.5%, 34.9% and 34.0% respectively). The relative positioning of response rates for the different survey locations also appears to be indicative of differing levels of connectivity with neighbourhoods. The desire to share information about place-based communities through a research project such as this could appear less intimidating for those who have positive viewpoints about their neighbourhood than for people who are unhappy, who are dissatisfied, who feel that they do not belong or who think that they have nothing to contribute.

This chapter has provided some interesting insights into locational differences. It has also suggested topics for further research. In the next chapter, attention is refocused on the composite picture. This final chapter consolidates material presented in the preceding six chapters and discusses the results in the context of the research topic being explored.

CHAPTER 10: RESULTS IN CONTEXT AND CONCLUSION

This research project has been concerned with a conceptual reworking of the CWP hypothesis so that the applicability of the concept could be assessed in the context of contemporary Australia. Key objectives were:

1. To examine levels of identification with local neighbourhood areas by urban residents
2. To investigate the extent to which types and intensity of activities are concentrated within neighbourhood areas by comparison with elsewhere
3. To explore levels of interaction in communities with propinquity (neighbourhood areas) and without propinquity with respect to formal and informal associations
4. To identify salient issues for a sense of belonging to place and impacts on wellbeing through neighbourhood experiences and activities

A number of factors justified an assessment of Webber's hypothesis at this time. The gathering and examination of empirical data from fieldwork makes a major contribution to the much-neglected subject of understanding how Australians connect with and participate within communities. As was mentioned earlier in this thesis, there is a desperate need for descriptive information about community life that is both verifiable and repeatable. The results are pertinent to any discussion aimed at formulating policy that impacts at the local level, not only by governments but also by organisations concerned with providing essential or discretionary community services and facilities.

Contemporary Australian society was represented in this thesis by six socially, culturally, economically and geographically separate locations within suburbs of Australia's largest city. A composite picture of the complex nature of social life in localities at the upper, middle and lower ends of the socio-economic scale was realised. As a result, the research cannot be accused of either "studying down" or "studying up", criticisms often directed not only at Australian projects but also at earlier ones conducted in North America and the UK (Bryson & Winter 1999; Nader 1974).

Impacts of economic change over recent years have fallen unevenly on different areas of Australian cities. This reinforces the value of a multiple-locality approach to the research rather than taking a particular community, suburb or locality as a microcosm of social life. Each survey location was within a suburb of long standing. This meant that social isolation or lack of established shops, facilities, services and other infrastructure, due to insufficient time for resource allocation and development, were not issues to be considered, as was the case in some Australian studies, like that of “Newtown” in 1966 (Bryson & Winter 1999). The bulk of Australia’s city-based population lives in suburban neighbourhoods rather than urban high-density areas or in comparatively low-density suburban expansion areas located on the metropolitan fringes, arguably making suburban studies such as this a priority. However, it must be remembered that the sample is not necessarily representative of the population at large because localities with very high concentrations of some demographic characteristics were avoided. Also, non-participation and non-response rates may have skewed the sample. These limitations need to be considered in any interpretation of, and speculation about, the findings.

This thesis stands out as pioneering among studies investigating community interactions within a contemporary Australian urban context. It has been extensive in terms of the geographic, socio-economic and demographic range of suburban communities studied and in the breadth of issues examined. It has been intensive with respect to details of daily life and the volume of data analysed. There were 18 independent variables describing respondent profile characteristics and 257 dependent variables, making a total of 4,626 possible cross-tabulations even before associated inter-relationships between data were explored. These could conceivably be repeated for each of the six study locations in addition to the consolidated data set, making 32,382 cross-tabulations in all. Clearly, it was impossible to cover all of these as well as the descriptive information available from 1,409 days of trip and social contact diaries. The thesis has therefore concentrated on those aspects most pertinent to the study topic.

10.1 Results in context

Differing levels of individual mobility, of household composition and of area affluence emerged as apparently important elements affecting activities and associations. Within this section, material from earlier chapters is drawn together, looking firstly at issues affecting mobility and its potential impact on community composition. Additionally, information

concerning some profile characteristics that have continually surfaced during earlier discussions is consolidated. In particular, the gendered nature of households and implications for single people and for those who work long hours are summarised. This is followed by a précis of the extent to which the research points to people being actively involved in different types of CWPs. Finally, responses to each of the project's key objectives are provided. Having placed results in context, the penultimate section to concluding comments summarises research findings, considers implications for policy and planning and presents ideas for future research.

Mobility

Mobility occurs over time as residents relocate into and out of neighbourhood areas and also on a more frequent basis through travel to work, shops, services, social and leisure activities. "Mobility" also exists in a non-spatial sense with respect to where and how people are contacted, facilitated in more recent times by the internet, mobile phones and text messaging. These forms of mobility almost inevitably reduce the intensity of interaction with others who live in the same locality (Bryson & Winter 1999). How population mobility, transport and communications influenced results are considered in turn.

Population mobility

The capacity for length of residence to impact on attitudes and activities relating to neighbourhood living has long been identified as affecting the extent to which people connect with the places where they live. This research provides specific examples of how short-term residents are significantly less likely to relate to their neighbourhood areas. For instance, nearly half of the adult population which had lived in an area for less than five years apparently do not consider their current place of living as "home". The results point to identification levels increasing significantly after five years, apparently influenced by greater levels of acquaintance with neighbours and stronger inclinations to trust them.

Residents of less than ten years generally keep in touch with close friends by phone more so than face-to-face (although meeting others is still important), whereas longer-term residents meet face-to-face with others to the same extent, if not more so, than they have contact by phone. It seems that lower levels of face-to-face meetings for shorter-term residents by comparison with others might be a function of fewer social contacts within the

neighbourhood. The results also point to associations with others through memberships in formal groups being lower for people with less than ten years of residence.

Australia is a highly mobile society. Between 1996 and 2001, 6.8 million people, or 42% of the population, changed their place of residence (ABS 2003a). This level of population mobility appears to be one factor working against neighbourhood cohesion. Connecting with others who live in the same area must become increasingly difficult when such a large proportion of the population is on the move.

Transport

Adults without motor vehicles were under-represented in the survey compared with those who owned or had access to cars. It seems this was because elderly single people are among those adults who were more likely than others to be without access to cars and many of these chose not to participate in the survey. The results point to the majority without cars having very small neighbourhood areas (less than one km²). In addition, members of this group apparently have high levels of indecision about future relocation prospects. They recognise that local facilities, shops and services are very important to them for a sense of belonging and some currently experience difficulties accessing facilities, with ramifications for their wellbeing. They are apparently less likely than others to have trips away from the home or to perform some types of “normal” activities (for example, purchase meals prepared away from the home) or have recreational or sporting activities or hobbies.

Whilst people without cars seemingly use the phone to a greater extent than others, they apparently prefer face-to-face meetings with their close friends. However, those surveyed were less likely than others to have people visit them at home or to meet with social contacts. They have lower contact levels with people who live away from Sydney than others, suggesting more limited social networks overall. Good neighbours are acknowledged by them as being very important for enhancing their sense of belonging and quality of life, to a significantly greater extent than for people who own cars. The relevance of good neighbours is possibly emphasised not only because of difficulties accessing some shops and facilities but also owing to their comparatively limited levels of face-to-face contact with other people.

Communications

“Communications” refers to people’s ability to get in touch with kin, friends and social contacts using a range of methods, including face-to-face meetings, phones and the internet. Results confirmed that postal letters have generally been superseded as a method of keeping in touch.

Whilst most of those who are computer literate apparently use the internet either at work or at home, this contact method for keeping in touch with others socially is generally bypassed. People preferred email as a method of contact with only about 16% of close friends and it was even less likely to be used for other recent social contacts. By comparison, there seems to be an overwhelming preference (in around 90% of situations) for keeping in touch through face-to-face meetings or by telephone. Results suggest that the telephone is about three times more likely to be used than all other methods combined when people at home are in social contact with others.

Computer use skills and internet capabilities were found to be strongly associated with age, stage in the life course and socio-economic status. In spite of this, the results point to adults of all ages, stages and socio-economic standings generally disregarding the internet as a method of social communication. Although home internet use continues to rise (ABS 2003c) and in spite of Sydney reportedly being a more internet-connected society than any other in Australia (Dale 2002), it seems this form of technology might be used more for information retrieval than social communication.

Recurring themes

Activities and interactions with close social ties external to the home patch generally did not occur to the exclusion of place-based associations. In fact, profile characteristics that were associated with high levels of networking and affiliation away from neighbourhood areas sometimes also indicated high levels of connection at the local level. For example, females had higher levels of involvement than males in CWPs that were related to helping other people, to work-related formal groups, and to organisations that operated within their local areas. Conversely, some people were less active overall. Single people generally had lower levels of interaction both away from and within neighbourhood areas. In addition, people who worked long hours were less likely to have memberships in leisure-related organisations than persons who worked shorter hours. They were also less likely than

those spending fewer hours at work to use local shops and facilities or to have social contact with others. This section summarises how gender, partnership status and long hours at work impacted on patterns of behaviour.

Gender

Whilst both men and women exhibited similar tendencies overall for identification with their neighbourhood areas, females were more likely than males to be contemplating relocation within five years. This distinction provides support for the notion that women are more inclined to plan ahead and make life choices.

The results point to males generally being the main breadwinners in “traditional” families and working comparatively longer hours than females. They are significantly less likely than females to have social contact with others when they are at home. Females are more active than males in most aspects of kinship, friendship and neighbourhood interaction and they are also more likely to use all forms of communication, especially the telephone, to contact others. Females have more very close friends living within neighbourhood areas than males, despite apparently having friendship networks that are more geographically dispersed overall. The results point to females being more inclined than males to have close social ties with friends who are external to family connections. They seem more likely to form very close relationships than males.

Results highlighted the gendered nature not only of neighbourhood activities but also of social networking in general. Webber was writing in times when there was limited consideration given to women’s opportunities, views, actions, motivations and impacts with respect to the places where they lived. This might account to some extent for his generally visionary but possibly limited interpretation of the consequence of change with respect to place-based communities.

Partnership status

Partnership status appeared to influence some patterns of activity and interaction within communities. People without partners include those with a variety of household arrangements including young adults living in the family home, single people living alone or in shared households, single parents with children at home, and elderly people who had been widowed and might be in their home of long-standing. Those who were single did not necessarily live alone.

Greater levels of detachment from neighbourhoods and, to some extent, from society as a whole became apparent for many who are single. They seemingly have fewer close friends overall and fewer social contacts who live in the same locality. In addition, they are less likely than those with partners to have social contacts with kin. Perhaps for these reasons, more are members of formal groups. Nevertheless, they apparently have lower overall levels of activity away from the home than those who live with partners.

Single people seem less inclined than others to exchange favours with their neighbours and most do not think that they would still be living in the same place in five years. In addition, single people are more likely to think that neighbours do not get along with each other; they also place less emphasis than others on local social interaction as being important for engendering a sense of belonging. An examination of social capacities and civic qualities points to those who are single, particularly those who live alone, being less inclined to feel, think about and participate in daily living in ways that are thought to positively construct the social and civic fabric of communities.

These results suggest comparative isolation, whether by choice or circumstances, of some who are single by comparison with those who live with partners. This is cause for concern, particularly having regard for the increasing proportion of the population who live alone or in single parent households, whether through marriage breakdowns, through circumstances, or by choice.

Hours worked

The following comments are with respect to people who work long hours (40 hours per week or more) by comparison with those who work shorter hours. The three survey locations with the highest proportions of employed people who worked long hours also had highest levels of survey respondents and total population who spoke languages other than English.

Whilst most employed people travel outside their neighbourhoods for work, results point to around two out of three of those who work long hours usually travelling at least 15 kilometres. By comparison, only about 40% of those who work shorter hours usually travelled this distance. Thus it is presumed that those who work long hours also spend more time travelling to and from work. Long hours in the workforce apparently reduce use

of neighbourhood areas, with shopping for food and household supplies and schooling for children generally occurring elsewhere. People who work shorter hours normally use more local shops or facilities, although those who work less than 20 hours per week also usually travel out of their local area for basic household supplies. Trip diary entries indicated that fewer activities are performed away from the home by people who work long hours whilst social contact diaries suggested that social exchanges when at home occur at significantly lower rates, including fewer visitors, than for people who work shorter hours.

More hours at work point to fewer favours exchanged with neighbours. People working long hours have low levels of close friends within neighbourhood areas compared with those who work shorter hours, and have close ties with kin more so than with friends. Nevertheless, those who work long hours are also more likely than people working shorter hours to have social contacts with neighbours rather than with people who live outside their local area, perhaps due to limited social associations overall. In summary, those who work long hours seem to have lower levels of involvement in all types of social networking and non-work related activities than those who work shorter hours.

Whilst location of work is mostly away from, rather than within, neighbourhood areas for all persons, this applies more so to persons who work long hours than others. Results point to long hours in the workforce impacting upon the extent to which other activities and interactions are performed within local areas in particular, possibly contributing towards a decline in neighbourhood cohesion and place-based communities. At the same time, involvement in CWPs appears minimal, an aspect to be pursued in the next section which summarises evidence of activities in CWPs.

Communities without propinquity

Throughout this thesis, associations and activities in communities *with* propinquity have referred to interactions and events that occur within the neighbourhood areas where people live. By default, all other community types have been classified as *without* propinquity. This is in line with Webber's concept of CWPs. The research has provided ample evidence of people's involvement in CWPs although to varying degrees, depending on type of CWP. Levels of connection with respect to family, friendship, interest, virtual, workplace and ethnic communities are summarised in this section.

Family communities

Most people apparently have fewer close social ties with kin (excluding members of the same household) than with people who are not relatives. Nevertheless, a majority of people have at least one relative whom they regard as a close friend. In addition, for most people, one or more relatives have been recent social contacts. Results from a limited study conducted in Melbourne in the late 1950s produced similar results, with two-thirds of those interviewed having regular contact with relatives; as with this study, few close relatives lived nearby (Scott & U'Ren 1962). The results from the current study are interesting given the widely publicised notion that many city dwellers are increasingly living severely isolated existences away from the support of the family unit (Gilding 1997; Richards 1990).

Earlier research, both in Australia and elsewhere, has suggested that kinship links might be more developed among people with “working class” backgrounds (Martin 1967; Richards 1990; Young & Willmott 1962). Results from this research provide some support for this notion. Residents from survey locations with lower SEIFA indexes of disadvantage seemingly have more kin who are close friends than those in other locations with higher indexes (less disadvantaged). For example, in Roselands, half of all close friends were also kin whereas in the more advantaged locations of Riverview and Collaroy Plateau, only around one in three close friends were kin.

Most kin who are identified as close friends or who have been recently contacted live away from neighbourhood areas in other parts of Sydney (this applied to about 60% of respondents) or outside the metropolitan area altogether (around 30%). Ease of travel through high levels of car ownership, as well as enhanced communications technology, probably facilitates maintenance of family ties.

Friendship communities

Spoke diagrams illustrating the geographic dispersal of all close friends and social contacts for the six survey locations suggest that the majority are concentrated within an estimated 15 kilometre radius or 30 minute drive at most of the home patch (refer to Appendix 13). Close friends and social contacts who are not family members represent the majority of people’s close social ties. They are geographically dispersed to a similar extent as described for kin. In other words, almost 60% live in other Sydney localities, outside

neighbourhood areas; only 20% of close friends and 15% of recent social contacts of respondents lived outside the Sydney metropolitan area.

High levels of preference illustrated by this research for face-to-face contact could be an important element influencing with whom strong connections are maintained. In short, a degree of geographic proximity appears to be important for the continuance of many close friendships. However, what constitutes a desirable distance for this type of activity is not clear but possibly depends to some extent on transport mobility.

Dispersed friendship communities might be limited with respect to number of members unless they are also associated with a common meeting place such as within neighbourhood areas, the workplace, an organisation's gathering place or in cyberspace, when they might also be described as another type of community. This does not, of course, infer reduced importance of friendship communities and some individuals appear to be largely sustained by this type of community interaction.

Interest communities

The majority of associations in formal groups were located away from neighbourhood suburbs, often at considerable distances, as illustrated in membership spoke diagrams for the six survey locations (refer to Appendix 13). Memberships within formal groups appear low, with 41% of participants having no affiliations. Additionally, over half the organisations with which people were associated were leisure-related. Such affiliations were often described as casual rather than participatory, involving occasional social visits to clubs, and might not justify classification as memberships in CWP *per se*.

The propensity to belong to formal groups seems to be linked to household structure and stage in the life cycle more than to other factors. The results point to persons without children in the household, especially single people (as previously noted in this chapter), being among those most likely to have memberships. In addition, parents with three or more children still living at home are more likely than ones with fewer children to have multiple involvements, suggesting that joining is influenced by some of the forces of family development. These results lend some support for the long-held view that those with school-aged children are most likely to participate in formal groups (Bryson & Thompson 1972).

In general, people do not seem to be interested in participating in work- or self-related activities or in voluntary groups aimed at helping other people or the community at large. Instead, memberships of formal groups seem to be influenced more by cyclical forces of family development than by social variables and values. This is not to say that people are uninterested or unaffected by what goes on around them. However, rather than participating in formal groups, people mainly focus on maintaining relationships and social contacts through kin and friends.

Virtual communities

There was only marginal evidence of involvements in virtual communities. No persons indicated that use of computers or the internet were regarded as forms of recreation, hobbies, culture or entertainment. Only 1.5% of close friends were contacted by email to the exclusion of other methods. For social contacts, using email as the only method for keeping in touch was even less likely. Use of the internet is a very distant third behind preferences for face-to-face meetings and the telephone. Whilst this might understate computer use for more casual chat room visits and email contacts within loose-knit arrangements, no patterns emerged in social contact diaries to suggest that the internet was a major factor in the overall scope of social or community involvements and interactions.

Workplace communities

The perception of reduced levels of involvement in neighbourhood communities is often linked with the possibility of this being balanced by people having greater activity levels through friendships based on the workplace and socialising with work colleagues. There was limited evidence of close friendship ties with people classified as current or former work colleagues. They represented only 7% of the total number of close friends; 73% of participants did not nominate any workplace-based friendships. Similar results applied for social contacts, with work colleagues accounting for only 8% of total social contacts and 77% of participants not identifying any work colleagues as recent social contacts. In addition, results suggest that only about 50% of friendships with work colleagues continue once the commonality of the workplace is removed.

Ethnic communities

Whilst the study did not address ethnicity or ethnic communities as such, patterns of activities for people from non-English speaking backgrounds were, in some respects,

sufficiently different from others to merit separate consideration here. The only survey question that related to ethnicity asked if there was a preference for speaking languages other than English when at home. Overall, 10% of respondents always or sometimes spoke languages other than English.

Whether or not languages other than English are spoken apparently influences use of neighbourhood areas, with those from non-English speaking backgrounds usually going out-of-area for basic daily supplies, to purchase meals, to worship and to seek professional health services. In addition, levels of neighbourly interaction and familiarity with neighbours are seemingly more limited for those who speak languages other than English. Such persons have shorter-term friendships and comparatively high proportions of acquaintances rather than close friends by comparison with those who speak English only. They have even fewer friends than others outside the Sydney metropolitan area. These patterns seemingly dissipate over time. In their earlier years as migrants, results suggest that they are more dependent than people who speak English not only on a sense of community afforded within ethnic CWPs but also upon local neighbourhood friendships.

People with languages other than English were unsure, more than others, about some aspects of social capacities and civic qualities and were less inclined to feel and think about, and participate in, daily living in ways that are normally deemed to construct the social and civic fabric of communities in a positive sense.

One aspect of ethnicity and its impact on communities was not recognised as potentially an issue until locational differences with respect to tolerance were examined. Overall, 80% of respondents thought that new or different neighbours would always or mostly be accepted. Those who spoke languages in addition to English were often unsure about neighbours' attitudes, although not to a significant extent. In two of the three neighbourhood areas with comparatively high levels of ethnicity, there were apparently low levels of tolerance. In Roselands, where 51% of the 2001 Census population spoke English only, 55% of survey respondents thought new or different neighbours would be accepted. Kingsgrove had a lower proportion of the population who spoke English only in 2001 (44%) and the tolerance rate in relation to acceptance, at 60%, was slightly higher than in Roselands. However, these were also the two most disadvantaged survey locations.

These quantitative results suggesting that ethnicity (or, rather, perceptions held by others about people with ethnic backgrounds) might be a factor impacting upon levels of tolerance were supported by comments written in survey booklets, through extended conversations conducted with people in the field (many of whom chose not to participate in the study), and by personal observations. Nevertheless, the Strathfield survey location had the highest component of total population who spoke other than English (49% had English as their only language) but 85% of those surveyed from this location thought new or different people would always or mostly be accepted. Lack of tolerance towards neighbours most likely arises from a complex combination of factors. The perceived impact upon short- and long-term residents of social and cultural change in areas that have experienced high levels of inward movement from migrants has not been addressed here.

Communities with propinquity

Changes in the way people relate to the cities in which they live and their different forms of mobility within and external to them have long been recognised as factors that alter the intensity of neighbourhood living and the way in which neighbourhoods develop. Prominent factors among contemporary concerns are patterns of employment (or lack of it); location of the workplace, shops, services and facilities; changes in household composition; increased leisure time; patterns of migration, both international and local; government policies promoting medium density living; and the impact of communications technology. Whether the combined influence of all factors has been sufficient to make the development or maintenance of attachments to the places where people live irrelevant, with affiliations transferred instead to CWPs, has been the focus of this study. The following section summarises available evidence from this research about the extent, type and relevance of neighbourhood connections, with reference to each of the four key objectives.

Identification with neighbourhood – Objective 1

Identification with a particular geographic area, the neighbourhood, does not by itself automatically lead to interaction with other people who live there and involvement in activities that take place within it. Having said this, home ownership clearly exerts a strong influence on people's inclinations towards identifying with their neighbourhoods, neighbours and local concerns. Home ownership was found to be a key in promoting casual interaction and social contact with neighbours, for the formation of friendships, and

for levels of social and civic participation within neighbourhoods. Indeed, home ownership is an element that has been recognised for well over a century by sociologists, politicians and housing developers as promoting neighbourhood stability and masking personal differences, especially in relation to class (Bell 1977; Castells 1977; Rex 1977; Troy 1991). This conforms with Krupat's (1985) views with respect to his "communities of commitment", to which he ascribed functional relationships that occur within neighbourhoods formed with people who appeared have a financial stake in maintaining the physical and social structures of the area. Other studies have shown home ownership to be a key factor in the Australian psyche (Kemeny 1983; Richards 1990). Delayed or even abandoned plans for participation in home ownership by younger Australians due to reduced affordability have the potential to alter people's perceptions about and interactions within the places where they live.

Within this study, generally high levels of identification with a particular area were suggested by people's feelings about the location of "home", by thoughts and plans on moving from the neighbourhood, and by the extent to which interests were shared with neighbours. This occurred in spite of travel to mainstream activities generally taking people away from neighbourhood areas.

Cognitive mapping techniques were used to spatially define the neighbourhood areas with which people identified. The size of individual areas varied greatly, seemingly linked to education and income levels, although these connections were generally only applicable at the small end of the size spectrum. Those with low levels of education and income or, as previously noted within this chapter, people who do not own cars, are apparently more likely than others to have small neighbourhood areas (less than one km²). In addition, people with small neighbourhood areas seem to be less likely to think that neighbours generally get along with each other and, perhaps for this reason, fewer are satisfied with their neighbourhoods as places to live, by comparison with those who have neighbourhood areas larger than one km² in size.

Those with small neighbourhood areas are more likely to place less importance than others on the local physical environment for enhancing a sense of belonging to place. Whether this is because some lower order needs (congeniality among neighbours and neighbourhood satisfaction) have not been met is a moot point. What is important with respect to the research topic is that a significant number of people who identify with small

neighbourhood areas apparently have greater levels of disenchantment with their neighbourhoods and less compatibility with neighbours than those who have larger areas. Which causes the other is not apparent.

None of the profile characteristics were identifiable as factors influencing people to identify with larger areas although results pointed to those who have highest activity levels away from the home and greatest numbers of social contacts whilst at home being most likely to identify with the largest category of size for neighbourhood areas (at least eight km²). Overall, these results provide some support for Everitt's (1976) argument that limits on interaction can restrict people's images of a city and thus their behaviour within it. Additionally, it seems, the converse applies, with unusually high levels of interaction expanding cognitive images and behaviour patterns.

Use of neighbourhood – Objective 2

Travel for mainstream pursuits occurs on a frequent basis away from local areas, with most people generally outward bound. This moderates the extent to which neighbourhood areas are used for shops and other facilities. Nevertheless, it became apparent during interview sessions that people do not anticipate, or even necessarily want, all essential shops, facilities and services – let alone elective ones – to be available within the neighbourhood areas in which they live. A limited range of core facilities (including local shops that supply daily basics and schools for children) is generally identified within neighbourhood areas whilst most are located elsewhere. Accessibility was apparently not a problem. Most people seem to exercise choices in where they go for the complete range of shops, services and facilities, with selection dependent on a number of factors not solely related to propinquity. In other words, the results suggest that service provision within the local area, with a few notable exceptions, is of limited importance for people who have access to private transport.

Trip diaries and social contact diaries investigated the intensity of activities. From these diaries, it became apparent that where activities are carried out and the location of others with whom people have general social contacts when they are at home have very little to do with perceptions of neighbourhood areas. The comparative size of neighbourhood areas was important – the smaller the area, the more happened elsewhere and less within; conversely, the larger the area, the more functions were internal and fewer external. The diaries therefore support the earlier results which suggested that the location of the

workplace or, alternatively, people's mainstream activities if they do not work, does not influence cognition and use of neighbourhood. This is important because it means that a downturn in the availability or use of most types of local facilities does not necessarily mean a lessening of the importance of the neighbourhood and its sense of community.

It might be expected that the extent of outward- rather than inward-bound activities must impact upon neighbourhood cohesion if only because it has the effect of limiting familiarity with the local area and casual or unplanned contact between neighbours. There was some evidence of this when locational differences were examined. With the exclusion of Maroubra, the survey location with the largest (to a considerable degree) average neighbourhood area, those survey locations which tended to have higher levels of use by residents (of not only "neighbourhood defining" types of facilities – such as the corner shop – but all other types as well), generally demonstrated higher levels of identification, networking and aspects of belonging. The converse also applied, with obvious lower use levels apparent for the two locations where there seemed to be comparatively low levels of community attachment.

Neighbourhood social networks – Objective 3

According to the research results, neighbourly interaction occurs on a regular basis in spite of high levels of out-of-area activity. Most people (83% of respondents) think that neighbours get along with each other at least most of the time. In addition, many (71% of respondents) regularly exchange favours with neighbours. A majority are acquainted with at least five adult neighbours well enough to call them by their first name; over one third know others in more than ten neighbouring households. These relationships point to people interacting to a degree that would make anonymity difficult, although general commentary about contemporary urban living tends to present a different view.

As previously noted in this chapter, people usually travel away from neighbourhood localities for activities within formal groups, with only about one in four associations (28% of respondents) operating from within local areas. However, for people who are actively involved in groups related to helping other people or organisations of a civic nature, results point to 50% of memberships being within close proximity of home. This denotes an additional level of commitment by some to working within and for their local communities.

With respect to the location of close friends, it seems that, overall, about one in five live within neighbourhood areas. Interaction between local people becomes more pronounced for social contacts, with around one in four living within the local area. In addition, friendships with neighbours are likely to be cherished as much as those with close friends who live elsewhere, with around two out of three relationships described as being very close. An important feature of these results is that people seem to turn towards neighbours rather than to people who live elsewhere when socialising with other than close friends.

The research results point to there being a link between neighbourhood area and the location of close social ties. This was signalled by the inclusion of some close friends and social contacts within neighbourhood areas by about 50% of respondents (49% for close friends, 56% for social contacts), irrespective of the size of the area. In other words, similar proportions of close friends and social contacts were located within local areas for all categories of neighbourhood sizes. Thus it seems that social networks involving close ties might contribute in an important way to the process by which people create mental images not only of overall urban social structures, as suggested by Flanagan (1993), but also of their neighbourhood areas.

Crucially, when the proportion of neighbours as close friends or social contacts was examined for each survey location, significant differences became apparent. People in the more advantaged locations apparently have more close friends and social contacts who are neighbours by comparison with people in the two least advantaged locations who have very few. In addition, it seems people from the more affluent areas have at least one close friend, and a majority of people have at least one recent social contact, within neighbourhood areas. Consequently, in Baum et al.'s (1999) communities of opportunity, people seemingly turn towards neighbours for close social ties significantly more than people in communities identified as vulnerable or marginal (after Baum et al. 1999) where neighbourhoods have reduced levels of overall affluence and limited evidence of close social ties. For example, in Collaroy Plateau, around one in three close social ties were within neighbourhood areas by comparison with less than one in twelve in Roselands. Instead, in the more disadvantaged locations, people seem to rely to a greater extent on kinship ties with relatives who live in other parts of metropolitan Sydney.

These are critical findings which clearly suggest a different interpretation than that promulgated by Webber for types of people most likely to be involved in CWPs, with an

attendant diminution of linkages to the place-based community. It seems that those living in advantaged areas are more likely to have strong neighbourhood connections whilst those in areas experiencing disadvantage are more likely to be alienated from their neighbourhoods, generally seeking community attachment through dispersed kinship and, to a lesser extent, friendship links. These key findings might have implications for the debates about social capital and the range of factors potentially influencing its development and maintenance, as outlined in Chapter 2.

Belonging to neighbourhood – Objective 4

Exploration of elements of belonging, such as neighbourhood satisfaction and safety, indicate that most people have positive experiences in these respects. In addition, levels of trust and tolerance are apparently high. However, the results suggest people generally do not try to get involved in civic affairs or volunteer help within their neighbourhoods. Whilst aspects of civic and social participation, altruism and reciprocity are complex and difficult to measure, results point to reduced levels of social capacities and civic qualities when compared with measurements for trust and tolerance. This is not to say these elements are necessarily absent. Rather, it seems that people prefer to act in less formal ways through neighbourly interaction and social networking. However, some additional qualifying comments are warranted.

All results are, of course, prejudiced according to the views of those who agreed to take part and it is with respect to satisfaction, safety, social capacities and civic qualities, that conflicting impressions were gained in the field. Some sections of the community, more particularly single people, those from non-English speaking backgrounds, short-term residents, people not in employment, tenants and, it seems, those who expressed negative views to the researcher about the places where they lived, were under-represented in the final sample. For these reasons, positive aspects of neighbourhood belonging might be overstated, particularly for some survey locations. Of course, it is not possible to do other than indicate concerns in this respect, but suffice it to say that some people did not feel safe enough to consider participation and others did not trust the ethical standards of the survey or the reaction of some neighbours if they were seen to be taking part.

These views were supported when locational differences were explored. People from communities of opportunity, those that were least disadvantaged (based on SEIFA indexes), generally experienced high levels of satisfaction, safety, social capacity and civic

qualities by comparison with those from communities that were most disadvantaged and were described by Baum et al. (1999) as vulnerable or marginal suburbs. People from transitional and moderate opportunity neighbourhoods tended to occupy the middle ground.

The subject of belonging is important when exploring the relevance of communities, particularly those with propinquity, given that place attachment is considered crucial for wellbeing (Walmsley & Lewis 1993). This study examined elements that apparently encourage attachments to the places where people live as well as the nature of any such attachments. Understanding the acknowledged desires and actual nature of attachments facilitates appreciation of the strength of ties connecting people to the places where they live. It allows comparisons between what is preferred and what is reality. In this way, some impacts on wellbeing can be gauged.

Evaluation of aspects that advance a sense of belonging to a place clearly suggest that, overall, family is more important than any other single factor. Most participants (about 85%) lived within nuclear families. Other key factors that were assessed to be of overall importance were, in order of priority, local facilities, shops and services; friends; good neighbours; and the local physical environment.

Recognition of good neighbours for promoting a sense of belonging points to positive neighbourly interactions and exchanges being important for place attachment and wellbeing for most people. This indicator was selected within all survey locations, including those apparently experiencing hesitant dealings with neighbours or where contact was essentially non-existent, implying potentially negative impacts on the wellbeing of many individuals within those locations.

In spite of the high ranking given to good neighbours, knowing and mixing with local people was not rated as being important. Of lesser importance still was location of work or mainstream pursuits, validating earlier suggestions that location of work is not strongly linked to perceptions of neighbourhood areas. Local clubs or groups were even less important. These low ranking issues for belonging also provide additional support for the view that, in general, many people are not predisposed to mixing indiscriminately or joining formal groups, instead preferring selective interaction and networking through close-knit associations involving family, friends and preferred neighbours. Non-elective

associations which, it seems, are more likely to occur with work, within some groups or through chance meetings, can, conversely, be likened to Flanagan's (1993) loose-knit arrangements.

From this summary of results relating to feelings about and activities and interactions within neighbourhoods, it is clear that, whilst most associations and activities are external to the local area, the community of place remains relevant for many. For others, close associations appear limited. This does not necessarily mean that such associations are unimportant and not a consideration. However, the results suggest that, in less advantaged locations, there might be adverse impacts upon wellbeing because of unsatisfactory neighbourhood experiences. It seems that factors other than the socio-economic status of individuals and their use of communications technology are stronger indicators of propensities for connections within or, alternatively, outside local neighbourhoods. These research findings and their implications are juxtaposed within the next section.

10.2 Research findings

Four decades ago, Webber (1963) was arguing that expected increases in the sophistication, affordability, complexity and variability of social networks and methods of communication would have direct consequences for society in developed nations such as Australia. He foresaw those with enhanced affluence, abilities and flexibility being less limited to the community of place, with greater activity within CWPs. This research appears to have substantiated Webber's notion that most close ties would be with people who live elsewhere. However, the people most likely to have spatially dispersed networks in CWPs, to an extent that place-based communities are reduced to levels of relative unimportance, appear to differ from those envisaged by Webber.

Summary of research findings

This research has illustrated that the varied nature of contemporary urban life means that people usually have both local and non-local linkages. Not unexpectedly, it points to all individuals being active within some types of CWPs. For example, all people's close social networks involve others who do not live in the immediate vicinity of the neighbourhood. In addition, the location of the workplace, of mainstream pursuits and of formal groups is usually away from local areas.

Improved methods of communications technology have enhanced people's abilities to stay in touch. Nevertheless, people overwhelmingly seem to prefer to meet face-to-face or to have interactive conversations using telephones rather than send emails, even when the internet is readily accessible. The significance of computers and the internet for loose-knit networking and information gathering was not investigated by this research but its worth in this respect is not disputed. However, it seems these types of communications, suitably labelled "instrumental" by Granovetter (1982), cannot be described as the basis for communities *per se* if it is accepted that characteristics of communities include not only people with common interests or concerns but also a sense of history (Harasim & Walls 1994; Krupat 1985; Rheingold 1994; Stacey 1969).

Although the majority of close associations are, overall, with friends and kin who live away from the neighbourhood, the research results have clearly illustrated that the place-based community is meaningful for some people. Whilst it could also be that close social ties formed elsewhere, within, for example, the workplace, underpin some people's social networks, this research found only limited evidence of strong associations within these other types of communities. In addition, connectivity within ethnic communities is apparently important for migrants, but more particularly so in the first few years of residence.

Of course, strength of neighbourhood attachment is not explained solely by any one factor. Previous research in an Australian rural setting has suggested that length of residence, stage in the life course and social position were key elements explaining the strength of place attachment (Beggs, Hurlbert and Haines 1996). If housing tenure and neighbourhood type (classified according to degree of opportunity or vulnerability), as well as, although to a lesser extent, individual affluence measured by education and income levels, are surrogates for "social position", the present research suggests that these factors are also important in an urban setting.

Thus propensity towards neighbourhood connections is not evenly distributed across all types of respondents or all survey locations. Importantly, when the density of social networks at the local level is considered in conjunction with people's attitudes and actions towards neighbourhood identification, use and belonging, it seems that socio-economic and cultural factors at the scale of the neighbourhood, rather than at the micro-level of the

individual, are the most important elements influencing the geography of people's contacts. Spatial factors are also important but mainly with respect to distance bias, with most activities and associations seemingly occurring within a limited range from the home rather than being widely dispersed as Webber supposed would be the case. This might in part be related to the size of Sydney with respect to both population and geographic spread and its distance from other primate cities.

Choices available to people with respect to where they live are limited not only by individual socio-economic circumstances but, according to Flanagan (1993), are also due to conditions imposed by local, national and international policies and economies. Economic downturn, globalisation of markets and immigration policies have had uneven impacts on the geography of Sydney. Some suburbs, such as Riverview and Collaroy Plateau, seem to have become more affluent, more homogeneous and more sought after as places to live. Others, including Maroubra and Strathfield, are apparently experiencing distinctive, rapid and, to some extent, unpredictable social and cultural changes as the suburbs are transformed by the rapid inflow of different types of residents. The survey locations that are described as being most disadvantaged, Roselands and Kingsgrove, appear to be even more distinctive because of the elusiveness of a community of place. According to the results, fewer social ties, interactions or associations exist within these neighbourhoods by comparison with those survey locations that are better off.

For people who live in comparatively disadvantaged areas, social networks are more likely to be based upon communities of kin and dispersed friends. In earlier times, members of an extended family often lived within the same neighbourhood. This meant that the community of propinquity and kin were essentially the same. This no longer generally applies in metropolitan areas, partly due to housing affordability, with first-home buyers often locating away from the established suburbs where they grew up.

People from the two most disadvantaged survey locations generally had lower education and lower income levels than others. It might be, as suggested by earlier Australian research (Fallding 1957), that people with lower socio-economic standing in this regard rely on the solidarity of family for emotional support more so than others and do not seek out local associations to the same extent as do people with higher socio-economic status. However, this pattern was not discernible from the overall results based on individual responses. Alternatively, people might be turning to family when relationships have

declined or not developed with neighbours. Strengthening of external attachments quite possibly leads to a further weakening of links or the potential for associations to become established within the neighbourhood, as recognised by Brower (1980) and Warren (1963). When this happens, local place connectivity can become diluted to such an extent that it is comparatively irrelevant or unimportant to individuals. Lack of connectivity might be having detrimental effects on wellbeing due, in part, to the rupturing of the people-place bond which can upset senses of identity and belonging (Brower 1980). It might also be because the problems that have caused people to avoid neighbourhood connections in the first instance have not been resolved.

Thus, for some, the place community appears to be important for close social ties. For others, kinship connections are of greater substance than those of place. In spite of this, a sense of community, belonging and attachment remains significant. Flanagan (1993) has proposed that place influences the spatial distribution of social relationships. The current research suggests that, whilst this does appear to be a factor, the location of close social ties also helps to create the mental image of place. Although most activities and social contacts are dispersed and external to the home patch, where they take place is seemingly of less importance than aspects relating to neighbourhood networking and interaction.

In Chapter 4, where profile characteristics of the final sample were described, attention was drawn to the skew in the data towards the professionals, people who were, according to Webber, potentially more likely to be members of CWPs. It seems instead that the emphasis should be more on the effect that this skew might have in terms of the under-representation of persons who, according to these results, are more likely to have lower levels of neighbourhood connectivity. People without the perceived benefits of high education and income levels and without access to communications technology are more likely to live in more disadvantaged areas. For these people, it seems the neighbourhood might sometimes be a place of alienation, with a result that associations are formed mainly with people who live elsewhere in family or friendship CWPs which are possibly disparate.

Implications for policy and planning

This project has presented information of a type and level of detail not previously available about contemporary Australian life in long-established neighbourhoods. It has described how people identify with their local areas, recognising this as a separate sentiment to place

attachment. Use patterns of neighbourhood areas by comparison with other localities for work, mainstream pursuits, shopping, facilities, services and other activities have been investigated and views on accessibility have been presented. This material should prove valuable not only to urban planners and providers of services within various levels of government but also to other organisations, whether planning a shopping centre, a sporting complex or a church. Many top-down policies relating to various aspects of community have been based on the perceptions and attitudes of those dictating or formulating the policies or on feedback from limited community consultation processes. The research results demonstrate the complexity of urban life and the complicated nature of place-based associations. Any community involvement in planning in future should be sensitive to the sorts of complex interactions brought to light in this thesis.

Preferences and patterns of behaviour for the maintenance of social networks have been examined and presented, offering important insights into where and with whom close social ties are formed and levels of formal and informal interaction. In particular, the impacts that different types of residential locations ranked by level of disadvantage have on people's propensity to form close social ties and interaction at the local level has been clearly illustrated, providing direction for those concerned with community development programs. Issues that people believe promote a sense of belonging to place have been presented. Such findings should be relevant to any future research examining aspects of wellbeing in urban communities.

Further research

The breadth and depth of this research project have been both extensive and intensive. Due to identified constraints, it has not been possible or appropriate to perform and present detailed investigation of all available material. For this reason, the thesis has concentrated on the most pertinent aspects. Further analysis of available data collected during fieldwork is intended. Specifically this will include additional detailed examination of trip and social contact diary entries and of social networks, to determine the precise nature of the geographic spread of activities, kin, close friends and social contacts. This could tie in with the obvious need to appreciate the relative importance of spatial separation and what constitutes acceptable separation distances and communication methods for overcoming them.

There is an obvious need for a clearer understanding of the relative level of significance of changes that occur over time in the places where people live and their place attachments. This has not been possible here. The objectives of this project and the rigour with which it has been undertaken permit longitudinal research at some future time.

Scrutiny of different types of communities, to a similar extent as in this study, could add balance to future discussions about CWPs, especially if extended to locations with varying levels of disadvantage in the inner city and the metropolitan fringe. In addition, examination of workplace communities and how people interact within them could provide interesting perspectives not only of the relative importance of associations formed through the workplace but also in answering the question of what happened in around one in five sample dwellings where nobody could be contacted. Who were these people? Did they represent dedicated members of CWPs who solely used their home as an operational base? In other words, did they represent a type of person whose activities and close social ties were not adequately represented in these research results?

An associated future research direction worthy of mention involves further exploration of the impact of hours worked on activities and community interaction. In particular, changing patterns of employment in terms of levels of work participation, location of work, and the growth of part-time work have major ramifications for society. Issues of whether reduced working hours have a liberating effect for some, and what effect increased working hours have for others, are worthy of investigation, especially in relation to the future format of leisure and work patterns on individual and community obligations.

Australians have apparently enthusiastically embraced advances in communications technology, particularly short messaging services (SMS) and, currently to a lesser extent, multimedia messaging services (MMS). The impacts that mobile phones are having on the volume and substance of social contacts and its implication for influencing other types of contact is not yet fully understood but has the potential to fundamentally alter the ways in which people communicate with each other. The recency of the phenomenon and its adoption across all levels of society points to this being an important area for further investigation.

The perceived impacts upon short- and long-term residents of a neighbourhood of high levels of population mobility over a comparatively short timeframe warrant exploration.

Rapid changes in population mix might result in shifts in behavioural norms. Whilst lack of tolerance appears to be an issue, lack of empowerment to react to circumstances believed to be outside long-term norms could have negative ramifications in respect of wellbeing. A humanistic phenomenological study of community perceptions towards changing social, cultural and ethnic mix could substantially contribute to an understanding of this issue.

Research will continue to play a key role in the collection of data that facilitate an understanding of the changing roles and perceptions of communities with and without propinquity. Lack of empirical data has historically hampered diachronic and comprehensive studies which are clearly of critical importance. Funding for further research in this regard is imperative.

Conclusion

The notion of communities will continue to be an area of relevance because the subject deals with people, where and how they interact, and what they need in order to function in satisfactory ways. Its interest as a topic of investigation for geographers, as well as researchers from other academic disciplines, will be ongoing because of changing forms of social interaction, imbalance in the distribution of economic wellbeing, and the implications for service provision and human wellbeing generally. People still have to live somewhere. This means there will always be a neighbourhood. It seems unlikely that humans will choose to operate in isolation, unaware of or uncaring about others.

The diversity of suburban life in metropolitan Sydney is such that opportunities abound for people to become linked to social networks located other than within their place of residence. However, this study has shown that the community of place does matter. Human geography, with its ability to address many aspects of contemporary society through investigation of spatial organisations and its willingness to cross academic disciplinary boundaries, can facilitate more comprehensive analyses and explanations of the nature of relationships that are constantly forming and evolving between people and their environment.