CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networking within place-based communities can take many forms such as chatting with neighbours or exchanging small favours, or through more formal affiliations within organisations that attract members from the local area. On a broader spatial scale but not to the exclusion of neighbourhood, social networking can occur through activities associated with the maintenance of kinship and friendship ties and through social contacts with work colleagues and acquaintances. Of course, the quality and intensity of social interactions that are developed can vary greatly between individuals and from one community to another.

This chapter explores aspects of social networking with respect to levels of interaction in communities with propinquity (neighbourhood areas) and without propinquity and in relation to formal and informal associations. It commences with an examination of general tendencies towards neighbourly interaction followed by an investigation of memberships in formal groups. Subsequent sections describe associations with, firstly, close friends and, secondly, with recent social contacts, focusing not only on the extent to which networks existed with other people within neighbourhood areas but also on types of relationships between individuals and how associations were maintained. At the same time, network links with dispersed communities, which may or may not have specific geographic locations, are explored. (A summary showing values before and after responses were condensed for analysis in this chapter is presented in Appendix 10.)

Clearly, this is not a search for a holistic commitment by individuals to other people in one neighbourhood, one place or one community, with only minimal network activity occurring outside that social setting. If, however, only limited, tenuous, short-term links at best are found with other people or social organisations within neighbourhoods whilst strong associations have apparently developed with others who live elsewhere, the notion of CWP with respect to contemporary Australian society would be validated. Conversely, if it were found that strong bonds exist between individuals who live in the same local areas, the strength of the CWP argument that involvement in CWPs occurs largely to the exclusion of place-based interactions would be threatened.

7.1 Neighbourly interaction

Some patterns in day-to-day living are recognised as indicators of community strength. These include the extent to which individuals know neighbours, exchange favours or call on neighbours in times of need (Black & Hughes 2001). With this in mind, participants were asked their views about neighbourhood compatibility (Question B10), favours exchanged (Question B13) and number of personal acquaintances (Question B16). The results permit comment on perceived levels of neighbourly interaction within survey locations and on profile characteristics that are apparently influential.

Neighbours "get along"

Respondents were asked if they thought that, in general, most people within their neighbourhood were able to "get along" with each other. Most respondents (82.6%,) indicated that they thought this was "always" or, at least, "mostly" the case. Interestingly, people in the smallest category of neighbourhood area were least likely to think that neighbours generally got along. Nevertheless, only 28.8% of them had negative or undefined thoughts in this respect (statistically significant difference,χ^2 = 12.954, df = 4) (Table 7-1). Of those respondents who indicated that they were "not sure" as to whether neighbours got along with each other (n = 18), 55.6% had neighbourhood areas smaller than one km^2, although whether this view was due to incompatibility or lack of familiarity with neighbours is not clear.

Those who were single had less positive views in this respect by comparison with those who lived with partners (statistically significant difference, χ^2 = 6.996, df = 1) (Table 7-1). In addition, persons who were not fluent in English were less likely to think that neighbours got along with each other and were also more likely to be not sure than those who spoke English only. There was no apparent relationship between partnership status and languages spoken.

Notable differences were apparent when cross-tabulating for computer and internet use. Respondents who were computer literate or who used the internet were more likely to think that people in their neighbourhood got along (Table 7-1). Use of computers and the internet has been shown to be clearly related to age, with younger people more likely to be computer and internet users than elderly people. However, whilst there was a tendency for

elderly persons (60 years or more) to have slightly less positive views with respect to the likelihood of neighbours getting along than persons who were younger, the difference was not significant or even notable. Thus it seems that people using modern forms of communication have more positive feelings about people's ability to get along with each other than the information poor, Webber's "left behinds".

Table 7-1: Getting along with neighbours by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	People in neighbourhood get along %		
	Always or mostly	Sometimes, never or not sure	Total (n =)
Size of neighbourhood (km²):			
Smaller than 1 km²	71.2	28.8	100 (66)
1 – 2 km²	92.3	7.7	100 (52)
2 – 4 km²	94.1	5.9	100 (34)
4 – 8 km²	78.1	21.9	100 (32)
Larger than 8 km²	82.6	17.4	100 (23)
Total responses	82.6	17.4	100 (207)
Live with a partner:			
Yes	85.8	14.2	100 (169)
No	67.6	32.4	100 (37)
Total responses	82.5	17.5	100 (206)
Preferred language at home:			
Speak English only	84.5	15.5	100 (187)
Speak other than English	65.0	35.0	100 (20)
Total responses	82.6	17.4	100 (207)
Computer literate:			
Yes	85.1	14.9	100 (154)
No	74.5	25.5	100 (51)
Total responses	82.4	17.6	100 (205)
Internet use at work:			
Yes	88.3	11.7	100 (94)
No	82.0	18.0	100 (49)
Not applicable	72.7	27.3	100 (56)
Total responses	82.4	17.6	100 (199)
Internet use at home:			
Yes	86.5	13.5	100 (133)
No	76.8	23.2	100 (69)
Total responses	83.2	16.8	100 (202)
Age:			
Less than 40 years	88.5	11.5	100 (52)
40 – 59 years	83.2	16.8	100 (95)
60 years or more	79.3	20.7	100 (58)
Total responses	83.4	16.6	100 (205)

Neighbours exchange favours

On the whole, most respondents exchanged favours (such as doing errands, or lending tools, books and magazines) "often" or "occasionally". However, there was a notable difference in the case of partnership status, with single people less inclined to exchange favours by comparison with those who lived with partners (Table 7-2).

Table 7-2: Favours exchanged with neighbours by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Exchange favours with neighbours %		
	Often or occasionally	Seldom, never or not sure	Total (n =)
Live with a partner:			
Yes	73.4	26.6	100 (169)
No	58.3	41.7	100 (36)
Total responses	70.7	29.3	100 (205)
Hours worked per week:			
Less than 20 hours	77.8	22.2	100 (27)
20 – 39 hours	82.4	17.6	100 (34)
40 hours or more	59.6	40.4	100 (57)
Total responses	70.3	29.7	100 (118)

Number of hours worked was influential in determining whether exchanges occurred (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 6.190$, df = 2). For example, those who worked long hours (40 hours or more per week) were about twice as likely to have no pattern for exchanging favours by comparison with others who were employed (Table 7-2). Of course, there would be reduced opportunities for persons working long hours to interact with neighbours due to less free time available to spend in local areas. Increasing tendencies in the Australian workforce for some people to work long hours, whether as overtime or due to having more than one job, could have negative impacts on levels of neighbourly interaction. Exchanging favours with neighbours could be promoted by both need and opportunity, sometimes leading to additional forms of contact and a strengthening of associations. Of course, the reverse might also apply, with increased familiarity leading to the breakdown of tenuous relationships.

Know neighbours

Respondents were asked to nominate the number of households in neighbourhood areas where they were on first-name terms with at least one adult member. Both length of residence and home ownership influenced numbers of neighbours spoken to with this degree of informality (statistically significant differences, $\chi^2 = 35.666$, df =4 and $\chi^2 =$

15.104, df = 2 respectively) (Table 7-3). The results suggested that the critical number of years of living within the same neighbourhood was about five; for persons with less than five years of residence, most knew fewer than five adults in neighbouring households by their first name. As might be expected, there was greater likelihood for more people to be known with more years spent living in the same neighbourhood. In addition, a significant difference was evident when home ownership was considered, with persons owning or purchasing their homes having greater numbers of acquaintances with adult neighbours than those who were tenants or still living in the family home (statistically significant, χ^2 = 15.104,df = 2). The role of home ownership and length of residence in establishing connections with others living in the same place again demonstrates the high level of inter-relationship between these two variables.

Table 7-3: Neighbours known by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Number of households where on first-name terms %			
	Less than 5 households	5 – 10 households	More than 10 households	Total (n =)
Length of residence:				
Less than 5 years	59.1	27.3	13.6	100 (44)
5 - 9 years	29.7	45.9	24.3	100 (37)
10 years or more	13.0	38.2	48.8	100 (123)
Total responses	26.0	37.3	36.8	100 (204)
Own or purchasing home:				
Yes	21.5	38.7	39.8	100 (181)
No	59.1	27.3	13.6	100 (22)
Total responses	25.6	37.4	36.9	100 (203)
Employed in paid work:				
Yes	27.6	34.6	37.8	100 (127)
No	41.7	41.7	16.7	100 (24)
Retired	15.1	41.5	43.4	100 (53)
Total responses	26.0	37.3	36.8	100 (204)
Preferred language at home:				
Speak English only	23.8	37.3	38.9	100 (185)
Speak other than English	50.0	35.0	15.0	100 (20)
Total responses	26.3	37.1	36.6	100 (205)
Size of neighbourhood (km^2):				
Smaller than 1 km^2	30.8	36.9	32.3	100 (65)
1 – 2 km^2	25.0	34.6	40.4	100 (52)
2 – 4 km^2	17.6	41.2	41.2	100 (34)
4 – 8 km^2	32.3	35.5	32.3	100 (31)
Larger than 8 km^2	21.7	39.1	39.1	100 (23)
Total responses	26.3	37.1	36.6	100 (205)

An expected high proportion of retirees (closely associated with length of residence and home ownership) were on first name terms with adults in neighbouring households (Table

7-3). People in paid employment also had high levels of neighbourly interaction in this respect. However, persons not in paid work knew notably fewer neighbours.

Language spoken was an important influence on people's tendencies to know their neighbours (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 7.557$, df = 2) (Table 7-3). For example, 50.0% of those who spoke languages other than English did not know adults in more than five neighbouring households by comparison with only 23.8% who normally spoke English only. The results presented here possibly overstate levels of social interaction in this respect because many people who were contacted in some survey locations were not able or willing to participate due to lack of proficiency in English.

In Chapter 6, results suggested that social contact levels with neighbours varied during a normal week in accordance with the size of the area, with people who identified with larger neighbourhood areas having contacts more often with neighbours than those with smaller areas. Therefore, it might have been expected that size of neighbourhood area would have influenced acquaintance levels within neighbourhoods. Interestingly, there was no significant difference and variations were limited, as shown in Table 7-3. This suggests that there might be some link between the location of neighbours who were known by their first names and recognition of neighbourhood boundaries.

Discussion

The proportion of single persons who apparently do not think that neighbours only usually get along or who do not perform mutually beneficial acts with neighbours is cause for concern, having regard for increasing numbers of people in contemporary society who live alone or in single parent households. The results also point to lack of proficiency in English, which might be linked with unfamiliarity with the local culture, contributing to comparatively low levels of neighbourly interaction.

A number of additional elements within the sample profile seemingly influence levels of informal neighbourly interaction. For example, familiarity with neighbours is apparently more limited for those with less than five years of residence, who do not own their own home or who generally work long hours (or, conversely, do not have a paid job). If greater proportions of these groups make up the Australian population in the future, as is the current statistical trend, then concomitant reductions in neighbourly interaction from levels

indicated by these results could be anticipated. Whether these same factors also impact upon levels of association in formal groups cr whether additional elements influence participation in these social networks is examined next.

7.2 Memberships of formal groups

Knowledge of patterns of activities and types of linkages within formal groups can contribute towards an understanding of whether there are additional opportunities for local area networking, the relevance of neighbourhoods for group activities and the extent to which people are prepared to volunteer resources for the benefit of the local area. To this end, respondents were asked if, within the past 12 months, they had actively participated in a publicly recognised club, association or group and, if so, to name the organisation or, alternatively, identify its type (Question C3) They were also asked to name the suburb or location where the activities of the organisations usually occurred so that proximity to identified neighbourhood areas could be determined (Question C4).

Location of formal groups

The only significant difference influencing club location was age (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 7.664$, df = 2), with the youngest age group (less than 40 years) having higher levels of association within neighbourhood suburbs than respondents in older age groups (Table 7-4). When data for children living in the same household were incorporated in the analysis, around three quarters of young chidren (less than five years of age) and almost 40% of children aged between five and 14 years had parents less than 40 years of age. School, sporting and leisure activities within organisations for younger children could often be located close to the home, possibly influencing the age-related significance of this result.

Table 7-4: Location of formal groups by age

Profile characteristics	Location of formal groups %		
	Neighbourhood	Elsewhere	Total (n =)
Age:			
Less than 40 years	42.1	57.9	100 (57)
40 – 59 years	22.5	77.5	100 (138)
60 years or more	28.9	71.1	100 (90)
Total responses	28.4	71.6	100 (285)
Size of neighbourhood:			
Smaller than 1 km^2	26.9	73.1	100 (78)
1 – 2 km^2	32.9	67.1	100 (73)
2 – 4 km^2	31.1	68.9	100 (45)
4 – 8 km^2	30.2	69.8	100 (43)
Larger than 8 km^2	19.6	80.4	100 (46)
Total responses	28.4	71.6	100 (285)

There was no significant difference when location of formal groups was cross-tabulated against size of neighbourhood area, as illustrated in Table 7-4. For example, around 30% of groups were located in neighbourhood areas for all size categories with the exception of neighbourhood areas larger than eight km^2, where respondents were more likely than those from other areas to travel even further away for these types of activities. These results, generally suggesting only minor variation in levels of group activities based on neighbourhood area, imply that the location of formal group activities might be inter-related with definition of neighbourhood boundaries.

Classification of formal groups

Different types of clubs and associations nominated by respondents were condensed into four categories related to "other people", "work or self-interest", "leisure", or "personal beliefs", which were used as the basis for analysis (see Table 7-5). For example, active involvement in voluntary work with service clubs, such as Rotary, Lions or Quota, or on a school committee, was classified as being related to other people even though elements of social participation could be involved. Conversely, affiliations with professional organisations, self-help groups or support groups were categorised as being related to work or self on the premise that such activities involved direct or indirect self-promotion or improvement. Whilst many who volunteer their resources to these types of organisations might do so for the general betterment of group members or professions, such associations are not viewed as existing for altruistic reasons to the same degree as associations categorised here as focused on helping other people. Similarly, affiliations with religious,

political or lobby groups were categorised as being related to personal beliefs whilst sporting, cultural or entertainment activities came under the general heading of leisure.

Table 7-5: Original and condensed responses for types of formal groups

Response options	Number of responses	%	Condensed responses	%
Children's club or organisation	4	1.4	Related to other	20.4
Volunteer work or services club	35	12.3	people	
School committee	19	6.7		
Professional employment	28	9.8	Related to work or	12.6
Self help/ support group	8	2.8	self	
Culture or entertainment	44	15.4	Related to leisure	55.0
Sport or recreation	113	39.6		
Church or spiritual organisation	20	7.0	Related to personal	10.2
Political party or lobby group	9	3.2	beliefs	
Other	5	1.8	Other	1.8
Total responses	285	100.0		100.0

Most formal groups that respondents were affiliated with were located external to neighbourhood areas or suburbs (Table 7-6). Overall, 71.6% were located elsewhere, with membership in groups related to work or self almost exclusively out of the local area. Profile characteristics that apparently influenced levels, types and location of membership are discussed in turn.

Table 7-6: Location of types of formal groups

Type of formal group – related to:	Neighbouring suburbs	Elsewhere	Total (n =)
Other people	50.0	50.0	100 (58)
Work or self	2.8	97.2	100 (36)
Leisure	28.7	71.3	100 (157)
Personal beliefs	17.2	82.8	100 (29)
Other	20.0	80.0	100 (5)
Total responses	28.4	71.6	100 (285)

Levels of membership

The mean number of memberships in formal groups was 1.38. This arguably low rate reflected the fact that 40.6% of respondents did not belong to any groups (Table 7-7).

Table 7-7: Original and condensed responses for membership of formal groups

Response options	Number of responses	%	Condensed responses	%
Nil membership	84	40.6	No participation	40.6
1 membership	47	22.7	1 – 2	37.7
2 memberships	31	15.0	memberships	
3 memberships	22	10.6	3 or more	21.7
4 memberships	11	5.3	memberships	
5 memberships	8	3.9		
6 memberships	2	1.0		
7 memberships	2	1.0		
Total	207	100.0		100.0
Average	1.38			

A significant difference was apparent in membership levels when cross-tabulated against length of residence (statistically significant, χ^2 = 12.890, df = 4) (Table 7-8). For example, the least active people in formal groups were those who had been in the neighbourhood for less than ten years, with a majority of these respondents having no affiliations with any formal groups. Only 12.3% of respondents in this category belonged to at least three. By comparison, 26.9% people who had lived in the same area for 30 years or more did not belong to any groups and 25.0%, about twice as many, were members of three or more.

Table 7-8: Membership numbers by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Number of memberships in formal groups %			
	None	1 – 2	3 or more	Total (n =)
Length of residence:				
Less than 10 years	50.6	37.0	12.3	100 (81)
10 – 29 years	39.7	30.1	30.1	100 (73)
30 years or more	26.9	48.1	25.0	100 (52)
Total responses	40.8	37.4	21.8	100 (206)
Employed in paid work:				
Yes	38.3	38.3	23.4	100 (128)
No	68.0	20.0	12.0	100 (25)
Retired	32.1	45.3	22.6	100 (52)
Total responses	40.3	37.9	21.8	100 (206)
Household size:				
1 – 2 people	36.0	41.3	22.7	100 (75)
3 – 4 people	43.6	42.6	13.8	100 (94)
5 or more people	43.2	16.2	40.5	100 (37)
Total responses	40.8	37.4	21.8	100 (206)
Live with a partner:				
Yes	42.0	39.6	18.3	100 (169)
No	35.1	29.7	35.1	100 (37)
Total responses	40.8	37.9	21.4	100 (206)

However, because most group activities occurred out of the local area, it appears factors other than length of residence are probably more influential. Employment status and household size might be of greater importance because significant differences were also evidenced in the case of these profile variables (statistically significant, χ^2 = 9.937, df = 4 and χ^2 = 14.789, df = 4 respectively) (Table 7-8). With respect to employment status, people who were not in paid work were the least likely to have membership in formal groups by comparison with retirees or those employed. Differences in activity levels could be related to both opportunity and financial considerations.

With regard to household size, 40.5% of people from large households (five persons or more) were members of at least three associations by comparison with only 13.8% where household size was three or four people (Table 7-8). This seemingly high level of multiple memberships for persons from large households might be ascribed to involvement in children's sporting or cultural activities (based on the premise that the more children in a household, the greater chance of there being some of an age to be involved in group activities external to the household).

Additionally, with respect to household size, the results point to adults without children who live in small (single- or two-person) households and who, therefore, arguably have greater opportunities to pursue individual activities, having higher levels of involvement than persons from households with three or four members. Single persons were notably more likely to be group members than those who lived with partners (Table 7-8). For example, 35.1% of single people were members in at least three organisations by comparison with only 18.3% of those who lived with partners. Involvements in group activities, most of which, it seems, occur external to neighbourhoods, could be one reason for single persons appearing to have lower levels of neighbourly interaction when compared with respondents who lived with partners, as identified earlier in this chapter. Whether these factors also impact upon types of organisations that attract members is examined next.

Types of formal groups

Linkages were evident between membership types and age, employment status and education, and, to a lesser extent, gender (Table 7-9). More than half of all memberships were associated with leisure-related activities, possibly in some cases for purely social

rather than active participation. This is surmised from the high proportion of those aged 60 years or more, compared with other age groups, who nominated that they had memberships within this classification.

Table 7-9: Membership types by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Other people	Work or self	Leisure	Beliefs	Other	Total (n =)
Age:						
Less than 40 years	26.3	14.0	52.6	7.0	0.0	100 (57)
40 – 59 years	19.6	18.8	47.1	12.3	2.2	100 (138)
60 years or more	17.8	2.2	68.9	8.9	2.2	100 (90)
Total responses	20.4	12.6	55.1	10.2	1.8	100 (285)
Employed in paid work:						
Yes	23.2	18.2	46.4	10.5	1.7	100 (181)
No	16.7	5.6	72.2	5.6	0.0	100 (18)
Retired	15.1	2.3	69.8	10.5	2.3	100 (86)
Total responses	20.4	12.6	55.1	10.2	1.8	100 (285)
Education:						
Year 12 or below	17.4	2.2	68.5	10.9	1.1	100 (92)
Trade or diploma	27.1	9.4	51.0	11.5	1.0	100 (96)
Bachelor degree or higher	16.9	23.6	47.2	9.0	3.4	100 (89)
Total responses	20.6	11.6	55.6	10.5	1.8	100 (277)
Gender:						
Male	13.4	8.4	64.7	11.8	1.7	100 (119)
Female	25.3	15.7	48.2	9.0	1.8	100 (166)
Total responses	20.4	12.6	55.1	10.2	1.8	100 (285)

The column heading spanning Other people, Work or self, Leisure, Beliefs, Other, Total: _Types of membership in formal groups %_

The employed, not unexpectedly, are more likely than others to have affiliations with work- or self-related clubs, communities of interest which, as noted earlier, were generally located external to the neighbourhood. These types of groups apparently attract greater membership numbers from people with university degrees, providing some support to the notion that CWP applies first and foremost to professionals, in part through these types of involvement. An expected low level of involvement was apparent for elderly people in work- or self-related organisations, as many were retired or were approaching retirement age. Participation in organisations directing efforts towards helping others was more a function of the under 40s than older persons, perhaps in response to their children's activities, as suggested by earlier results.

The results point to retirees and also persons not employed having higher levels of association with recreational-type clubs than those in paid work, perhaps linked to increased leisure hours (Table 7-9). For example, only 46.4% of employed people belong

to leisure related groups compared with 72.2% of people not in paid work. The results also suggest that people with memberships in activities related to other people are more likely to be employed in paid work than not, to have trade certificates or diplomas rather than higher or lower levels of education, and to be females, not males.

Women are allegedly drawn to groups that provided support for services for their children (Richards 1990). This research suggests women's tendency to nurture might not only be reflected through their involvement in children's group activities but also in the workplace through females' propensity to have memberships with professional and support groups to a greater extent than males. Additional considerations are that females possibly support each other more than males in what many argue remains principally a patriarchal society, especially with respect to the workplace (Winchester 1992).

Discussion

The results point to the location of formal groups being linked, to some degree, to type of organisation, with work- or self-related activities commonly based outside the local area. Most people also travel to different suburbs or locations to follow personal beliefs and, to a lesser extent, to pursue leisure activities. By contrast, participation in organisations helping other people or the community occurs to the same extent within and outside local areas. These results both support and detract from the notion of CWP. On the one hand, professionals pursue work-related activities through interest communities geographically remote from their neighbourhood. On the other hand, around half of the people who volunteer for activities in organisations to help others do so within local areas.

Being single or a member of a large household that includes children is a strong indicator of multiple memberships in formal groups. Involvements are predominantly with leisure-related groups (through sporting, recreation, culture or entertainment groups). The results suggest that females are more likely than males to become involved in organisations associated with other people or work. In addition, those who are employed have higher levels of commitment to non-leisure-related organisations than people not in paid work or retired, with such membership being at the expense of arguably more enjoyable participation in recreational or cultural pursuits.

Whether people generally travel away from their suburb for formal group activities because there is little opportunity for local participation due to paucity of venues or sought-after groups, or because people are not really interested in volunteering for community work at the local level, is not clear. Essential out-of-area travel for involvement could reduce membership capabilities for those with limited resources such as finance, time or mobility. The results provide some support for the notion that CWP affects all levels of society to some extent, with minimal networking and connectivity apparently happening through formal associations within neighbourhoods.

Examination of social networking within neighbourhoods and elsewhere continues in the next section. The focus is on how close social ties are maintained with relatives, friends, work colleagues and acquaintances and the degree of local involvement.

7.3   Close friends

In this section, *how* respondents networked with those they were closest to and, in particular, *where* these people were located are investigated to further clarify types and levels of neighbourhood social interaction. To achieve this, respondents were asked to think of adult friends or relatives (excluding a partner or relative living in the same household) to whom they felt closest (up to five) and to provide information about types of interactions. Data were sought that described methods of contact (Part C (i) of the survey questionnaire), residential location (Part C (ii)), types of relationships (kin, friend, work colleague or acquaintance) (Part C (iii)), and the closeness and length of relationships (Part C (iv) and (v) respectively). Each of these facets is dealt with in turn within this section.

Number of close friends

Information was recorded for a total of 947 persons, an average of 4.6 "close friends" per respondent. Most respondents (83.1%) chose to nominate the maximum of five close friends, with an additional 6.7% listing information with respect to four. Only 2.4% did not nominate any close friends. Whilst the minimum number of friends nominated was elective, the response rate was considered indicative of close personal relationships outside the immediate household. People who can name several intimate friends are said to be healthier and happier and, therefore, have more positive levels of wellbeing than those with few or no close friends (Myers & Diener 1996). A number of recognised factors, including

lack of resources or self esteem, are believed to influence the ability or desire of people to network socially.

Some interesting perspectives became apparent for numbers of close friends when cross-tabulated against household size. A large proportion of respondents from households of five or more persons nominated no more than one close friend. This suggests that large households, by comparison with respondents from smaller households, are to some extent self-supportive (Table 7-10). This is not to say that members of large households are essentially closed and have little contact with neighbouring families as was concluded by a Melbourne study half a century earlier (Middleton, 1954). Indeed, subsequent results point to members of large households readily associating within neighbourhoods, perhaps partly as a function of household size.

Table 7-10: Number of close friends by key profile variables

	Number of close friends nominated %			
Profile characteristics	*No friends or 1*	*2 – 3 friends*	*4 – 5 friends*	*Total (n =)*
Household size:				
1 – 2 people	4.0	6.7	89.3	100 (75)
3 – 4 people	4.3	3.2	92.6	100 (94)
5 or more people	16.2	0.0	83.8	100 (20)
Total responses	6.3	3.9	89.8	100 (206)
Live with a partner:				
Yes	4.7	3.0	92.3	100 (169)
No	13.5	8.1	78.4	100 (37)
Total responses	6.3	3.9	89.8	100 (206)
Employed in paid work:				
Yes	4.7	3.9	91.4	100 (128)
No	16.0	–	84.0	100 (25)
Retired	3.8	5.7	90.6	100 (53)
Total responses	5.8	3.9	90.3	100 (206)

In addition, the comparative solitude of some who are single, whether by choice or circumstances, was suggested by these results. Fewer single respondents nominated four or five close friends by comparison with those who lived with partners. Another factor worthy of note is that persons not in paid work seem more likely to have no close friends or only one, fewer than employed people or retirees.

Location of persons with whom respondents had close social ties is examined next. This is another element that appears to be linked to definition of boundaries of neighbourhood areas.

Location of close friends

Respondents were asked to nominate if their close friends lived within their identified neighbourhood areas, in other parts of metropolitan Sydney or elsewhere. Respondents identified that 59.0% of close friends lived in other Sydney suburbs and around 20% lived within neighbourhood areas and also outside metropolitan Sydney (Table 7-11). When the distribution of close friends was cross-tabulated against size of neighbourhood areas, the results reflected similar distribution patterns for each category of size. In other words, around 20% of close friends were located within neighbourhood areas irrespective of size, and about another 60% were in the metropolitan area, as shown in Table 7-11.

Table 7-11: Location of close friends by neighbourhood size

	Location of close friends %			
Size of neighbourhood	*Neighbour-hood*	*Other Sydney*	*Elsewhere*	*Total (n =)*
Smaller than 1 km²	22.8	58.1	19.0	100 (289)
1 – 2 km²	18.6	59.7	21.6	100 (236)
2 – 4 km²	20.0	55.5	24.5	100 (155)
4 – 8 km²	20.4	61.8	17.8	100 (152)
Larger than 8 km²	22.8	60.5	16.7	100 (114)
Total responses	20.9	59.0	20.1	100 (946)

In addition, when the number of close friends who lived in the same neighbourhood was cross-tabulated against size of area, a significant difference was not apparent (Table 7-12). About half the respondents (52.7% overall) did not have any close friends living within their local area. This ranged from 47.8% having none with the largest sized areas to 56.3% with the second largest areas. In the smallest category of size, 53.0% did not nominate any neighbours as close friends. At the same time, 16.7% of those with the smallest areas had three or more friends who were neighbours by comparison with 21.7% with the largest areas.

Table 7-12: Close friends in neighbourhood by neighbourhood size

	Number of close friends in neighbourhood %				
Size of neighbourhood	*Nil*	*One*	*Two*	*Three or more*	*Total (n =)*
Smaller than 1 km^2	53.0	25.8	4.5	16.7	100 (66)
1 – 2 km^2	51.9	23.1	15.4	9.6	100 (52)
2 – 4 km^2	52.9	23.5	8.8	14.7	100 (34)
4 – 8 km^2	56.3	12.5	15.6	15.6	100 (32)
Larger than 8 km^2	47.8	21.7	8.7	21.7	100 (23)
Total responses	52.7	22.2	10.1	15.0	100 (207)

These results suggest that there is an inter-relationship between location of close friends and the area recognised as the neighbourhood. Because some people have large home patches, this apparently does not mean that they have significantly more close friends within them than those with small neighbourhood areas. For these reasons, it is important to investigate whether some characteristics identify the types of people who are more likely than others to have close social ties within neighbourhood areas, in other parts of Sydney or elsewhere altogether.

The results point to three profile characteristics influencing propensities for respondents to indicate as close friends people who lived within neighbourhood areas. These are number of hours worked per week, income level and home ownership (Table 7-13).

Table 7-13: Close friends in neighbourhood by key profile variables

	Number of close friends in neighbourhood %				
Profile characteristics	*Nil*	*One*	*Two*	*Three or more*	*Total (n =)*
Own/purchasing home:					
Yes	47.8	23.6	11.5	17.0	100 (182)
No	86.4	13.6	–	–	100 (22)
Total responses	52.0	22.5	10.3	15.2	100 (204)
Income:					
$1,000 or more	55.7	27.9	11.5	4.9	100 (61)
$500 – $999	53.8	19.2	3.8	23.1	100 (52)
Less than $500	47.1	22.1	13.2	17.6	100 (68)
Total responses	51.9	23.2	9.9	14.9	100 (181)
Hours worked per week:					
Less than 20 hours	55.6	14.8	7.4	22.2	100 (27)
20 – 39 hours	41.2	14.7	23.5	20.6	100 (34)
40 hours or more	61.4	26.3	3.5	8.8	100 (57)
Total responses	54.2	20.3	10.2	15.3	100 (118)

213

The most prominent factor appears to be housing tenure, with people who do not own or are not purchasing their homes unlikely to have any neighbours as close friends; no respondents who were tenants had more than one. This provides additional support for the view expressed in Chapter 5, based on results from this research, that housing tenure is an important influence on people's propensity to identify with particular areas.

A notable difference became apparent in the case of income. Persons with high income levels seemed less likely than those on lower incomes to have friends within neighbourhood areas. For example, only 16.4% of those with incomes of $1,000 per week or more identified more than one close neighbourhood friend by comparison with 26.9% of those with incomes of between $500 and $999 per week and 30.8% for those with less than $500 per week (Table 7-13). There was no significant difference with respect to education level of respondents, suggesting that distinctions regarding local close friends should not be made for Webber's professionals.

People who work more "normal" hours (between 20 and 39 hours per week) are apparently more likely than those working either short or long hours to have at least one close friend in the neighbourhood. However, the results suggest those who work short hours (less than 20 hours per week) are more likely to have three or more close friends who were neighbours than those working longer hours. It seems more leisure hours might influence some people to form closer ties within neighbourhood areas whilst for others, this presents opportunities for close friendships to be maintained elsewhere.

Whilst gender was not influential at the local level, when close friends located in other metropolitan areas and outside Sydney were cross-tabulated against gender, there were notable and significant differences respectively (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 11.554$, df = 3 for outside Sydney) (refer to Tables 7-14 and 7-15). Females were more likely than males to have at least one close friends in these other locations. For example, 63.6% of males did not nominate any close friends living away from Sydney compared with only 40.3% of females. In addition, females were more likely than males to have at least three friends living outside Sydney, whereas males were more likely to have three or more friends in the wider Sydney area. Results discussed in Chapter 6 pointed to females having significantly more social contacts with people who lived elsewhere (outside Sydney) than males. Keeping in regular contact with close friends is one obvious reason for females to have more geographically dispersed friendship networks.

Table 7-14: Close friends in "other" Sydney by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Number of close friends in "other" Sydney %				
	Nil	One	Two	Three or more	Total (n =)
Gender:					
Males	15.9	8.0	15.9	60.2	100 (88)
Females	9.2	16.0	23.5	51.3	100 (119)
Total responses	12.1	12.6	20.3	55.1	100 (207)
Live with a partner:					
Yes	12.4	9.5	20.1	58.0	100 (169)
No	10.8	24.3	21.6	43.2	100 (37)
Total responses	12.1	12.1	20.4	55.3	100 (206)
Education:					
Year 12 or below	10.4	17.9	22.4	49.3	100 (67)
Trade certificate or diploma	19.1	13.2	22.1	45.6	100 (68)
Bachelor degree or higher	7.6	7.6	16.7	68.2	100 (66)
Total responses	12.4	12.9	20.4	54.2	100 (201)

Table 7-15: Close friends elsewhere by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Number of close friends elsewhere %				
	Nil	One	Two	Three or more	Total (n =)
Gender:					
Males	63.6	18.2	9.1	9.1	100 (88)
Females	40.3	33.6	10.9	15.1	100 (119)
Total responses	50.2	27.1	10.1	12.6	100 (207)
Length of residence:					
Less than 10 years	48.1	22.2	9.9	19.8	100 (81)
10 – 29 years	49.3	26.0	13.7	11.0	100 (73)
30 years or more	53.8	36.5	5.8	3.8	100 (52)
Total responses	50.0	27.2	10.2	12.6	100 (206)

Other characteristics apparently influencing the tendency for close friends to be living in other parts of Sydney are partnership status and education level (Table 7-14). Persons who are single seemingly have fewer friends within "other Sydney" than those who live with a partner. This is, presumably, because they have fewer close friends overall, as suggested by results earlier in this section. With respect to education level, the results point to those with university qualifications having more close friends in other parts of Sydney. For example, over two thirds (68.2%) had three or more close friends in other Sydney suburbs compared with a minority of others having similar numbers.

When number of close friends located outside Sydney was cross-tabulated against profile characteristics, a notable difference became apparent for length of residence (Table 7-15).

It seems that persons with fewer years of residence in their neighbourhoods have more close friends who live elsewhere than others. For example, 19.8% of respondents with fewer than ten years living in their neighbourhoods had at least three close friends who lived outside Sydney by comparison with only 3.8% of those who had been resident in the same area for 30 years or more. It was noted in Chapter 5 that 50% of respondents who spoke languages other than English had less than 10 years of residence. Quite possibly some of their close friends and relatives lived outside Sydney in their countries of origin.

The results analysed in this section suggest that there is tenuous evidence for Webber's professionals to have fewer social ties limited by the propinquity of neighbourhood than others in that those with higher incomes had fewer neighbours as close friends and those with university qualifications had more close friends located in other parts of metropolitan Sydney. Of greater importance seems to be that females in general rather than professionals or males have more dispersed friendship networks, at odds with the tenet of the hypothesis. Of course, dispersal patterns described by respondents for nominated *close* friendships are not necessarily the same as for *all* contacts. Additional insights into the relevance of propinquity for friendship ties is provided by examination in the next section of methods used for keeping in touch with close friends.

Methods of keeping in touch

In an earlier chapter that discussed actual neighbourhood use through social contact diaries (Chapter 6), the telephone was identified as the most practised method for keeping in touch with others. Face-to-face meetings also happened frequently. Sending emails and writing letters were less common. The seemingly reduced relevance of written methods of communication is echoed in methods nominated for keeping in touch with close friends (Table 7-16).

Table 7-16: Methods of keeping in touch with close friends by gender

| Method of contact | Gender % that kept in touch with close friends using identified method | | |
	Males	*Females*	*Total responses*
Face-to-face meetings	82.7	76.8	79.2
Phone	78.3	88.0	84.1
Send emails	18.6	16.6	17.4
Write letters	3.1	6.3	5.0
Total (n =)	100 (387)	100 (560)	100 (947)

Because social contact diaries were concerned with interactions that occurred at home, it could be argued that this ignored potentially high levels of social networking using the internet in the workplace or at alternative sites offering internet access. However, this section's results place the internet in a distant third place behind the telephone and face-to-face meetings as preferred methods for keeping in touch with close friends (Table 7-16). In spite of the fact that 72.3% of all respondents used the internet (as identified in Chapter 4), only 17.4% of all identified close friends were usually contacted by email. Of course, it might be that many close friends, particularly older relatives, were without email addresses but this would not provide sufficient reason to invalidate the suggestion that emails are generally not used for staying in touch with close friends.

For persons who used the internet at home, emailing did not appear to have replaced other contact methods when compared with patterns indicated for those who did not use the internet at home (Table 7-17). By comparison, those with internet access at work emailed the same proportion of their close friends as people who use the internet at home (24.1%). However, there were apparently reduced tendencies for those who used the internet at work to have face-to-face meetings with close friends by comparison with others. For example, only 73.6% of users of the internet at work met close friends face-to-face compared with 84.2% of other people (including those not employed). This could, of course, be a function of the geographic dispersal of close friends, perhaps in CWPs, as well as the hours spent in the workforce limiting opportunities for meeting friends. Levels of phone contact were similar for those who used the internet at work and at home. In both cases, use levels of the phone were higher than those who did not use the internet, suggesting that email contact was supplementary to other methods of contact.

Table 7-17: Preferred contact methods between close friends for internet users

Contact method	Use internet at home %		Use internet at work %	
	Yes	*No*	*Yes*	*No*
Face-to-face meetings	79.3	79.6	73.6	84.2
Phone	86.1	81.3	86.8	80.9
Email	24.1	4.0	24.1	12.6

Computer use skills were demonstrated to be highly inter-related with age, stage in the life course, and socio-economic status and thus the elderly, retirees, persons without tertiary education and those on low incomes could be expected to be less likely to email relatives

and close friends. They might not have the inclination, facilities, resources or capacity for computer and internet use. In spite of these tendencies, the results point to people of *all* ages and stages generally disregarding the internet as a method of communication. It is imagined that use of mobile phones, with increasingly sophisticated technology facilitating text messaging, might further diminish the relevance of the internet and emails as a preferred contact method.

Gender was an important factor influencing preferred methods of contact (Table 7-16). The results point to males being more likely to prefer contact through face-to-face meetings than females (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 4.838$, df = 1) whilst females were significantly more likely to nominate the phone (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 16.202$. df = 1). It should be noted that *frequency* of contact was not the measure here. Elsewhere in this thesis, females were found to have appreciably greater numbers of contacts using all methods, including face-to-face meetings, than males. In other words, whilst males nominated that they preferred to keep in touch through face-to-face meetings to a greater degree than females, such meetings with others might not happen as frequently as for females.

The preference by males for face-to-face meetings could be explained by their having established patterns of socialising that do not require prior arrangement or confirmation (for example, meeting at a particular venue on a preset night of the week). It might also be that females sometimes arrange face-to-face meetings on behalf of males.

Seemingly high levels of preferences by both genders for phone and face-to-face meetings for keeping in touch are interesting having regard for social contact diaries pointing to the phone being around six times more frequently used than face-to-face meetings. Of course, contact methods discussed in this section are with respondents' close friends only and not limited by place, whereas earlier discussion related to *all* social contact occurring *at home*. Another consideration is that more than one preferred method for keeping in touch could be nominated, and whilst contact by phone might be more commonly practised, this is not necessarily to the exclusion of less regular, but favoured, face-to-face meetings.

Most people indicated that they liked to keep in touch with close friends through face-to-face meetings. Those respondents more likely to have face-to-face contact were longer-term residents (30 years or more) by comparison with those with fewer years living in the

same area (statistically significant difference, χ^2 = 8.451, df = 2), elderly (many with long term connections with their neighbourhood), and also younger people more so than those aged 40 to 59 years (statistically significant difference, χ^2 = 7.469, df = 2) (Table 7-18). Housing tenure is strongly associated with length of residence and age and thus it is not surprising that homeowners also apparently have a stronger preferences for face-to-face meetings than tenants (statistically significant, χ^2 = 9.065, df = 1).

Table 7-18: Face-to-face meetings with close friends by key profile variables

	Keep in touch by face-to-face meetings %		
Profile characteristics	*Yes*	*No*	*Total (n =)*
Length of residence:			
Less than 10 years	75.2	24.8	100 (375)
10 – 29 years	79.3	20.7	100 (333)
30 years or more	85.0	15.0	100 (234)
Total responses	79.1	20.9	100 (942)
Age:			
Less than 40 years	81.5	18.5	100 (249)
40 – 59 years	75.3	24.7	100 (434)
60 years or more	83.3	16.7	100 (264)
Total responses	79.2	20.8	100 (947)
Household size:			
1 – 2 persons	80.8	19.2	100 (344)
3 – 4 persons	74.4	25.6	100 (442)
5 or more persons	90.4	9.6	100 (156)
Total responses	79.4	20.6	100 (942)
Own/purchasing home:			
Yes	80.6	19.4	100 (847)
No	67.7	32.3	100 (99)
Total responses	79.3	20.7	100 (946)
Own/access to motor vehicle:			
Yes	79.3	20.7	100 (886)
No	77.0	23.0	100 (61)
Total responses	79.2	20.8	100 (947)

In addition, members of large households (as opposed to those composed of fewer than five persons) seem to prefer face-to-face meetings more so than people from smaller households (statistically significant difference, χ^2 = 18.595, df = 2). Earlier results from this research have pointed to people from large households having higher levels of interaction in the neighbourhood areas than elsewhere. Perhaps respondents from large households, by comparison with those from smaller ones, are more exposed to this form of interaction due to arrangements initiated by, and activities of, other household members, and facilitated within the neighbourhood by people's propinquity.

Significant differences that became apparent when use of the phone to keep in touch with close friends was cross-tabulated against profile variables are shown in Table 7-19. Shorter-term residents (less than 10 years) were apparently more likely to use the phone than longer-term ones (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 11.611$, df = 2), and residents in younger age groups more than respondents in older groups (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 11.643$, df = 2).

Table 7-19: Phone contact with close friends by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Keep in touch by phone %		
	Yes	*No*	*Total (n =)*
Length of residence:			
Less than 10 years	89.3	10.7	100 (375)
10 – 29 years	80.8	19.2	100 (333)
30 years or more	81.6	18.4	100 (234)
Total responses	84.4	15.6	100 (942)
Age:			
Less than 40 years	90.4	9.6	100 (249)
40 – 59 years	83.2	16.8	100 (434)
60 years or more	79.5	20.5	100 (264)
Total responses	84.1	15.9	100 (947)
Own/access to motor vehicle:			
Yes	85.2	14.8	100 (886)
No	67.2	32.8	100 (61)
Total responses	84.1	15.9	100 (947)
Internet use at work:			
Yes	86.8	13.2	100 (440)
No	78.5	21.5	100 (414)
Not applicable	83.0	17.0	100 (253)
	83.8	16.2	100 (907)
Own mobile phone:			
Yes	85.9	14.1	100 (694)
No	79.4	20.6	100 (248)
Total responses	84.2	15.8	100 (942)

In addition, an expected preference for use of the telephones was apparent for owners of mobile phones (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 5.697$, df = 1). A high inter-relationship between mobile phone ownership and age was previously identified (in Chapter 4). Of those respondents who were less than 40 (*n* = 52), 88.5% owned mobile phones by comparison with only 45.6% of participants 60 years or more (*n* = 57). However, those in the middle age group of 40 to 59 years (*n* = 95) also had high levels of mobile phone ownership (80.0%). Thus ownership of mobile phones alone does not appear to account for preferences for keeping in touch by phone. Age is apparently the defining factor in this regard, with younger people more likely to choose this method of

contact, reinforcing comments made with respect to habitual use of phones in the analysis of social contact diaries.

Interestingly, respondents without private transport were less likely to make contact with close friends by phone than those who owned motor vehicles and were more likely to prefer face-to-face meetings (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 13.799$, df = 1) (Table 7-19). As shown in Table 7-18, 77.0% of their close friends were contacted face-to-face but only to about the same extent as others (79.3% of close friends of car owners were usually contacted through meetings). In other words, the difference was not significant. This further suggests that non-car owners might have limited contact levels with other people by comparison with car owners.

Types of relationships between respondents and their nominated close friends are examined next to explore why (perhaps due to a kinship connection) and where (such as at work) friendship ties are formed and maintained.

Types of relationships

Respondents were asked to describe their relationship with persons nominated as close friends. For the purposes of analysis, relationship classifications were treated as being exclusive in that a person could not be categorised as, for example, both kin *and* friend or work colleague. Most of the 947 people nominated as close friends had a single classification but where there was more than one, kinship ties took precedence over all others, and work colleague overrode the classification of friend or acquaintance. Closeness of relationships ("very close" or "somewhat close") was also established through the questionnaire, as was the number of years nominees had been known to respondents. Types of relationships respondents had with close friends are summarised in Table 7-20..

Table 7-20: Types and closeness of relationships with close friends

Type of relationship	%	Closeness of relationship %		
		Very close	Somewhat close	Total (n =)
Kin	36.3	83.1	16.9	100 (344)
Friend	54.4	61.4	38.6	100 (513)
Work colleague	7.2	50.0	50.0	100 (68)
Acquaintance	2.1	15.0	85.0	100 (20)
Total responses	100 (n = 947)	67.5	32.5	100 (945)

As shown in Table 7-20, only a small proportion (7.2%) of close friends were work colleagues. Further analysis of results illustrated that even when respondents not currently in the paid work force were excluded from consideration, the proportion of work colleagues who were classified as close friends rose to only 8.7%. People who were not employed or who were retirees nominated 4.8% and 4.5% of previous work colleagues respectively as close friends, suggesting that once the commonality and propinquity of the workplace was removed, around half of work-based friendships did not endure in the long run. The fact that respondents claimed to be very close to only 50.0% of work colleagues lends support to this interpretation.

Whilst some attention has been given in the literature to the potential importance of the workplace in providing alternative communities in lieu of traditional place-based ones, these results point to general levels of impermanence within, and unimportance of, friendships in workplace communities. Moreover, over half the workplace close friends (56.7%) had been known for less than ten years (refer to Table 7-21). Whilst the high level of mobility of Australians with respect to place of residence is acknowledged in discussion about community ties, it appears that little attention has been given to the mobility of people within the workplace and the potentially tenuous nature of friendship links formed in workplace communities as people move from one job to another (or, alternatively, in and out of employment). These results point to friendships made within workplace communities being less stable than ones established within neighbourhoods.

Table 7-21: Length of relationship for types of close friends

	Length of relationship %			
Relationship	Less than 10 years	10 – 29 years	30 years or more	Total (n =)
Kin	5.3	22.3	72.4	100 (337)
Friend	28.5	45.9	25.6	100 (512)
Work colleague	56.7	26.9	16.4	100 (67)
Acquaintance	75.0	20.0	5.0	100 (20)
Total responses	23.2	35.5	41.3	100 (936)

For nominated close friends who were also kin, respondents were, as might be expected, very close to most (83.1%) (Table 7-20). Propinquity is apparently not essential for maintaining close kinship ties, since about one-third of kin lived outside the Sydney metropolitan area (Table 7-22). Only a small proportion (9.6%) of kin lived within the same neighbourhood area (excluding family members in the same household). The

majority (72.4%) of relationships with kin were long-term, in excess of 30 years, suggesting many people nominated parents, children or siblings as those to whom they were closest (Table 7-21).

Table 7-22: Types of close friends by location

Relationship	Location % In neighbour- hood	Other Sydney	Elsewhere	Total (n =)
Kin	9.6	59.0	31.4	100 (344)
Friend	28.2	57.0	14.2	100 (514)
Work colleague	8.8	79.4	11.8	100 (68)
Acquaintance	55.0	40.0	5.0	100 (20)
Total responses	20.9	59.0	20.1	100 (946)

Over half (54.4%) of all close friends were classified as "friends" rather than kin, work colleagues or merely acquaintances and people felt very close to the majority (61.4%) (Table 7-20). Therefore, it seems that, whilst relatives of long-standing are of great importance, in terms of numbers alone, relationships forged with close friends over time, with no kinship connection, are more important with respect to numbers. Over a quarter (28.2%) of friends lived within the same neighbourhood (Table 7-22). Respondents had known 10.3% of those in the category of friends for no more than five years, and another 18.2% for no more than ten years.

As might be expected, the classification of "acquaintance" was not generally selected, with only 2.1% of all close friends described as such (Table 7-20). Over half (55.0%) of the acquaintances lived within neighbourhood areas, suggesting associations formed as a consequence of propinquity (Table 7-22).

Several factors influenced types of close friends (refer to Table 7-23). Whilst it has already been suggested that friends rather than kin provide the bulk of close relationships, the results point to males nominating more kinfolk as close friends by comparison with females. For example, 40.6% of close friends identified by males were kin compared with only 33.4% of females' close friends (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 5.094$, df = 1) and, conversely, females had significantly more "friends" than males (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 16.342$, df = 1). In addition, male respondents had fewer very close friendships with others than females (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 5.725$, df = 1).

Table 7-23: Types and closeness of close friends by key profile variables

			Relationship %			
Profile characteristics	Kin	Friend	Work-mate	Acquaint-ance	Total (n =)	Very close
Gender:						
Male	40.6	46.5	9.0	3.9	100 (387)	61.3
Female	33.4	59.8	5.9	0.9	100 (560)	70.5
Total responses	36.3	54.4	7.2	2.1	100 (947)	67.5
Employed in paid work:						
Yes	37.8	52.9	8.7	0.7	100 (596)	70.5
No	24.8	65.7	4.8	4.8	100 (105)	53.3
Retired	37.8	53.3	4.5	4.5	100 (246)	66.4
Total responses	36.3	54.4	7.2	2.1	100 (947)	67.5
Hours worked per week:						
Less than 20 hrs	31.5	65.4	3.1	0.0	100 (130)	86.2
20 – 39 hours	35.0	58.6	6.4	0.0	100 (157)	65.6
40 hrs or more	42.8	43.2	12.5	1.5	100 (264)	66.3
Total responses	37.9	52.8	8.5	0.7	100 (551)	70.8
Income:						
$1,000 or more	40.3	47.1	11.9	0.7	100 (293)	64.2
$500 – $999	35.7	52.9	7.0	4.5	100 (244)	68.4
Less than $500	32.5	61.4	4.2	1.9	100 (311)	72.0
Total responses	36.3	54.4	7.2	2.1	100 (947)	67.5

The results point to females being more inclined to network outside, but in addition to, inherited family connections and to form more very close relationships than males. This factor is supported elsewhere in this thesis, in particular within social contact diaries, where females were shown to have significantly greater levels of activity in terms of social contacts.

Earlier results from this research suggested that some who are not employed (excluding retirees) experience lower levels of social interaction than others. Results with respect to close friends provide additional support for this premise. Kinship ties for people not employed were significantly weaker than for respondents in paid work and for retirees (statistically significant, χ^2 = 6.827, df = 2). This might have contributed to their lower levels of very close friendships than others (statistically significant, χ^2 = 12.141, df = 2; refer to Table 7-23). In addition, for persons not employed, close friendships with others were generally of shorter duration by comparison with those actively involved in the workforce or retired (statistically significant, χ^2 = 91.659. df = 4; refer to Table 7-24).

Table 7-24: Years known close friends by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Years known close friend %			
	Less than 10 years	10 – 29 years	30 years or more	Total (n =)
Length of residence:				
Less than 10 years	31.5	37.4	31.2	100 (372)
10 – 29 years	21.5	41.5	37.0	100 (330)
30 years or more	10.5	24.5	65.1	100 (229)
Total responses	22.8	35.7	41.6	100 (931)
Age:				
Less than 40 years	39.0	36.2	24.8	100 (246)
40 – 59 years	20.8	41.0	38.2	100 (432)
60 years or more	12.0	25.6	62.4	100 (258)
Total responses	23.2	35.5	41.3	100 (936)
Household size:				
1 – 2 people	16.5	31.9	51.6	100 (339)
3 – 4 people	24.9	37.0	38.1	100 (438)
5 people or more	33.8	40.3	26.0	100 (154)
Total responses	23.3	35.7	41.0	100 (931)
Preferred language at home:				
Speak English only	20.7	35.7	43.6	100 (849)
Speak other than English	47.1	33.3	19.5	100 (87)
Total responses	23.2	35.5	41.3	100 (936)
Employment status:				
Yes	24.0	38.4	37.6	100 (591)
No	43.8	42.9	13.3	100 (105)
Retired	12.1	25.0	62.9	100 (240)
Total responses	23.2	35.5	41.3	100 (936)
Income:				
$1,000 or more	19.5	36.3	44.2	100 (292)
$500 – $999	25.0	40.2	34.8	100 (244)
Less than $500	28.4	35.0	36.6	100 (303)
Total responses	24.3	36.9	38.7	100 (839)
Own/purchasing home:				
Yes	21.3	35.3	43.4	100 (836)
No	39.4	36.4	24.2	100 (99)
Total responses	23.2	35.5	41.3	100 (936)
Computer literate:				
Yes	24.6	38.1	37.3	100 (716)
No	19.0	26.7	54.3	100 (210)
Total responses	23.3	35.5	41.1	100 (926)
Use internet at work:				
Yes	21.4	29.8	48.8	100 (252)
No	23.7	40.2	36.1	100 (438)
Not applicable	27.7	33.5	38.8	100 (206)
Total responses	24.0	35.7	40.3	100 (896)
Use internet at home:				
Yes	25.8	37.1	37.1	100 (628)
No	17.4	32.1	50.5	100 (293)
Total responses	23.1	35.5	41.4	100 (921)

The results illustrate the adverse impact that working long hours might have on the establishment and maintenance of friendships. Respondents who worked 40 hours or more per week were sustained more so by close ties with kin (notable difference) and with work colleagues (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 11.224$, df = 2) than with friends (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 20.108$, df = 2) by comparison with persons working fewer hours per week (Table 7-23). Of course, long hours at work mean less time for social activities away from the workplace, leading perhaps to greater dependency on established kinship ties and friendships with fellow workers. In addition, respondents in part-time work (less than 20 hours per week) had more friendships that they described as being very close than those who worked longer hours (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 19.465$, df = 2.

In addition, significant differences were apparent when the types of close relationships formed were cross-tabulated against income (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 12.627$, df = 2 for friends and $\chi^2 = 13.089$, df = 2 for work colleagues) (refer to Table 7-23). For example, people with low incomes (less than $500 per week) seemingly have more friendships with *friends*, as opposed to kin and work colleagues, than persons with higher incomes. However, results previously suggested that female respondents had lower incomes and worked shorter hours than males. Therefore, these relationships might instead be more of a function of gender than either hours worked or income.

Results also point to lower income earners having relationships of shorter duration than those on high incomes (notable difference). For example, persons earning less than $500 per week had 28.4% of close friendships that had lasted for less than 10 years whilst this proportion was only 19.4% for those who earned more than $1,000 per week. The low-income group includes those without paid jobs. Fewer long-term friendships might in part be a function of the cost of maintaining friendship networks over time.

As might be expected, both long-term residents and those more senior in age were more likely to have long-standing friendships (statistically significant differences, $\chi^2 = 81.017$, df = 4 for length of residence and $\chi^2 = 97.371$, df = 4 for age) (Table 7-24). There were also significant differences associated with household size ($\chi^2 = 35.578$, df = 4), with members of larger households having more close relationships of short duration than those from smaller households, possibly associated with activities involving children or other family members but with age perhaps also a function. For example, 33.8% of close friends of

people from large households had been known for less than 10 years compared with 24.9% where there were three or four household members and only 16.5% in households of one or two people.

People who spoke languages other than English at home were more dependent on short-term friendships (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 34.871$, df = 2). Relocation from another country causes forced disruptions of historical ties with relatives and friends, to be replaced by more recently formed associations. The metropolitan concentration of Australia's recent immigration flows can both exacerbate and alleviate potential problems of isolation (Walmsley, Rolley & Weinand 1999; Burnley, Murphy & Fagan 1997).

Significant differences were evident for length of relationships in relation to home ownership, computer use and internet use (Table 7-24). However, these appear to be more functions of age and stage in the life course, factors already discussed, than housing tenure and use of computers *per se*.

Synopsis of results for close friends

Most close friends live in metropolitan Sydney but away from neighbourhood areas. The results point to only about one in five close friends also being neighbours, with about the same proportion located away from Sydney. There seems to be a link between location of close friends and definition of neighbourhood areas for about half the population, with perceptions of neighbourhood area, irrespective of size, including, for them, at least one close friend.

Friendship rather than kinship ties seemingly form the basis for the majority of close friendships, with work colleagues a distant and comparatively unimportant third category. Whether this means that mutual help and support patterns and preferences of associations happen more or, alternatively, less among kin or close friends cannot be stated. An enquiry among families of professionals and tradespersons in Sydney half a century ago (Fallding 1957) showed high degrees of solidarity within families in that relatives more so than friends were cherished, were depended (or were dependent) upon, were seen and were spoken to. The geographic dispersal of many family members due to societal changes possibly reduces opportunities for these same high levels of association in contemporary Australian society, in spite of improvements in communication. This factor, combined

with a demonstrated preference for face-to-face meetings, might promote the importance of geographically closer friends over more dispersed kin.

Generally, people prefer both face-to-face meetings and the telephone to keep in touch. Contact by email is apparently of limited consequence, even though most people have access to the internet. Postal mail is seldom used to contact close friends. Friendships formed in workplace communities or virtual communities seem to be relatively unimportant overall. Whether data for social contacts provide further clarification of the relevance of the neighbourhood is examined in the next section.

7.4   Social contacts

Similar data to those collected about close friends were also sought about persons with whom respondents had experienced most frequent social contact over the four weeks before the survey (Part C2). This additional information was sought because some friends to whom people feel very close might not be regularly contacted, particularly those of long-standing or without propinquity. In other words, the strength and endurance of the relationship might not require continual reinforcement through contact. Instead, another group of people might substitute as regular social contacts, with continuing associations having the potential over time to impact on attachments formed within specific communities or groups. Therefore, social contact data could show where active social networking was predominantly occurring and, more importantly, if neighbours or other groups of people altogether were involved. Members of respondents' households were to be excluded from consideration (as applied when close friends were nominated). People nominated in the previous survey question as close friends could, of course, also be nominated as recent social contacts.

The information sought was under the same headings as for close friends. Respondents were asked to describe how social contacts were usually made (Part C2 (i)), where they lived (Part C2 (ii)), their relationship to the respondent (Part C2 (iii)), the closeness of that relationship (Part C2 (iv)), and the length of the association (Part C2 (v)). In addition, respondents were asked to indicate if the same person had been nominated as a close friend.

Overall, 59.3% of persons who had been identified as close friends were also nominated as those whom respondents had recently contacted socially. The proportion of social contacts from neighbourhood areas, other metropolitan suburbs, and elsewhere outside Sydney remained essentially the same irrespective of whether or not they had also been nominated as close friends (Table 7-25). For example, 25.4% of social contacts who were close friends lived in neighbourhood areas as did 25.8% of social contacts who had not been nominated as close friends.

Table 7-25: Location of social contacts

| Location | Also nominated as a close friend % | | |
	Yes	*No*	*Total responses*
Neighbourhood area	25.4	25.8	25.5
Other Sydney	58.6	61.6	59.9
Elsewhere	16.0	12.6	14.6
Total (n =)	100 (532)	100 (365)	100 (897)
As % of total (n = 897)	59.3	42.1	100

The characteristics that best described approximately three out of five of close friends who had also been contacted socially within the preceding four weeks are of particular interest. Of perhaps greater importance is what distinguished the other 40% in their relationship with the respondent. For this reason, scrutiny of results for social contacts is based on assessment of information for, firstly, social contacts who were also close friends, and secondly, for those who were social contacts only. Comments are directed towards highlighting features that are pertinent to the CWP concept, rather than presenting a similar pattern of results as for close friends.

Number of social contacts

Information was recorded for a total of 898 social contacts, an average of 4.3 contacts per respondent. Number of social contacts was slightly lower than numbers of close friends (by only 5.2%). Again, most respondents (79.7%) chose to nominate a maximum of five people, with an additional 3.4% listing information in respect of four. Only 5.3% did not nominate any social contacts. Of those respondents who identified no more than one contact (n = 18), 50.0% were in the smallest category for size of neighbourhood area.

The only significant difference with respect to number of social contacts nominated was that people who did not use the internet at home were more likely to have fewer social

contacts (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 12.900$, df = 2) (Table 7-26). This implies that internet usage in the home might facilitate social contact. It could also be that those who use the internet have more resources and greater inclinations to make contact than others and, of course, do not belong to Webber's "left behinds". Again, 16.0% of respondents not in paid work nominated no more than one social contact, the same proportion as for close friends (refer to Table 7-10).

Table 7-26: Number of social contacts by internet use at home

Internet use at home	Number of social contacts %			
	Nil – 1 contacts	2 - 3 contacts	4 - 5 contacts	Total (n =)
Yes	3.0	9.0	88.0	100 (133)
No	17.4	7.2	75.4	100 (69)
Total responses	7.9	8.4	83.7	100 (202)

Location of social contacts

With respect to location of social contacts, the most interesting feature is that, by comparison with close friends, more social contacts were located within neighbourhood areas, with about one in four living in the home patch (Table 7-27). Furthermore, a majority of respondents identified at least one social contact within their neighbourhood. As might be expected, the increase in the proportion of local associations as recent social contacts, by comparison with the proportion of local close friends, was to the detriment of friends and relatives living outside Sydney. The proportions of recent social contacts living in other metropolitan suburbs was, at around 59%, essentially the same as for the proportion of close friends in other parts of Sydney.

Table 7-27: Comparisons between close friends and social contacts

Characteristic	Close friends %	Social contacts %
Location:		
Neighbourhood	20.9	25.5
Other Sydney	59.0	59.9
Elsewhere	20.1	14.6
Total (n =)	100 (946)	100 (897)
Number in neighbourhood:		
Nil	51.5	44.1
1 person	22.8	23.8
2 persons	10.4	17.3
3 persons	9.4	6.9
4 persons	3.5	5.4
5 persons	2.5	2.5
Total (n =)	100 (202)	100 (202)

When location of social contacts was cross-tabulated against size of neighbourhood area, no significant difference was apparent. There were only minor variations in the proportion of social contacts located in neighbourhood areas, metropolitan areas or elsewhere altogether between all categories for sizes (Table 7-28). Thus the results point to a link between definition of neighbourhood boundaries and the location of some social contacts for at least half the respondents, as was previously suggested by research results with respect to close friends.

Table 7-28: Location of social contacts by neighbourhood size

Size of neighbourhood	Location of social contacts%			
	Neighbour-hood	*Other Sydney*	*Elsewhere*	*Total (n =)*
Smaller than 1 km²	26.3	61.5	12.2	100 (289)
1 – 2 km²	22.7	62.9	14.4	100 (236)
2 – 4 km²	26.9	56.6	16.6	100 (155)
4 – 8 km²	26.0	59.5	14.5	100 (152)
Larger than 8 km²	27.2	54.4	18.4	100 (114)
Total responses	25.5	59.9	14.6	100 (946)

The proportion of respondents with no recent social contacts who also lived within neighbourhood areas ranged from 50.0% for those with a neighbourhood that was two to four km² in size to a low 34.8% of respondents in the largest category for neighbourhood size (over eight km²) (Table 7-29). The difference in number of social contacts based on size of neighbourhood was not significant.

Table 7-29: Neighbours as social contacts by neighbourhood size

Size of neighbourhood	Number of social contacts in neighbourhood %				
	Nil	*One*	*Two*	*Three or more*	*Total (n =)*
Smaller than 1 km²	48.5	21.2	15.2	15.2	100 (66)
1 – 2 km²	42.3	30.8	13.5	13.5	100 (52)
2 – 4 km²	50.0	11.8	23.5	14.7	100 (34)
4 – 8 km²	46.9	21.9	21.9	9.4	100 (32)
Larger than 8 km²	34.8	30.4	13.0	21.7	100 (23)
Total responses	45.4	23.2	16.9	14.5	100 (207)

Neighbours who were close friends were more likely to be nominated as recent social contacts than close friends who lived outside the neighbourhood. As a result (and not unexpectedly), it is obvious that face-to-face meetings, the preferred method of social

contact, are facilitated by propinquity. The effect of neighbourhood propinquity on the preferred methods of contact *vis-à-vis* friends or social contacts living in other locations is illustrated in Table 7-30. For example, neighbours were met face-to-face around 97% of the time whereas meetings with friends who lived in other happened about only 75% of the time.

Table 7-30: Effect of propinquity on preferred method of contact

Type of association	In neighbourhood % Face-to-face	Phone	In all other locations % Face-to-face	Phone
Close friends only	97.5	68.2	74.3	88.2
All social contacts	96.9	54.6	78.3	77.8
Social contacts, also close friends	97.8	62.2	75.6	85.9
Only social contacts	95.7	43.6	82.3	66.1

When location of social contacts was cross-tabulated against numbers of contacts within each category of location (neighbourhood, other Sydney and elsewhere), no significant differences became apparent for "other Sydney". The most influential factors for the other two location categories were, in each situation, partnership status and housing tenure (refer to Tables 7-31 and 7-32). The results point to those who live with partners and homeowners having more social contacts with neighbours whilst single persons and tenants have more social contact with people living elsewhere. In addition, when social contacts who lived elsewhere were cross-tabulated against internet use at home, there was a notable difference. Not unexpectedly, persons who used the internet at home had social contact by email more so than those without internet access at home. This was the only situation when noteworthy differences were apparent in relation to contact by email, an indication of the relative unimportance overall of emailing as a method of staying in touch.

Table 7-31: Social contacts in neighbourhood by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Number of social contacts in neighbourhood % Nil	One	Two	Three or more	Total (n =)
Live with a partner:					
Yes	43.8	19.5	20.7	16.0	100 (169)
No	54.1	37.8	–	8.1	100 (37)
Total responses	45.6	22.8	17.0	14.6	100 (206)
Own/purchasing home:					
Yes	42.9	22.0	18.7	16.5	100 (182)
No	59.1	36.4	4.5	–	100 (22)
Total responses	44.6	23.5	17.2	14.7	100 (204)

Table 7-32: Social contacts outside Sydney by key profile variables

| Profile characteristics | Number of social contacts elsewhere % | | | | |
	Nil	*One*	*Two*	*Three or more*	*Total (n =)*
Live with a partner:					
Yes	63.9	20.1	13.0	3.0	100 (169)
No	62.2	10.8	13.5	13.5	100 (37)
Total responses	63.6	18.4	13.1	4.9	100 (206)
Own/purchasing home:					
Yes	65.4	18.1	12.1	4.4	100 (182)
No	40.9	22.7	22.7	13.6	100 (22)
Total responses	62.7	18.6	13.2	5.4	100 (204)
Use internet at home:					
Yes	58.6	17.3	16.5	7.5	100 (133)
No	71.0	20.3	7.2	1.4	100 (69)
Total responses	62.9	18.3	13.4	5.4	100 (202)

Not surprisingly, respondents who had lived in the same area for many years or who were at least 60 years of age were more likely to have social contacts who were neighbours as well as close friends than short-term residents or younger persons (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 12.098$, df = 4 and $\chi^2 = 11.148$, df = 4 respectively) (Table 7-33). For example, persons with at least 30 years of residence had 36.4% of their social contacts with neighbours by comparison with only 20.9% with less than 10 years of residence. In addition, 30.4% of social contacts for persons over 60 lived in the same local area whereas for those aged between 40 and 59 years, only 21.7% were neighbours.

The results also point to those who live with partners or who own their own homes, as well as respondents who usually speak languages other than English, having more neighbourhood social contacts than single people, tenants and persons speaking English only at home. All differences were statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 9.276$, df = 2 for partnership status; $\chi^2 = 8.226$, df = 2 for language spoken; and $\chi^2 = 24.484$, df = 2 for home ownership) (refer to Table 7-33).

Thus it seems for neighbours to become good friends rather than just casual social contacts, age and stage in the life course and length of residence are important. Alternatively, those who use languages other than English are apparently more dependent upon social contacts formed through neighbourhood associations than the bulk of population, perhaps in part a reflection of cultural norms practised in another country, but also possibly influenced by limited networks and opportunities to meet and get to know people in CWPs.

Table 7-33: Location of "close friend" social contacts by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Location of "close friend" social contacts %			
	Neighbour-hood	*Other Sydney*	*Elsewhere*	*Total (n =)*
Length of residence:				
Less than 10 years	20.9	60.2	18.9	100 (196)
10 – 29 years	23.0	60.5	16.5	100 (200)
30 years or more	36.4	52.3	11.4	100 (132)
Total responses	25.6	58.3	16.1	100 (528)
Age:				
Less than 40 years	26.4	64.3	9.3	100 (140)
40 – 59 years	21.7	57.8	20.5	100 (244)
60 years or more	30.4	54.7	14.9	100 (148)
Total responses	25.4	58.6	16.0	100 (532)
Live with a partner:				
Yes	27.3	59.2	13.5	100 (429)
No	17.3	58.2	24.5	100 (98)
Total responses	25.4	59.0	15.6	100 (527)
Preferred language at home:				
Speak English only	25.0	57.7	17.3	100 (492)
Speak other than English	30.0	70.0	–	100 (40)
Total responses	25.4	58.6	16.0	100 (532)
Own or purchasing home:				
Yes	28.0	58.1	13.9	100 (475)
No	3.6	62.5	33.9	100 (56)
Total responses	25.4	58.6	16.0	100 (531)

When recent social contacts who had *not* also been nominated as close friends were cross-tabulated against profile characteristics, the single statistically significant difference was with respect to partnership status (χ^2 = 6.235, df = 2), with single people having fewer contacts with neighbours than others (Table 7-34). Notable differences were apparent for numbers of hours worked and internet use at work. For example, people who worked long hours were more likely to have social contact with neighbours whilst those who worked between 20 and 39 hours had fewer contacts. In addition, those who used the internet at work had more neighbours as social contacts than those with jobs did which did not involve internet access or who were not in the workforce.

Table 7-34: Location of "other" social contacts by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Location of "other" social contacts %			
	Neighbour-hood	Other Sydney	Elsewhere	Total (n =)
Live with a partner:				
Yes	28.0	59.2	12.9	100 (311)
No	13.0	75.9	11.1	100 (54)
Total responses	25.8	61.6	12.6	100 (365)
Hours worked per week:				
Less than 20 hours	22.6	56.6	20.8	100 (53)
20 – 39 hours	14.8	63.9	21.3	100 (61)
40 hours or more	29.1	62.1	8.7	100 (103)
Total responses	23.5	61.3	15.2	100 (217)
Use internet at work:				
Yes	33.3	54.6	12.0	100 (108)
No	26.9	59.4	13.7	100 (175)
Not applicable	14.3	72.9	12.9	100 (70)
Total responses	26.3	60.6	13.0	100 (353)
Education:				
Year 12 or below	22.2	66.7	11.1	100 (108)
Trade or diploma	25.6	62.8	11.6	100 (121)
Bachelor degree or higher	28.3	57.5	14.2	100 (107)
Total responses	25.6	621.	12.4	100 (356)
Income:				
$1,000 or more	26.4	63.2	10.4	100 (125)
$500 – $999	25.0	59.0	16.0	100 (100)
Less than $500	25.2	62.1	12.6	100 (103)
Total responses	25.6	61.6	12.8	100 (328)

Whilst there were no other differences of statistical significance, it is worth noting that persons with university degrees had slightly greater propensities for social contacts with neighbours than those with lower education levels. In addition, people had similar proportions of social contacts who were neighbours, irrespective of income levels (Table 7-34). In other words, people were not significantly more or less inclined to interact socially with neighbours according to levels of education and personal affluence.

Methods of keeping in touch

Comparative methods of keeping in touch with all close friends, close friends who had also been recently contacted socially, social contacts who had not been nominated as close friends and, finally, all social contacts are displayed in Table 7-35. Face-to-face meetings were the most practised way to keep in touch with social contacts, more so if they were not close friends. In addition, the telephone was very important.

Table 7-35: Methods of contacts with close friends and social contacts

	Close friends and/or social contacts %			
Types of contact	*Total close friends*	*Close friends, also social contacts*	*Only social contacts*	*Total social contacts*
Face-to-face meetings	79.2	81.2	85.8	83.1
Phone	84.1	79.9	60.3	71.9
Send emails	17.4	15.4	9.9	13.1
Write letters	5.0	2.8	1.9	2.4
Total (n =)	100 (947)	100 (533)	100 (365)	100 (898)

Not surprisingly, similar patterns in results were apparent for social contacts meeting face-to-face as for close friends although differences were generally less pronounced. One noteworthy but expected significant difference was with respect to motor vehicle ownership, with those without private transport less likely to have face-to-face meetings as forms of social contact (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 12.308$, df = 1). This emphasises how limited mobility due to lack of motor vehicle ownership or access can restrict the ability to meet with people (Table 7-36).

Table 7-36: Face-to-face social contacts by motor vehicle ownership

Own or access to motor vehicle	*Face to face social contact %*		
	Yes	*No*	*Total (n =)*
Yes	84.2	15.8	100 (838)
No	66.7	33.3	100 (60)
Total responses	83.1	16.9	100 (898)

Predictably, given earlier results in this thesis, females were more likely than males to use the telephone to make social contact (Table 7-37). Members of large households of five or more people used the phone more for making social contact than those from smaller households. Whilst similar patterns for social contacts were presented as for close friends, the differences with social contacts were statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 18.894$, df = 1 for gender and $\chi^2 = 6.993$, df = 2 for household size). In addition, there was a difference of statistical significance for contact by phone when cross-tabulating against hours worked ($\chi^2 = 13.836$, df = 2). Respondents who worked short hours per week (less than 20 hours) used the phone more than those working longer hours (see Table 7-37).

Table 7-37: Social contact by phone by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Keep in touch by phone %		
	Yes	*No*	*Total (n =)*
Gender:			
Male	64.0	36.0	100 (361)
Female	77.3	22.7	100 (537)
Total responses	71.9	28.1	100 (898)
Household size:			
1 – 2 persons	69.3	30.7	100 (322)
3 – 4 persons	71.0	29.0	100 (421)
5 or more persons	80.7	19.3	100 (150)
Total responses	72.0	28.0	100 (893)
Hours worked per week:			
Less than 20 hours	85.3	14.7	100 (129)
20 – 39 hours	75.3	24.7	100 (154)
40 hours or more	67.7	32.3	100 (251)
Total responses	74.2	25.8	100 (534)

The reduction in use of telephones and the internet by those who were social contacts but not close friends, by comparison with those who were also close friends (refer to Table 7-35), suggests that for other than close friends, meetings are either habitual, organised by another person, or arise in the normal course of daily life, as would occur in the case of work colleagues or with chance meetings.

The comparatively peripheral nature of the internet for communicating socially is further borne out by these results. Significant differences were produced when correspondence by email was cross-tabulated against internet use at work, with those who had internet access at work more likely to use the internet (whether at work or elsewhere) for social contact than others ($\chi^2 = 14.197$, df = 2) (Table 7-38). However, there were reduced tendencies to use emails for communicating with social contacts by comparison with keeping in touch with close friends (refer to Table 7-15). Overall, the rates for written communication are still low by comparison with other methods of keeping in touch.

Table 7-38: Social contact by email by internet use at work

Internet use at work	Email social contact %		
	Yes	*No*	*Total (n =)*
Yes	18.1	81.9	100 (415)
No	7.9	92.1	100 (202)
Not applicable	10.8	89.2	100 (241)
Total responses	13.6	86.4	100 (858)

In the main, respondents used very similar communications methods for keeping in touch with those who were only social contacts compared with those also nominated as close friends. *Who* was being contacted did not alter *how* contact was made. How different types of relationships, either inherited or developed, impacted upon social involvement is considered in the next section.

Types of relationships

Types of relationships for social contacts were similar to those for close friends (Table 7-39). For example, 36.3% of close friends were kin as were 34.1% of social contacts. Previously, 28.2% of friends (as opposed to kin, work colleagues or acquaintances) who were close friends had been identified as living in the same neighbourhood (refer to Table 7-19). When "friends" who were social contacts were examined, over one third (34.8%) of these people were also neighbours (Table 7-39). These results further suggest that, when kin or "close friends" are not available, people turn to their neighbours for social contact more than to "friends" in other locations.

Table 7-39: Types of relationships with neighbours

Relationship to respondent	Total responses %		Neighbours only as % of all social contacts					
			Social contacts, also close friends		Only social contacts		All social contacts	
	Close friends	Social contacts	%	n =	%	%	%	n =
Kin	36.3	34.1	10.2	21	12.0	12	10.8	33
Friend	54.4	53.9	35.4	102	33.8	66	34.8	168
Workmate	7.2	8.4	14.3	4	17.0	8	16.0	12
Acquaintance	2.1	3.6	80.0	8	36.4	8	50.0	16
Total	100	100	25.4	135	25.8	94	25.5	229
(n =)	(947)	(898)						

Although less relevant in terms of actual numbers, it is also interesting to note that, whilst only 8.8% of work colleagues who were also close friends lived in the same local area (Table 7-19), networking for social purposes occurred with twice as many workmates (twelve in total (Table 7-39)). In addition, respondents were likely to socialise with neighbours to whom they did not feel "very close" (statistically significant, χ^2 = 22.568, df = 4) (Table 7-40). For instance, people were very close to only 46.5% of neighbours compared with 71.5% of those who lived away from Sydney. Whilst these levels of networking are taking place within communities of propinquity, closer friendships with neighbours have the potential to develop.

Table 7-40: Closeness of relationships with neighbourhood social contacts

| Location | Closeness of relationship % | | | |
	Very close	Somewhat close	Not at all close	Total (n =)
In neighbourhood	46.5	47.4	6.1	100 (228)
Other Sydney	57.4	38.5	4.1	100 (537)
Elsewhere	71.5	23.8	4.6	100 (130)
Total responses	56.6	38.7	4.7	100 (895)

Social contacts with kin who had not also been identified as close friends were more likely to occur if respondents lived with partners. (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 5.408$, df = 1) (Table 7-41). Kinship interactions are quite likely comprised of an expanded network of associations that includes relatives of spouses.

Table 7-41: Social contacts by partnership status

| Live with a partner | Social contacts with kin (not identified as close friend) % | | |
	Yes	No	Total (n =)
Yes	29.6	70.4	100 (311)
No	14.8	85.2	100 (54)
Total responses	27.4	72.6	100 (365)

Time spent at work apparently restricts the opportunity to socialise with friends (Table 7-42). Those who worked shorter hours were more likely to socialise with friends instead of kin or work colleagues by comparison with persons who worked longer hours (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 10.552$, df = 2). For example, people who worked less than 20 hours per week had social contact with 61.2% who were friends by comparison with only 43.8% for persons working at least 40 hours per week. Possibly adding to the suggestions of the gendered nature of associations, males were more inclined to socialise with people who were work colleagues or acquaintances than females although numbers were unimportant by comparison with numbers of kin or friends who were social contacts.

Table 7-42: Relationships with social contacts by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Relationship with social contact %				
	Kin	Friend	Work colleague	Acquaint-ance	Total (n =)
Hours worked per week:					
Less than 20 hours	32.6	61.2	6.2	–	100 (125)
20 – 39 hours	36.4	51.9	10.4	1.3	100 (154)
40 hours or more	35.5	43.8	17.1	3.2	100 (251)
Total responses	35.1	50.5	12.5	1.9	100 (534)
Employed in paid work:					
Yes	34.5	51.4	11.8	2.1	100 (566)
No	24.8	63.4	3.0	8.9	100 (101)
Retired	37.2	55.8	2.2	4.8	100 (231)
Total responses	34.1	53.9	8.4	3.6	100 (898)
Gender:					
Males	35.7	49.3	9.1	5.5	100 (361)
Females	33.0	57.0	7.8	2.2	100 (537)
Total responses	34.1	53.9	8.4	3.6	100 (898)

For seemingly unrelated reasons, notable differences became apparent when cross-tabulating against employment status, with respondents not in paid work having reduced levels of social contacts with kin and, therefore, more with friends and acquaintances, by comparison with retirees and employed people (see also Table 7-42). Other results in this thesis have suggested reduced associations within some aspects of community for persons not employed in paid work by comparison with others. However, whether this is largely a function of not being actively involved in the paid workforce cannot be stated.

Synopsis of results for social contacts

The results point to people having a preference for socialising with others who are also regarded as close friends and for a majority of recent social contacts to live in metropolitan Sydney but outside neighbourhood areas. When close friends are not available, respondents turn more towards their neighbours for social interaction than elsewhere. This seems to be more likely to occur with long-term residents or those who have partners. Not unexpectedly, the results suggest that people had fewer very close relationships with those who were social contacts but not also close friends, nor have they generally known each other for as many years. Apart from these factors, there seems to be little to distinguish between people who are close friends and those who are social contacts, with similar methods used to keep in touch and with a similar mix of relationship types, with the majority being friends rather than kin. An important outcome is an apparent inter-

relationship between the location of some social contacts and the definition of neighbourhood boundaries.

Conclusion

The results suggest that most people are involved in some forms of neighbourly interaction in that they have amicable relationships with neighbours, exchanging small favours, and are on first name terms with some other adults who also live in their home patch. About one in five close friendships are apparently with neighbours and over one in four people who are recent social contacts are also neighbours. Most associations within neighbourhood areas appear to be on an individual or informal basis, with little activity happening within formal groups, particularly those directed towards supporting local communities and people living in them.

Whilst some neighbours seem to offer each other mutual support, others are detached from their place-based communities in that they do not appear to have local networks that are used for convenience, friendship or companionship. More senior residents, both with respect to age and length of time spent living in a neighbourhood, and also those who have stakeholdings through kinship connections or home ownership, generally have higher levels of social interaction within their local areas than persons with other profile characteristics. People who are single, who work long hours, who do not work at all (excluding retirees) or who are tenants, have lower levels of interaction with neighbours than those with partners, with regular or part-time jobs or who are homeowners. Trends in contemporary society towards increased levels of residential relocation, in addition to household dispersions as a result of family breakdowns, point to the possibility of greater numbers of neighbours being strangers to each other in the future. This could be expected to impact in a negative sense upon general levels of neighbourhood social relationships.

Low interaction levels also apply more to those who normally speak languages in addition to English at home than to people who speak English only. At the same time, those with non-English speaking backgrounds apparently depend on social contacts with neighbours more than others. The results might understate these inter-relationships due to an inability or unwillingness of many people not fluent in English to participate in this survey.

Females are apparently more connected with others within their neighbourhoods than males, in part through greater numbers of memberships in organisations aimed at helping others. They also seemingly have more friends living there to whom they feel very close, with numbers of years of association not relevant. This is in spite of the fact that, overall, friendships for most females are more geographically dispersed than those of males.

The results strongly suggest that face-to-face meetings and the telephone are the preferred methods of contact, with the internet comparatively unimportant for communicating with close friends and social contacts. Thus it seems most people support a view expressed by Truss (2003) that '[c]licking on "send" has its limitations as a system of subtle communication'.

The extent to which associations are being formed within other communities at the expense of place-based ones cannot be measured by this research project. However, it seems that some forms of interaction with others at the local level are a normal occurrence for the majority of people and, for about half the population, very close associations are developed with neighbours. Conversely, a comparatively small proportion of the population seemingly have close friendship ties and social contacts with work colleagues but only about half of these relationships seem to endure once the commonality of the workplace is removed. In contemporary Australia, location of people's place of work is arguably less stable than that of the neighbourhood.

These results have suggested that most people seek out and enjoy close friendships and social interaction in a variety of different ways and in many locations, including the neighbourhood. In fact, it seems that there is a link between perceptions of neighbourhood areas and, therefore, definition of its boundaries and location of close friends, social contacts and connections within formal groups. Whether people experience community within their neighbourhoods through acts of mutual support, generosity, reciprocity, shared norms and public-spirited behaviour, despite the many factors that are promoted as advancing fragmentation, is examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8:   BELONGING TO NEIGHBOURHOOD

This thesis has thus far explored people's physical and social connections to the neighbourhoods in which they lived as well as elsewhere. These have been examined through respondent identification with, and use of, neighbourhood areas, their social interactions and close social ties. Also important are people's emotional attachments and the sense of belonging to a place. Emotional connections to particular geographic areas are, to a degree, associated with, and maintained by, group processes. In addition, individual and community interactions that occur within those locations can affect levels of wellbeing.

Whilst the phenomenon of belonging-to-an-area has been a consistent finding in research, it is difficult to measure. The approach taken here is made possible by recognising the individuality of neighbourhood areas. By encouraging respondents to relate to current as well as historical experiences of places of residence, issues that are important for promoting a sense of belonging and concomitant attachments can be evaluated. As a result, consideration can be given to how identified salient issues for belonging affect the wellbeing of respondents.

This chapter investigates these social characteristics of neighbourhood experiences by evaluating the extent to which respondents related to, were involved in or were affected by community characteristics of social organisation that are believed to promote a sense of belonging and the development and maintenance of wellbeing. The chapter commences by looking at elements of neighbourhood satisfaction and safety, followed by an exploration of social capacities and civic qualities, determined by passive and active participation in local social and civic life. Issues that participants recognised as promoting a sense of belonging are also investigated. (Responses for variables used to investigate all aspects of belonging are summarised in Appendix 11; values before and after responses were condensed for the purpose of analysis are shown.)

8.1   Neighbourhood satisfaction and safety

Selected questions within the survey instrument were directed towards establishing levels of general satisfaction (Question B4) and safety (Question B18) experienced by respondents within their neighbourhoods, and perceived reputations for safety of

neighbourhoods (Question B19). These data were sought in part to determine if neighbourhood satisfaction and safety levels within residential communities were important issues for determining levels of wellbeing. If significant numbers of ambivalent responses were received, the issue could be interpreted as being of minor consideration. Conversely, non-ambiguous responses would indicate that there was an intense awareness of the issue and, therefore, that it was of importance. Responses are linked to profile characteristics to identify factors that apparently influenced feelings about neighbourhood satisfaction and safety.

Satisfaction levels

In order to gain a measure of how satisfied people were with their neighbourhood areas, respondents were asked to mark the image that most closely represented their sentiments (as shown below). By and large, people were generally happy with the place where they lived, with 89.6% of all respondents ($n = 206$) indicating they were "very" or "somewhat" satisfied.

Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Ambivalent	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
🙂	🙂	😐	🙁	☹️
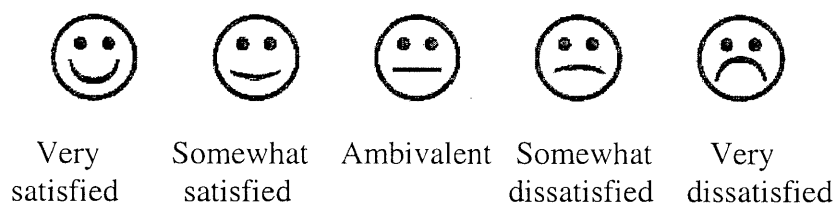
Only 3.0% were very or somewhat dissatisfied, with the remaining 7.5% ambivalent. Whilst there were only limited variations in terms of size of neighbourhood area, of those who had ambivalent feelings with respect to degree of satisfaction ($n = 16$), 62.5% identified with the smallest category of size (less than one km^2) (Table 8-1).

Whilst the overall low number of ambivalent responses points to neighbourhood satisfaction being an important factor influencing wellbeing, satisfaction appeared more likely to be a non-issue for persons who did not own or were not in the process of purchasing their own home. Interestingly, whilst only six people in total indicated that they were very or somewhat dissatisfied, these were all homeowners. Relocation can be more difficult when there is a financial stake in property, particularly if a capital loss is anticipated. Dissatisfaction might be a reflection of changes in personal relationships, housing requirements or neighbourhood amenity since time of purchase. Levels of

satisfaction may in part be influenced by personal perceptions about neighbourhood safety and its overall reputation for safety, the next aspects to be considered.

Table 8-1: Neighbourhood satisfaction levels by home ownership

Profile characteristic	Satisfaction with neighbourhood %			
	Very or somewhat satisfied	Very or somewhat dissatisfied	Ambivalent	Total (n =)
Size of neighbourhood (km²):				
Smaller than 1 km²	82.8	1.6	15.6	100 (64)
1 – 2 km²	94.1	3.9	2.0	100 (51)
2 – 4 km²	88.2	–	11.8	100 (34)
4 – 8 km²	90.6	6.3	3.1	100 (32)
Larger than 8 km²	95.7	4.3	0	100 (23)
Total responses	89.2	2.9	7.8	100 (204)
Home ownership:				
Yes	90.5	3.4	6.1	100 (179)
No	81.8	–	18.2	100 (22)
Total responses	89.6	3.0	7.5	100 (201)

Safety and reputation

The extent to which people felt safe walking in their local street after dark and the neighbourhood's reputation as a place to live are important influences on wellbeing. An expected significant difference became apparent in the case of gender (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 8.911$, df = 1), with males more likely to feel "always' or "mostly" safe than females (Table 8-2). In spite of this, females also generally felt secure, contributing to an overall 78.5% of respondents always or mostly feeling safe in their neighbourhood street environment. Nearly half of respondents who lived alone felt less safe; 73.3% of these were females. Walking in the dark understandably has different implications for females and those living alone and, for pragmatists, different coping strategies are required.

Personal income was influential in defining perceptions of neighbourhood safety, with high-income groups feeling safer than those on low incomes (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 6.651$, df = 2) (Table 8-2). For example, 90.0% of persons earning at least $1,000 per week always or mostly felt safe walking in their street after dark by comparison with only 71.2% of those with incomes between $500 and $999 per week. High-income earners might live in areas better resourced with street lighting and other aspects of security. Perhaps, too, being a pedestrian after dark is something not generally

experienced by those on high-income. It might also be that they are less likely to live in areas with poor reputations for safety. Accordingly, how respondents rated their neighbourhood for reputation as a place to live was also investigated.

Table 8-2: Neighbourhood safety levels by key profile variables

	Feel safe walking in own street after dark %		
Profile characteristics	*Always or mostly safe*	*Sometimes or never, or not sure*	*Total (n =)*
Gender:			
Male	88.5	11.5	100 (87)
Female	71.2	28.8	100 (118)
Total responses	78.5	21.5	100 (205)
Household size:			
1 person	53.3	46.7	100 (15)
2 persons	76.3	23.7	100 (59)
3 – 4 persons	83.9	16.1	100 (93)
5 or more persons	78.4	21.6	100 (37)
Total responses	78.4	21.6	100 (204)
Gross weekly income:			
$1,000 or more	90.0	10.0	100 (60)
$500 – $999	71.2	28.8	100 (52)
Less than $500	76.5	23.5	100 (68)
Total responses	79.4	20.6	100 (180)

Respondents generally thought their neighbourhoods had good reputations for safety, with a high 91.3% believing their local area was considered always or mostly safe. Persons not in agreement with this sentiment were more likely to be single or living in small households, by comparison with persons who lived with partners or in households of at least three people (Table 8-3). For example, 16.2% of single people thought their neighbourhood had a reputation for being often or very unsafe or were unsure compared with only 7.1% of people living with partners.

In addition, more people who were computer literate thought their neighbourhood was safe than persons just learning or not using computers, although this was possibly associated with the strong inter-relationship between levels of computer illiteracy and the elderly; only 86.2% who were 60 years or more thought their local area was very or mostly safe compared with 96.2% who were less than 40 years of age.

Table 8-3: Neighbourhood safety reputations by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Neighbourhood reputation for safety %		
	Very or mostly safe	Often or very unsafe, or not sure	Total (n =)
Household size:			
1 – 2 persons	85.3	14.7	100 (75)
3 – 4 persons	95.7	4.3	100 (94)
5 or more persons	91.9	8.1	100 (37)
Total responses	91.3	8.7	100 (206)
Live with a partner:			
Yes	92.9	7.1	100 (169)
No	83.8	16.2	100 (37)
Total responses	91.3	8.7	100 (206)
Computer use skills:			
Computer literate	93.5	6.5	100 (154)
Just learning or not used	84.3	15.7	100 (51)
Total responses	91.2	8.8	100 (205)
Age:			
Less than 40	96.2	3.8	100 (52)
40 – 59 years	92.6	7.4	100 (95)
60 years or more	86.2	13.8	100 (58)
Total responses	91.7	8.3	100 (205)

Discussion

The results present the view that people generally experienced high levels of satisfaction with, and felt safe in, their neighbourhoods and also could suggest neighbourhood satisfaction and safety issues as being important for promoting wellbeing.

Of course, all results are prejudiced according to the types of people who agreed to participate in the survey. Some residents who responded to the researcher's doorknock but subsequently elected not to take part in the survey volunteered that they declined because they could not be sure of the integrity of the project and the researcher. Others refused to open the door to someone they did not know, in spite of information that authenticated the survey having been distributed in advance. Two elderly women who lived alone and who initially demonstrated enthusiasm for taking part were subsequently deterred from doing so by their children who were apparently suspicious about the possible ulterior motives of the researcher.

Other residents were prepared to talk at length in quite specific terms about neighbourhood dissatisfaction and mistrust and to cite recent examples of unpleasant, damaging or intimidating personal experiences. In one survey location, some respondents linked a methadone outlet that had recently been established within the suburban shopping centre

with alleged bag snatches targeting elderly ladies. In another, the recent assault upon an elderly woman in her own home, allegedly by young females, understandably caused concern. In neither location did respondents know the people involved but apprehension about personal safety was evident. In a third location, claims of murder, disposal of a body, drug dealing, arson, prostitution, property damage, personal injury, affiliations with convicted rapists and threatening language were among the complaints levelled against neighbours by some people who did not agree to participate in the survey. Elsewhere, a comparatively high number of *gated* houses was interpreted as a reflection of perceived levels of safety. People who expressed these feelings or had experienced these events generally did not participate in the project and were, at times, reluctant to be seen talking to the researcher in case this prompted reprisal actions from some neighbours.

Whilst these experiences indicate that distrust existed for many individuals talked to during fieldwork, this is not reflected in the results. A general impression gained during the survey period, subsequently substantiated by the results, was that the majority who were prepared to participate did so because they had positive or, at worst, ambivalent feelings, rather than negative ones about the places where they lived, and many enthused about their neighbourhood experiences and the sense of community they enjoyed.

Conceptions about satisfaction and safety levels are, of course, influenced by a variety of physical and social features within a neighbourhood. In the next section, social capacities and civic qualities, which respondents both contributed to and experienced, are explored.

8.2 Social capacities and civic qualities

Group processes and social and civic interaction levels within communities are thought to be indicative of the extent to which social support and security, freedom of expression, and opportunities and preparedness to become involved in non-intimate and non-exclusive groups are present (Inkeles 2000). Whilst variations in these features can generally only be recognised through diachronic analysis, absence of comparative data from an earlier period precludes actual measurement within this project. In spite of this, some elements of these qualities have been explored. Specific factors relating to social capacity and civic character are based on responses to survey questions assessing trust and trustworthiness (Questions B11, B12, B14 & B15), tolerance (Question B17), civic and social participation

(Questions B20 and B21 respectively), and altruism and reciprocity (Questions B22 and B23). The first of these to be addressed is trust and trustworthiness.

Trust and trustworthiness

Trust within neighbourhood areas was assessed by asking respondents if, generally speaking, they felt others within their neighbourhood areas could be trusted. Overall, the response was affirmative, with 82.1% indicating that this was "always" or "mostly" the case. Another 11.6% thought they could "never" or only "sometimes" trust neighbours, with 6.3% undecided. In general, people did not make up their minds about the trustworthiness of neighbours until they had been resident for at least five years (Table 8-4). Sennett (1998) argued that long-term relationships are needed in order to develop trust. People who spoke languages in addition to English were more likely to remain unsure than those who usually spoke English only, possibly due in part to lack of proficiency in English. Furthermore, different cultural backgrounds could make it more difficult for the social norms of their adopted country to be understood and interpreted.

Table 8-4: Levels of neighbourhood trust by key profile variables

	People in neighbourhood can be trusted %			
Profile characteristics	*Always or mostly*	*Sometimes or never*	*Not sure*	*Total (n =)*
Length of residence:				
Less than 5 years	70.5	13.6	15.9	100 (44)
5 – 9 years	83.8	10.8	5.4	100 (37)
10 – 29 years	82.2	13.7	4.1	100 (73)
30 years or more	92.3	5.8	1.9	100 (52)
Total responses	82.5	11.2	6.3	100 (206)
Preferred language at home:				
Speak English only	83.4	12.8	3.7	100 (187)
Speak other than English	70.0	–	30.0	100 (20)
Total responses	82.1	11.6	6.3	100 (207)
Household size:				
1 person	60.0	40.0	–	100 (15)
2 persons	81.7	5.0	13.3	100 (60)
3 – 4 persons	86.2	9.6	4.3	100 (94)
5 or more persons	81.1	16.2	2.7	100 (37)
Total responses	82.0	11.7	6.3	100 (206)

Persons who lived alone were less likely to trust others than those in larger households, with 40.0% of respondents indicating neighbours could never or only sometimes be trusted (Table 8-4). By comparison, less than 20% of people from households of two or more were either distrustful or not sure. More opportunities to become acquainted with

neighbours can occur through close associations with other household members. Earlier results from this research pointed to single persons having fewer close friends and lower levels of neighbourly interaction than those who live with others. Sharing a household with others could lead to greater numbers of acquaintances and friends within the neighbourhood which, in turn, possibly contributes towards higher levels of trust. Alternatively, distrust of others might be a trait associated with persons who choose to live alone.

Whether people were inclined to greet strangers or, more specifically, greet people they might recognise but did not really know, in places such as the supermarket or on public transport, was also gauged as a measure of trust. More than half the respondents indicated they "often" did so. Of the remainder, most "occasionally" greeted strangers and only 7.0%, sometimes or never greeted people they did not know. The single noteworthy difference was with respect to education, with university-educated respondents not acknowledging familiar faces as often as persons with lower education levels (refer to Table 8-5). This suggests that a university education might be associated with certain degrees of selectiveness with respect to casual contact with others although this could also be related to limited opportunities due to lifestyle factors (such as not generally using public transport). Overall, the results encourage the notion of informal interaction occurring with others, supporting results presented in Chapter 7.

Table 8-5: Propensities to greet people by education level

| | Greet familiar faces % | | | |
Education	Often	Occasionally	Sometimes or never	Total (n =)
Year 12 or below	60.6	28.8	10.6	100 (66)
Trade certificate or diploma	60.3	38.2	1.5	100 (68)
Bachelor degree or higher	37.9	53.0	9.1	100 (66)
Total responses	53.0	40.0	7.0	100 (200)

As another measure of trust, participants were asked if someone they knew within neighbourhood areas (other than relatives) collected mail if they went away from home for a few days. Overall (n = 206), a majority (59.2%) "usually" trusted neighbours to this extent and an additional 16.5% "sometimes" asked neighbours to collect mail; this situation did not apply to 3.9% of participants. Only 20.4% never asked neighbours to collect mail. An anticipated significant difference was apparent in the case of age (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 8.575$, df = 2). For example, 89.1% of persons aged at least

60 years were more likely to trust neighbours in this regard by comparison with only 66.0% of those less than 40 years (Table 8-6). In addition and with respect to employment status, retirees were more likely than others to ask neighbours to collect mail and persons not in paid work less likely. It seems these inter-relationships were in part a feature of younger persons, particularly those who were single, "never" asking neighbours to collect mail. In fact, a notable difference was apparent in terms of partnership status and further analysis showed that, of single respondents under the age of 40 ($n = 8$), 75.0% never asked neighbours to collect mail.

Table 8-6: Neighbours collect mail by key profile variables

| Profile characteristics | Neighbours collect mail % | | |
	Usually or sometimes	Never	Total (n =)
Age			
Less than 40 years	66.0	34.0	100 (50)
40 – 59 years	80.2	19.8	100 (91)
60 years or more	89.1	10.9	100 (55)
Total responses	79.1	19.9	100 (196)
Employed in paid work:			
Yes	78.2	21.8	100 (124)
No	63.6	36.4	100 (22)
Retired	86.3	13.7	100 (51)
Total responses	78.7	21.3	100 (197)
Hours worked per week:			
Less than 20 hours	92.3	7.7	100 (26)
20 – 39 hours	85.3	14.7	100 (34)
40 hours or more	69.6	30.4	100 (56)
Total responses	79.3	20.7	100 (116)
Live with a partner:			
Yes	81.0	19.0	100 (163)
No	67.6	32.4	100 (34)
Total responses	78.7	21.3	100 (197)

A significant difference occurred for number of hours worked (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 6.608$, df = 2) (Table 8-6). Not unexpectedly, it was those who worked fewer hours per week (less than 20) who were more likely to trust neighbours in this respect than persons who worked longer hours. This ties in with earlier results that showed respondents who worked long hours (40 or more per week) were less likely to have close ties with neighbours to the extent that, it seems, they would not trust them to collect mail.

An act that demands a higher level of trust, leaving house keys with neighbours when away from home for a period of time, would "never" be contemplated by a majority (53.9%) of respondents ($n = 206$). (Only 4.9% of participants indicated that this situation was "not

applicable" to them.) Expected differences were apparent in the case of length of residence (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 7.898$, df = 3) (Table 8-7). For example, 54.2% of persons with at least 30 years in the same neighbourhood usually or sometimes left house keys with neighbours whereas only 26.8% with less than five years of residence left keys. Earlier results presented in this chapter suggested single persons might be less trusting of neighbours than others. However, around 43% of both single persons and those who lived with partners left keys with neighbours.

Table 8-7: Leaving house key with neighbours by length of residence

	Leave house key with neighbour %		
Length of residence	*Usually or sometimes*	*Never*	*Total (n =)*
Less than 5 years	26.8	73.2	100 (41)
5 – 9 years	38.9	61.1	100 (36)
10 – 29 years	48.6	51.4	100 (70)
30 years or more	54.2	45.8	100 (48)
Total responses	43.6	56.4	100 (195)

Tolerance

Levels of tolerance were gauged by asking respondents whether they thought neighbours would be prepared to accept someone new and apparently different (perhaps of a different age group, ethnicity or religion). Impressions would have been formed over time, through personal reactions, experiences, beliefs or observations. Overall ($n = 206$), 80.1% of respondents indicated acceptance would "always" or "mostly" occur, outwardly pointing to a society generally tolerant of differences. However, during interview sessions, some comments were made about the perceived inappropriateness of, or potential problems associated with, some types of people moving to some locations, with differences distinguishable from appearances alone.

Noteworthy differences for tolerance were apparent when cross-tabulating against household size and home ownership (Table 8-8). Of those who were members of large households, 18.9% thought someone different would only "sometimes", or perhaps "never", be accepted by comparison with only 5.4% of those in households of three or four people, although reasons are not apparent. Additionally, a lower proportion of single respondents than those who were members of households of at least two persons viewed acceptance in a positive sense. In particular, 17.3% of respondents from small households were not sure of what might happen within the presented scenario and another 12.0%

thought acceptance was unlikely. Results have already shown that people from small households generally have lower levels of interaction within their neighbourhoods than others. Indecision on this issue might be a consequence of limited exposure to others within their local area. Alternatively, uncertainty might be associated with participants having always lived in homogenous neighbourhoods or reluctance by them to respond more definitively to what some might regard as sensitive issues implicating attitudes about ethnicity.

Table 8-8: Neighbourhood acceptance levels by key profile variables

| Profile characteristics | Acceptance of a new or different neighbour % | | | |
	Always or mostly	Sometimes or never	Not sure	Total (n =)
Household size:				
1 – 2 people	70.7	12.0	17.3	100 (75)
3 – 4 people	88.2	5.4	6.5	100 (93)
5 or more people	78.4	18.9	2.7	100 (37)
Total responses	80.0	10.2	9.8	100 (205)
Own/purchasing home:				
Yes	81.8	10.5	7.7	100 (181)
No	68.2	9.1	22.7	100 (22)
Total responses	80.3	10.3	9.4	100 (203)

Of those who did not have capital invested in their dwelling, 22.7% were unsure about the potential acceptance within their neighbourhoods of someone who was different by comparison with only 7.7% who were homeowners having this view (Table 8-8). The results of this research have previously suggested that non-homeowners were less likely than others to identify with the neighbourhoods in which they lived. Identification with neighbourhood might also be linked to perceived tolerance levels of neighbours, with people who think they might be regarded as different because they are not home buyers less likely to think other people who seem different (for whatever reason) might be accepted. Whether home ownership or other profile characteristics altogether impact upon levels of civic and social participation, also adjudged to be indicative of the social capacities and civic qualities of neighbourhoods, is examined next.

Civic and social participation

For exploration of degrees of civic participation, respondents were asked to consider specific instances (if any) of their own civic or political involvement within, and empowerment sought through, local neighbourhood or community activities. Examples of

civic participation presented to respondents included contacting or writing to councillors or members of parliament, writing letters to the editors of newspapers, or attending protest meetings or local council meetings. There was a notable difference in terms of size of neighbourhood area, resulting from a comparatively high 77.3% of respondents who identified with the smallest category for size not having participated in any form of civic affairs during the preceding 12 months (Table 8-9). By comparison, there was limited variation for all other size categories, with between 52.9% and 59.4% indicating no level of civic participation.

Table 8-9: Levels of civic participation by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Recent participation in civic affairs %		
	Yes	*No*	*Total (n =)*
Size of neighbourhood (km²):			
Smaller than 1 km²	22.7	77.3	100 (66)
1 – 2 km²	42.3	57.7	100 (52)
2 – 4 km²	47.1	52.9	100 (34)
4 – 8 km²	40.6	59.4	100 (32)
Larger than 8 km²	43.5	56.5	100 (23)
Total responses	36.7	63.3	100 (207)
Preferred language at home:			
Speak English only	39.0	61.0	100 (187)
Speak other than English	15.0	85.0	100 (20)
Total responses	36.7	63.3	100 (207)
Employment status:			
Yes	39.8	60.2	100 (128)
No	12.0	88.0	100 (25)
Retired	41.5	58.5	100 (53)
Total responses	36.9	63.1	100 (206)
Gross weekly income:			
$1,000 or more	47.5	52.5	100 (81)
$500 – $999	34.6	65.4	100 (73)
Less than $500	26.5	73.5	100 (52)
Total responses	35.9	64.1	100 (206)
Length of residence:			
Less than 10 years	28.4	71.6	100 (61)
10 – 29 years	39.7	60.3	100 (52)
30 years or more	46.2	53.8	100 (68)
Total responses	36.9	63.1	100 (181)
Education:			
Year 12 or below	28.4	71.6	100 (67)
Trade or diploma	35.3	64.7	100 (68)
Bachelor degree or higher	47.0	53.0	100 (66)
Total responses	36.8	63.2	100 (201)
Own/purchasing home:			
Yes	39.6	60.4	100 (182)
No	18.2	81.8	100 (22)
Total responses	37.3	62.7	100 (204)

Persons who spoke languages at home other than English were less likely to participate in civic matters than those who spoke English only (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 =$ 4.493, df = 1) (Table 8-9). This might be due to lack of proficiency in English and also possibly because of unfamiliarity with the Australian political system or uncertainty about how they would be treated.

Significant differences became apparent in relation to employment status and income ($\chi^2 =$ 7.618, df = 2 and $\chi^2 = 6.256$, df = 2 respectively) (Table 8-9). For example, 41.5% of retirees had been active in civic affairs by comparison with only 12.0% of those without paid employment. This pattern might be linked not only to available time for participation but also to length of residence, with longer-term residents, particularly those with at least 30 years in the neighbourhood, more likely to have been active than those with fewer years in the same locality. With respect to income, of those people with less than $500 per week, only 26.5% had actively participated in civic affairs by comparison with 47.5% of those with incomes of $1,000 or more.

Education level, another profile characteristic indicative of socio-economic standing, was apparently also influential in empowering civic actions (Table 8-9). Respondents with bachelor degrees or higher seem more likely to be active than those without university education. High-income professionals arguably have greater economic resources and expertise to lobby on behalf of proposals or concepts in which they have personal or philosophical interests. In addition, homeowners were also notable for their civic involvement, being more than twice as likely to have performed a civic act during the preceding 12 months compared with non-homeowners (Table 8-9). This might be linked to their having economic capital invested in their neighbourhoods and, therefore, possibly having more at stake if political or community issues were proposed that could impact upon future returns.

Whether respondents had volunteered unpaid time to do something for neighbours (other than kin) or had been actively involved in community projects were used as indicators of social participation. Overall participation rates suggest one out of every two people would have had some sort of involvement in social or community activities within the past 12 months. Expected significant differences were apparent with respect to length of residence and age (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 11.893$, df = 2 and $\chi^2 = 8.151$, df = 2 respectively) and there was a notable difference in terms of employment status (Table 8-10). Retirees,

elderly people (at least 60 years of age) or those with long-term neighbourhood connections (30 years or more) were more likely to participate than others. Retirees not only have more leisure time but also, apparently, stronger community ties as a result of neighbourhood identification, use and interaction (factors suggested by results elsewhere in this thesis). They could also have greater tendencies than younger persons to adhere to values associated with more "traditional" community life, generally at odds with the CWP phenomenon.

Table 8-10: Levels of social participation by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	Recently volunteered help to neighbours %		
	Yes	No	Total (n =)
Length of residence:			
Less than 10 years	43.2	56.8	100 (81)
10 – 29 years	43.8	56.2	100 (73)
30 years or more	71.2	28.8	100 (52)
Total responses	50.5	49.5	100 (206)
Age:			
Less than 40 years	36.5	63.5	100 (52)
40 – 59 years	50.5	49.5	100 (95)
60 years or more	63.8	36.2	100 (58)
Total responses	50.7	49.3	100 (205)
Employed in paid work:			
Yes	46.9	53.1	100 (128)
No	40.0	60.0	100 (25)
Retired	64.2	35.8	100 (53)
Total responses	50.5	49.5	100 (206)
Computer use skills:			
Computer literate	45.5	54.5	100 (154)
Just learning or not used	62.7	37.3	100 (51)
Total responses	49.8	50.2	100 (205)
Internet use at home:			
Yes	44.4	55.6	100 (133)
No	60.9	39.1	100 (69)
Total responses	50.0	50.0	100 (202)
Education:			
Year 12 or below	38.6	61.2	100 (67)
Trade certificate or diploma	60.3	39.7	100 (68)
Bachelor degree or higher	53.0	47.0	100 (66)
Total responses	50.7	49.3	100 (201)

Arguably, some people not in the paid workforce (but excluding retirees) also have more leisure time, although not necessarily by choice. Their lesser inclinations to demonstrate social capacities within neighbourhoods could reflect reduced feelings of empowerment, with this attitude reflected within society in a number of ways. Mothers at home with young children were also within this category of people not in the paid workforce,

although many persons who were obviously in this situation declared that they did not have time for the survey.

When social participation levels were considered in terms of computer use and internet use at home, significant differences became apparent ($\chi^2 = 4.582$, df = 1 and $\chi^2 = 4.953$, df = 1 respectively) (Table 8-10). In both cases, it was those who did not claim use of these forms of technology who had volunteered to help neighbours to a significantly greater extent than others. However, due to the strong inter-relationships between the other identified profile variables that presented significant differences, the differences might be connected with age and stage in the life course rather than computer use *per se*.

Respondents without tertiary qualifications were significantly less likely than others to have volunteered help in the preceding 12 months (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 6.440$, df = 2). Strong levels of inter-relationship between profile characteristics were established in Chapter 4 for persons with no education past Year 12, persons who were aged 60 years or more, persons with at least 30 years of residence in the same neighbourhood, retirees and persons not using computers. Therefore, this significant difference with respect to education appears to be at odds with previous significant relationships for social participation through volunteering help. This distinction, together with a variety of subtleties evidenced in earlier results, increasingly point to there being a small group of people with low education levels who may have impeded social mobility who are also the information poor – to use Webber's expression, those who have been left behind.

Altruism and reciprocity

An indirect approach was taken for the measurement of altruism and reciprocity. Respondents were asked to consider their perceptions of the actions and intentions of others within their neighbourhood areas rather than their own actions. To assess levels of self-interest, respondents were asked if they thought most people within their neighbourhood were only interested in what was best for them. Respondents were also asked if they thought most people would, if asked, volunteer time for a project that would benefit the neighbourhood but not necessarily themselves. This was to determine if people would be prepared to give up time to help their community for altruistic reasons. For each question, a mark placed at one point along a line permitted responses to be subsequently scored (0 through 100) and categorised (Table 8-11).

Table 8-11: Summary results for levels of reciprocity and altruism

Result categories	*Most people are only interested in what's best for them %*	*Most people would volunteer help for a neighbourhood project%*
Generally yes (0 – 40)	44.7	40.8
Indeterminate (41 – 60)	36.9	45.6
Generally no (61 – 100)	18.4	13.6
Total (n =)	100 (207)	100 (207)

Many respondents were undecided about the attitude of their neighbours, and this by itself might be indicative of low levels of altruism and reciprocity. An indeterminate response could also mean mixed emotions based on both good and bad personal experiences or, alternatively, insufficient contact with neighbours on which to form an opinion. Additionally, the two sets of responses appear contradictory to some extent. On the one hand, 44.7% of respondents indicated that they thought others were only interested in what was best for them. On the other hand, 40.8% believed their neighbours would volunteer their time for a community project. Thus, it seems that whilst people thought most neighbours were generally self-absorbed in their own activities and interests, they would also be prepared to help the neighbourhood if they were made aware of a particular project or need. In summary, the responses suggest a general lack of involvement in, or awareness of, local concerns and activities, although there is an insinuation that most people thought others would be willing to contribute in a positive way if asked.

No profile variables tested as being significant in the case of volunteering. In one location in particular, many long-term residents recalled with apparent pride and satisfaction the way community members had worked together several decades previously, when the area was first being developed, to build neighbourhood facilities for the benefit of children in particular. They bemoaned the fact that such activities no longer seemed to take place. However, in the same location, residents of short duration spoke with enthusiasm about neighbourhood cooperation to provide activities for children and, during one day of the survey, a street party was in progress. Perceptions obviously change according to the extent of involvement of the individual.

With respect to self-interest, significant differences were apparent in terms of gender, education and income ($\chi^2 = 6.550$, df = 2, $\chi^2 = 9.523$, df = 4 and $\chi^2 = 11.667$, df = 4 respectively) (Table 8-12). Most males (53.4%) were inclined to think others within their

neighbourhoods were only interested in what was best for them, whilst many respondent females (44.1%) were undecided. In other words, it seems females were less sure about the self-centredness of neighbours. Results presented elsewhere in this thesis show females used their neighbourhoods and had more visitors to their homes than males and, therefore, might have opinions shaped by personal encounters to a greater extent than males. Experiences external to the neighbourhood could also be expected to shape attitudes. Increased levels of competitiveness and pressure, recognised features of many workplaces in contemporary Australia, might influence attitudes towards all types of communities.

Table 8-12: Levels of self interest by key profile variables

	Neighbours only interested in what's best for them %			
Profile characteristics	*Generally yes*	*Indeterminate*	*Generally no*	*Total (n =)*
Gender:				
Male	53.4	27.3	19.3	100 (88)
Female	38.1	44.1	17.8	100 (118)
Total responses	44.7	36.9	18.4	100 (206)
Education:				
Year 12 or below	40.3	47.8	11.9	100 (67)
Trade or diploma	50.7	35.8	13.4	100 (67)
Bachelor degree or higher	43.9	28.8	27.3	100 (66)
Total responses	45.0	37.5	17.5	100 (200)
Gross weekly income:				
$1,000 or more	42.6	31.1	26.2	100 (61)
$500 – $999	61.5	23.1	15.4	100 (52)
Less than $500	38.2	47.1	14.7	100 (68)
Total responses	46.4	34.8	18.8	100 (181)

Differences for education and income show that the majority of persons with trade certificates or diplomas or middle income levels thought neighbours were only interested in what was best for them whereas others with higher or lower education and income levels were less sure. Furthermore, the results point to the professionals (those with bachelor degrees or higher and with incomes of $1,000 or more per week) having more positive views regarding reciprocity within their neighbourhoods than persons without university qualifications or on lower incomes. For example, more than one in four of the professionals (27.3% and 26.2% for education and income respectively) did *not* think neighbours were only interested in what was best for them, considerably higher than for other groups. It might, of course, be expected that better financial resources facilitate greater flexibility in selection of neighbourhood, perhaps one that is, for example, outwardly more affluent and with greater levels of general amenity. Although the results

discussed in Chapter 5 did not indicate education and income were influential factors for identifying with neighbourhood, opinions about neighbours that were examined with respect to reciprocity suggest these profile characteristics might point to levels of goodwill between fellow residents within a local area.

According to Mackay (1999), Australians have, in recent years, aired concerns that there is no longer the same sense of belonging and sense of morality as once existed within communities, with neighbourhoods not appearing to work as well as they once did. Whilst these results with respect to reciprocity and altruism are a limited interpretation of attitudes at one point in time and, as such, are inconclusive, they do appear to lend support to Mackay's interpretation that common interests and actions with respect to local areas are generally not strong in contemporary metropolitan communities.

Discussion

The results suggest that people trust neighbours and tolerate differences. However, when particular thoughts or deeds that respondents ascribed to neighbours are considered, the outcome is apparently not so positive. For example, less than half would trust a neighbour sufficiently to provide key access to the home, just one half volunteer to help neighbours, and only about one third would perform an act of civic mindedness. About 45% seem to think others are only interested in what was best for them, although a similar proportion (41%) apparently believe that neighbours would volunteer their time for a community project.

Caution needs to exercised in the interpretation of these results for two reasons. Firstly, on many occasions, people talked to during fieldwork who expressed strong negative feelings about the places where they lived, with respect to topics pursued in this chapter in particular, chose not to take part in the survey. Conversely, people who talked enthusiastically about their neighbourhood normally wanted to participate. Secondly, some categories of people were identified in Chapter 4 as being under-represented in the final sample by comparison with the population of the six survey locations. Results analysed in this section point to some under-represented groups (for example, single people, short-term residents, those speaking languages other than English, tenants and people not employed) having less strong connections to their neighbourhood areas than others. Therefore, negative views about neighbourhood belonging are possibly understated.

Conversely, it seems that those who have lived in neighbourhood areas for long periods of time, who are more senior in years (especially retirees), who have high levels of both education and income, and who have capital investments in neighbourhood property are more positively contributing to some aspects of community life than others. This points to persons who have financial stake-holdings, and thus have more to lose in a monetary sense if social capacities deteriorated, being more inclined to actively participate in the maintenance or development of positive aspects of their neighbourhoods.

Lack of time and opportunity could be reasons for perceived low levels of social capacities and civic interaction but low levels might also be indicative of an increasing emphasis on individualism and greater degrees of disparity between different identifiable groups within metropolitan areas. Issues regarded by respondents as important for a sense of belonging to neighbourhood areas might provide some different perspectives on this subject.

8.3 Salience of issues

This section focuses on some indicators considered influential for enhancing people's sense of belonging to place and, in turn, having an effect on human wellbeing. In Question B3 of the survey, participants were asked to indicate levels of importance to them ("very", "somewhat", "not really" or "not at all" important; alternatively, not sure) of eight potential aspects of community life in cities Responses for each indicator have been weighted and consolidated and the indicators ranked in order of comparative importance. Apparently significant or noteworthy differences highlighted when significance testing was carried out advance the understanding of influential factors impacting upon wellbeing.

Indicators influencing belonging

Participants were asked to nominate the level of importance to them of family, friends and good neighbours, as well as various aspects of the natural and built environment, for giving them a sense of belonging to a place. This enquiry was not limited to thoughts about belonging to the place or neighbourhood where they lived at the time of the survey but looked for responses based on their whole-of-life experiences. They were asked to consider eight specific issues and were also asked to nominate any other aspects that they thought were important to them.

Responses for belonging were scored according to indicated levels of importance (Table 8-13), mean scores for each indicator were calculated, and the indicators ranked from most to least important (Table 8-14). If a response had been supplied by participants for only one of the eight categories of belonging (as occurred in eight of the survey questionnaires), responses for the other categories were recorded as missing. This conservative approach to interpretation of results was taken in case respondents had misunderstood the stated requirements of the questionnaire and, instead, identified only that one factor that was *most* important to them. The alternative interpretation would have been that one single aspect alone (for example, family) was really important for providing a sense of belonging. If there was no response for an indicator but more than one issue had been rated, the missing indicators were scored the same as if they were not at all important to the respondent.

Table 8-13: Basis for calculation of "belonging" scores

In general terms of what gives you a sense of belonging to a place, how important to you are the following?	Response scored as:
Very important	3
Somewhat important	2
Not really important	1
Not at all important	0
Not sure	1
No response	0

Table 8-14: Importance of indicators for belonging

Belonging indicator	Score*	Very important	Somewhat important	Un-important	Total (n =)
Family	2.645	77.3	11.1	9.6	100 (203)
Local shops, facilities and services	2.345	49.0	39.5	11.5	100 (200)
Friends	2.313	47.0	40.9	12.1	100 (198)
Good neighbours	2.296	43.2	44.7	12.1	100 (199)
Local physical environment	2.197	40.9	44.4	14.7	100 (198)
Knowing / mixing with local people	1.864	20.7	50.5	28.8	100 (198)
Location of work / main interest	1.646	20.7	40.4	38.9	100 (198)
Local clubs or groups	1.258	8.6	32.8	58.6	100 (198)

*   See text for details of calculation of scores

Only one "not sure" response was nominated across all indicators; this was scored the same as "not really important". Fourteen respondents volunteered extra characteristics as being important for a sense of belonging. However, the range of issues presented in the survey instrument could have encompassed them (as indicated in Table 8-15). Three

specific nominations for a safe environment reinforces the importance of safety to a sense of belonging.

A high score in Table 8-14 indicates a greater level of importance than a low score. A score in the range from three to two means the indicator was between "very" and "somewhat" important overall. Where the score was between two and one, the characteristic was not important. The most important factor overall was family. There was little separating the next four indicators, with the presence of friends and good neighbours being of similar importance, just behind local shops, facilities and services but ahead of characteristics of the local physical environment. Noteworthy results are presented next in order of the priority ascribed to the belonging indicators, commencing with the most important element, family.

Table 8-15: Additional important aspects nominated for belonging

Characteristic	Number of occurrences	Level of importance	Existing classification
Church	3	Very	Local shops, facilities and services
Education, medical, ATMs	2	Very	Local shops, facilities and services
Public transport	1	Somewhat	Local shops, facilities and services
Swimming facilities	1	Very	Local shops, facilities and services
Ambience	1	Very	Local physical environment
Clean air	1	Very	Local physical environment
Open spaces, backyards	1	Very	Local physical environment
Quiet and green area	1	Very	Local physical environment
Security and safety	3	Very	Local physical environment
Familiarity	1	Very	Local social interaction
Community spirit	1	Very	Local social interaction

Family was "very important" for 77.3% of respondents, and "somewhat important" for an additional 11.1%. Of the eight questionnaires where a response had been provided for one issue only instead of for each of the eight indicators, five nominated family was very important. (Of the remaining three, two identified shops and one, good neighbours; in all cases, these aspects were very important.)

With family overwhelmingly the most important factor to a sense of belonging, it is not surprising that there were no significant differences when the relative importance of family was cross-tabulated against profile characteristics. All respondents who spoke languages other than English at home said family was very important. This compares with 75.8% of persons whose only spoken language at home was English.

Local shops, facilities and services were very important for 49.0% of people and somewhat important for another 39.5%. A notable difference was apparent in relation to gender, with this aspect of belonging more important for females than males (Table 8-16). For example, 55.6% of females thought local shops and facilities were very important compared with only 39.8% of males. Traditionally, females are regarded as more inclined to shop and to assume greater responsibility for household management than males. Earlier results pointed to the gendered nature of some household activities, including the likelihood of females to use of some types of local shops and facilities more than males. What is important here is recognition of gender as potentially influencing feelings of place connectedness.

Table 8-16: Importance of local facilities by key profile variables

| Profile characteristics | Importance of local facilities, shops and services % | | | |
	Very important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Total (n =)
Gender:				
Males	39.8	44.6	15.7	100 (83)
Females	55.6	35.9	8.5	100 (117)
Total responses	49.0	39.5	11.5	100 (200)
Motor vehicle ownership:				
Yes	47.1	41.7	11.2	100 (187)
No	76.9	7.7	15.4	100 (13)
Total responses	49.0	39.5	11.5	100 (200)
Computer skills:				
Computer literate	43.4	46.7	9.9	100 (152)
Just learning or not used	65.2	17.4	17.4	100 (46)
Total responses	48.5	39.9	11.6	100 (198)
Gross weekly income:				
$1,000 or more	37.7	45.9	16.4	100 (61)
$500 – $999	44.2	40.4	15.4	100 (52)
Less than $500	60.0	35.4	4.6	100 (65)
Total responses	47.8	40.4	11.8	100 (178)
Education:				
Year 12 or below	58.1	32.3	9.7	100 (62)
Trade certificate or diploma	50.0	37.9	12.1	100 (66)
Bachelor degree or higher	40.9	45.5	13.6	100 (66)
Total responses	49.5	38.7	11.9	100 (194)

An expected difference was evidenced based on motor vehicle ownership, with 76.9% of respondents without private transport thinking that local shops were very important by comparison with a minority of those who owned cars (Table 8-16). In addition, a significant difference became apparent when this aspect of belonging was cross-tabulated against computer use. For example, 65.2% of respondents who did not use computers or were just learning placed great importance on local shops by comparison with only 43.4%

of those who were computer literate (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 12.789$, df = 2). In terms of income, a notable difference became apparent, with 60.0% of persons with less than $500 per week thinking local shops and facilities were very important for belonging by comparison with only 37.7% with at least $1,000 per week income. These two profile variables, together with education level, are highly inter-related and, predictably, the results also pointed to those with lower education levels thinking local facilities were more important compared with those with higher education qualifications. It seems identification with local shops and familiarity with particular aspects of the built environment are important for strengthening feelings of belonging for some, in particular females and some people with low education and income levels.

Overall, 47.0% classified friends as being very important for advancing a sense of belonging to a place, and a further 40.9% that said they were somewhat important. Friends were more important for those who worked short hours (less than 20 hours per week) by comparison with those who generally worked longer hours (Table 8-17). For example, friends were very important for 70.4% who worked less than 20 hours per week by comparison with only 29.8% who worked 40 hours or more. This also supports results explored in Chapter 7 which seemed to indicate that part-time workers have more very close relationships with friends and social contacts than those working long hours. Less time spent in the workforce obviously presents more opportunities to strengthen relationships with friends. This in turn can reinforce an individual's position in society and their sense of belonging.

Table 8-17: Importance of friends by key profile variables

Profile characteristics	*Importance of friends %*			
	Very important	*Somewhat important*	*Unimportant*	*Total (=)*
Hours worked per week:				
Less than 20 hours	70.4	25.9	3.7	100 (27)
20 – 39 hours	50.0	38.2	11.8	100 (34)
40 hours or more	29.8	57.9	12.3	100 (57)
Total responses	44.9	44.9	10.2	100 (118)
Employed in paid work:				
Yes	46.0	42.1	11.9	100 (126)
No	28.0	60.0	12.0	100 (25)
Retired	59.6	27.7	12.8	100 (47)
Total responses	47.0	40.9	12.1	100 (198)

In addition, employment status apparently influences the degree of importance ascribed to friends. For example, friends were very important to 59.6% of retired respondents and to 46.0% of persons in paid work but to only 28.0% of those not in the paid workforce, although they were "somewhat" important to another 60.0% of those not employed.

Most people rated good neighbours as being important for advancing a sense of belonging, with 43.2% stating they were very important and a further 44.7% indicating that they were somewhat important. Motor vehicle ownership was an anticipated influence, with 85.7% of respondents without access to motor vehicles thinking good neighbours were very important compared with only 40.0% who owned private transport (Table 8-18). This highlights the probable dependency by those who are less transport mobile on the goodwill of neighbours.

Education and income levels apparently influenced attitudes towards the importance of neighbours (Table 8-18). For example, 56.5% of respondents with no post-school education rated good neighbours as being very important compared with only 28.8% of those with university degrees (statistically significant difference, $\chi^2 = 12.861, df = 4$). In addition, only 29.5% of those earning $1,000 per week or more thought good neighbours were very important by comparison with 54.5% of those earning less than $500 per week.

When importance of good neighbours was tabulated against computer use skills and use of the internet at home, significant differences became apparent (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 8.164, df = 2$ and $\chi^2 = 13.637, df = 2$ respectively) (Table 8-18). For example, only 33.8% of those who were used the internet at home thought that good neighbours were very important compared with 61.5% who did not access the internet when at home. Notable differences were produced for other indicators associated with more recent technology – use of the internet at work and ownership of mobile phones. For both profile variables, neighbours were of greater importance for non-users of technology compared with those who were not users.

Table 8-18: Importance of good neighbours by key profile variables

| Profile characteristics | *Importance of good neighbours %* | | | |
	Very important	*Somewhat important*	*Unimportant*	*Total*
Own/access to a motor vehicle:				
Yes	40.0	47.6	12.4	100 (185)
No	85.7	7.1	7.1	100 (14)
Total responses	43.2	44.7	12.1	100 (199)
Education:				
Year 12 or below	56.5	33.9	9.7	100 (62)
Trade or diploma	49.2	35.4	15.4	100 (65)
Bachelor degree or higher	28.8	59.1	12.1	100 (66)
Total responses	44.6	43.0	12.4	100 (193)
Income:				
$1,000 or more	29.5	55.7	14.8	100 (61)
$500 – $999	35.3	51.0	13.7	100 (51)
Less than $500	54.5	34.8	10.6	100 (66)
Total responses	40.4	46.6	12.9	100 (178)
Computer use skills:				
Computer literate	37.1	49.7	13.2	100 (151)
Just learning or not used	60.9	30.4	8.7	100 (46)
Total responses	42.6	45.2	12.2	100 (197)
Internet use at home:				
Yes	33.8	52.3	13.8	100 (130)
No	61.5	29.2	9.2	100 (65)
Total responses	43.1	44.6	12.3	100 (195)
Internet use at work:				
Yes	40.9	41.9	17.2	100 (93)
No	36.2	57.4	6.4	100 (47)
Retired	54.9	35.3	9.8	100 (51)
Total responses	43.5	44.0	12.6	100 (191)
Own a mobile phone:				
Yes	38.2	48.6	13.2	100 (144)
No	55.6	35.2	9.3	100 (54)
Total responses	42.9	44.9	12.1	100 (198)

Earlier results have pointed to people with lower education qualifications and incomes and non-computer users being more likely to also have lower levels of activities away from the home and fewer social contacts than others, pointing to their possibly being dependent to a greater extent than others on neighbourly interaction. In addition, as suggested earlier in this chapter, they were less likely to volunteer help than others, perhaps because they were recipients rather than providers in this respect.

Overall, the local physical environment was generally important, with 40.9% rating it as very important and a further 44.4% indicating that it was somewhat important. However, the results require quite different interpretations compared to feelings about good neighbours in spite of noteworthy differences being highlighted by a similar combination

of profile variables – use of communications technology and income. In particular, in the case of the use of technology, significant differences became apparent for the four profile variables of computer use skills, internet use at work, internet use at home and mobile phone ownership (χ^2 = 7.424, df = 2; χ^2 = 11.101, df = 4; χ^2 = 7.952, df = 2; and χ^2 = 6.730, df = 2 respectively) (Table 8-19). There was also a statistically significant difference for income (χ^2 = 14.387, df = 4).

Table 8-19: Importance of local physical environment by key profile variables

| Profile characteristics | Importance of local physical environment % | | | |
	Very important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Total
Computer use skills:				
Computer literate	43.7	45.7	10.6	100 (151)
Just learning or not used	33.3	40.0	26.7	100 (45)
Total responses	41.3	44.4	14.3	100 (196)
Internet use at home:				
Yes	46.9	42.3	10.8	100 (130)
No	28.1	50.0	21.9	100 (64)
Total responses	40.7	44.8	14.4	100 (194)
Internet use at work:				
Yes	47.3	46.2	6.5	100 (93)
No	34.8	39.1	26.1	100 (46)
Not applicable	35.3	47.1	17.6	100 (51)
Total responses	41.1	44.7	14.2	100 (190)
Own a mobile phone:				
Yes	41.7	47.9	10.4	100 (144)
No	39.6	35.8	24.5	100 (53)
Total responses	41.1	44.7	14.2	100 (197)
Income:				
$1,000 or more	42.6	55.7	1.6	100 (61)
$500 – $999	33.3	43.1	23.5	100 (65)
Less than $500	46.2	36.9	16.9	100 (66)
Total responses	41.2	45.2	13.6	100 (197)
Education:				
Year 12 or below	41.0	34.4	24.6	100 (61)
Trade certificate or diploma	36.9	52.3	10.8	100 (51)
Bachelor degree or higher	45.5	45.5	9.1	100 (65)
Total responses	41.1	44.3	14.6	100 (192)
Size of neighbourhood (km²):				
Smaller than 1 km²	25.8	53.2	21.0	100 (62)
1 – 2 km²	35.3	49.0	15.7	100 (51)
2 – 4 km²	48.5	36.4	15.2	100 (33)
4 – 8 km²	66.7	26.7	6.7	100 (30)
Larger than 8 km²	50.0	45.5	4.5	100 (22)
Total responses	40.9	44.4	14.6	100 (198)

Similar proportions of respondents in the highest and lowest income categories rated local environment as very important (42.6% and 46.2% respectively) whilst only 33.3% of those

in the middle-income indicated this level of importance. Another 55.7% of high-income earners ($1,000 per week or more) said it was somewhat important. As a result, a very low 1.6% of those with high incomes rated the local physical environment as unimportant compared with nearly one in four of those in the middle range (23.5%) and 16.9% of those in the lowest range. Arguably, it is the more affluent (those on high incomes) who can be more selective about the types of physical environments in which they live and, consequently, be prepared to recognise this as a factor for enhancing a sense of belonging.

The differences that were produced in relation to education (highly inter-related with income) show this profile characteristic was also influential (Table 8-19). A high 24.6% of respondents with no post-school education thought the local environment was unimportant compared with 9.1% of respondents with university qualifications and 10.8% of those with trade certificates or diplomas. Another reason for those with university degrees according greater important to the physical environment could be associated with increased levels of awareness of, concerns for, and interaction with, the physical environmental through education.

In addition, the results point to fewer of Webber's "left behinds" (non-users of technology) being concerned about the local environment for a sense of belonging to place by comparison with users of computers and contemporary methods of communication. These distinguishing features might occur in part because other needs have been satisfied for respondents with high incomes who, it is presumed, can generally afford such technology. For potential members of Webber's CWPs, it therefore seems that the local physical environment influences place belonging.

When this belonging indicator was cross-tabulated against neighbourhood area, a significant difference became apparent (statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 18.133$, df = 8). In particular, those with smaller neighbourhood areas tended to think that this aspect was less relevant than those with larger areas (Table 8-19). For example, only 4.5% of respondents with the largest area thought environment was unimportant by comparison with 21.0% of those with the smallest neighbourhood area In addition, only 25.8% of respondents identifying with the smallest area thought this aspect very important compared with 66.7% of those with an area between four and eight km^2.

The remaining three indicators for belonging – local social interaction, location of work or mainstream pursuit and location of local clubs and groups – were unimportant overall (indicated by scores of less than two). It should not be surprising that location of work is not important given that boundary definitions do not appear to be influenced by the location of the workplace (refer to Chapter 5). The relative unimportance to a sense of belonging of location of local clubs and groups might also be expected given the seemingly low levels of memberships in formal groups (refer to Chapter 7) . For these reasons and also because, when significance testing was performed, significant differences were not apparent, discussion about these issues with respect to belonging is not warranted.

The exception is the effect of age and partnership status on views about the local social interaction because a significant difference became apparent in terms of these two profile variables ($\chi^2 = 11.389$, df = 4 and $\chi^2 = 7.017$, df = 2 respectively) (Table 8-20). For example, 40.4% of respondents who were less than 40 years of age thought local social interaction was unimportant for engendering a sense of belonging to place compared with 21.2% who were at least 60 years old. In addition, 46.9% of people who were single also thought this factor was unimportant by comparison with only 25.5% who lived with a partner.

Table 8-20: Importance of local social interaction by key profile variables

	Importance of local social interaction %			
Profile characteristics	*Very important*	*Somewhat important*	*Unimportant*	*Total (=)*
Age:				
Less than 40 years	26.9	32.7	40.4	100 (52)
40 – 59 years	15.1	59.1	25.8	100 (93)
60 years or more	25.0	53.8	21.2	100 (52)
Total responses	20.8	50.8	28.4	100 (197)
Live with a partner:				
Yes	20.6	53.9	25.5	100 (165)
No	21.9	31.3	46.9	100 (32)
Total responses	20.8	50.3	28.9	100 (197)

Earlier results were possible portents of these views. For example, single people seemingly had fewer close social ties than others; they had lower activity levels, both within neighbourhood areas and in other places; and they had lower levels of neighbourhood interaction and fewer neighbours who were recent social contacts. Thus it is not surprising that local social interaction was relatively unimportant for them compared with those who had partners.

It is not so clear why people less than 40 years of age had similar views to single people, although they were apparently less likely to use some types of local facilities than others, such as those described as medical or personal services. These results suggest these attitudes prevail no matter where young adults and single people dwell.

Discussion

Results point to salient issues for belonging being linked more with situations that bring people into close personal contact with others rather than within large groups. For example, family, friends and good neighbours were all important whereas knowing and mixing with local people or location of clubs or groups were not classified as being important. Nor was location of the workplace important.

Nevertheless, local shops, facilities and services were considered important (second only to family). The level of importance accorded to this issue has been connected by some with a decline in social networks and personal closeness, to be substituted by shopping and commercial entertainment as a community-based activity (Lane 1997). According to Lane, the shopping experience is a major contributor to social isolation within countries such as Australia. With the shopping mall and its simulated "community" façade arguably the prevailing shopping destination within contemporary metropolitan society, shopping has also been ascribed as the activity through which some people attempt to recapture a sense of community (Hamilton 2003).

Alternatively, familiarity with elements within the physical landscape might not only provide comfort and enhance identification with and attachment to a place but also contribute to the high level of importance attached to shops and facilities. This could perhaps account to some extent for the level of importance accorded to the local physical environment for a sense of belonging.

This section has followed the same procedures applied throughout this thesis by presenting differences that are significant in a statistical sense rather than discussing general trends in results. In so doing, the apparent relevance of computers, the internet and mobile phones as indicators of differing views has been highlighted. The only other variables describing characteristics of the final sample that were influential for more than one indicator for belonging were income, education and motor vehicle ownership. (Interestingly, profile

characteristics related to age and stage in the life course are apparently not influential determinants of the five aspects of belonging identified as being important.)

Whilst these variables describing the profile (use of technology, income, education and car ownership) are apparently highly inter-related, there is no clear pattern to the salience of issues for belonging other than a suggestion that users of technology seem to accord less importance to local shops, facilities and good neighbours and more importance to the local physical environment. One interpretation of these results suggests that an increasingly technological society is producing, for some, changes in the degree of importance ascribed to the landscape (increasing) and people (decreasing). If this is so, it would not necessarily mean a diminution of the importance of place as such but rather the role of other people as an element might assume comparatively less importance. Alternatively, the outcome might relate to the lower order needs of urban dwellers increasingly being met, especially for those with high income and education levels, within what is often described as an increasingly affluent society.

Whilst belonging and attachment to place might be nebulous elements to measure, the results point to most people being able to relate to these sentiments and pursue a sense of belonging through associations with family, friends, good neighbours, familiarity with local shops, services and facilities, and through an affinity with the physical environment.

Conclusion

The results analysed in this chapter point to people having generally positive feelings about neighbourhoods in which they live. Residents seem to have high levels of satisfaction with, and perceptions of safety about, their neighbourhoods. In addition, results point to apparently high levels of trust and tolerance although anecdotal evidence provided some contrasting viewpoints. Other aspects of social capacities and civic qualities are not so positive, although stakeholders such as long-term residents and homeowners appear to be more active contributors to their neighbourhood areas than other respondents.

People generally have high levels of awareness of what it means to have a sense of belonging to a place. The presence of family members is more important to most people than any other issue for promoting this feeling. Other important factors are local facilities, shops and services, friends, good neighbours and the local physical environment.

This chapter and the preceding three have provided interpretations of results from the consolidated data set collected from six survey locations. Whether different emphases might need to be highlighted when results are examined independently for each of the locations is explored in the next (and penultimate) chapter.