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Neighbourhood Cohesion and Sense of Community in a Local Church Context

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Neighbourhood Cohesion and Sense of Community in a Local Church Context

by
Colin Cowie

A report submitted as a partial requirement for the degree of
Bachelor of Science with Honours in Psychology at Edith Cowan University.

October, 1999

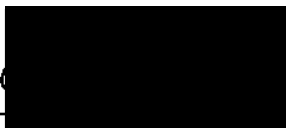
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Abstract

The nature and implications for growth of sense of community (SOC) in a local church setting were explored. In study one, the Neighbourhood Cohesion Index (NCI) and Sense of Community Index (SCI) were completed by 108 Sorrento Anglican Church members. Principal components and reliability analyses indicated that the church-referenced SCI was an appropriate assessment tool. Three factors labelled values, influence and neighbourhood concern emerged in a SCI principal components analysis. A hierarchical multiple regression indicated that talking to neighbours about religion and the SCI values subscale predicted 22% of the variance in the NCI. The prediction that the church-referenced SCI would relate negatively with the NCI was not supported. In study two, semi-structured interviews with five members were analysed to explore the unique properties of SOC and neighbourhood cohesion within the church setting. Study two results suggest that SOC can be associated with negative outcomes. Transcript excerpts are used to illustrate that a contemporary service, youth emphasis and close-knit relationships may pose barriers to attracting potential members. While shared fellowship and interpersonal connections bind the church positively, the dangers associated with a relatively unchanged membership were noted. It was argued that the development of a second congregation, small home prayer groups and employment of a youth worker have been hampered by neighbourhood, development and church profile factors. Findings are discussed in terms of how strategies for change are challenged by the need to maintain existing structures. Further investigation into the negative aspects of SOC is warranted.

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Submitted: 29th October, 1999

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Christopher Sonn, for sharing his expertise.

Special thanks is extended to Pastor David Jones and Sorrento Anglican Church members. Every church member connected with the study gave freely of themselves.

I am especially indebted to Elizabeth Mayhew. Elizabeth provided invaluable support throughout the course.

As always, my family's encouragement was important. Thank you Ann, Jill and Lewis.

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Introduction

Social settings such as neighbourhoods, schools, family and religious organisations provide contexts in which people participate on a daily basis (Buckner, 1988; Burroughs & Eby, 1998; Pargament, 1983; Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler & Williams, 1996). These settings may fill the lives of members with meaning, social roles and identities (Maton & Salem, 1995). For example, a number of researchers have explored the integrative and regulative experiences that influence the quality of life and general well-being of church members (Bjarnason, 1998; Ellison & George, 1994; Tix & Frazier, 1998).

Traditionally, the church has played a central role in the lives of people (Bjarnason, 1998; Maton & Wells, 1995; Perrin, Kennedy & Miller, 1997). In Australia however, this function has been challenged. In part, this challenge has sprung from the irreverent, irreligious streak that has been historically associated with some Australians (Cathcart, 1995). Other analysts have pointed to the changing nature of the Australian community and the adjustments in language and style that churches have needed to consider (e.g., Miers, 1999; O'Farrell, 1977). Accordingly, many churches have embraced the social, economic and political realities of contemporary Australian communities by revising and updating services (Jones, 1997; Miers, 1999).

On a local level, Sorrento Anglican Church conducted a survey to identify neighbourhood needs and explore ways forward (Jones, 1997). A key issue that emerged suggests that the church was perceived as isolationist. As a result the church may have no direct meaning and influence on the lives of some people in

the Sorrento neighbourhood. This may have contributed to the church having a relatively unchanged congregation.

Sorrento Anglican Church members may have responded to neighbourhood constraints by developing tightly knit fellowship circles that effectively preclude newcomers. Under these circumstances any change may threaten the cohesion of the group. This raises questions about the future direction of the church and suggests the possibility of barriers to church growth. If the development of internal relationships overrides the promotion of an external focus, then the repercussions may include a decrease in community-wide sense of community (SOC; Sarason, 1974) and diminished neighbourhood cohesion (Buckner, 1988).

Sarason (1974) introduced and defined SOC as, "The perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure" (p. 111). In an equally influential paper, McMillan and Chavis (1986) defined SOC as, "...a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9).

Many researchers have linked SOC to self-esteem, identity and health related issues (e.g., Fyson, 1999; Hill, 1996; Johnson & Mullins, 1990; Puddifoot, 1996). Sarason (1974) contended that, "The absence or dilution of the psychological sense of community is the most destructive dynamic in the lives of the people in our society" (p. 96). Chavis and Wandersman (1990) emphasised the pivotal role SOC plays in catalysing community participation, mobilising human

service intervention programmes and unifying the diverse entities that form urban localities. Similarly, Felton and Shinn (1992) linked SOC to group cohesion and the unwritten social structures that bind neighbourhoods together. More recently, Hill (1996) argued that an individual's well-being may depend on the meaning, identity and support garnered through a SOC.

Although a full understanding of the exact components of SOC may require further research, the present pliability of the construct appears to make it a valuable means of exploring complex phenomena such as participation in church groups (Fyson, 1999). Church groups may promote SOC by playing a mediating role that links the diverse entities that make up modern neighbourhood life (Maton & Wells, 1995). A failure to accept this role may lead to a church becoming narrowly embedded within a neighbourhood (Stolle & Rochon, 1998).

Researchers have tended to equate a positive SOC with uplifting consequences for communities (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). However, when viewed within a community-group context, a positive SOC may include a downside that warrants investigation (Brodsky, 1996). The examination of how a local church group's members interact internally and with surrounding neighbours provides a means of examining this possible SOC facet. The present study explores the nature of SOC within Sorrento Anglican Church. In particular, the question of whether SOC and neighbourhood cohesion factors within the church pose barriers to attracting potential members is examined.

Sense of Community Framework

McMillan and Chavis's (1986) four part model comprising membership, influence, integration of needs and shared emotional connection has tended to

guide recent SOC studies (Fyson, 1999; Prezza & Costantini, 1998). The first McMillan and Chavis (1986) component, membership, is tied to whether an individual is accepted, has a contribution to make and has a right to belong in a group. The definition of membership emphasises boundaries and distinguishes “us” from “them”. While boundaries afford members the right to be trusted as “one of us”, newcomers may find it difficult to breach the interpersonal connections and shared intimacies that bind an established group.

To the insider the boundaries provide an emotional safety net that creates intimacy and encourages self-disclosure (McMillan, 1996). For example, when church members are challenged to offer a personal testimony, the emotional safety provided by being “one of us” may encourage a willingness to take risks and invest more of oneself (Ingram, 1986). The testimony represents an opportunity to recollect pivotal events and sharing these can provide the church member with an enhanced feeling of belonging (Ingram, 1986).

McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) second SOC component, influence, involves balancing a group’s desire to influence with an individual’s need to be influential. Although a member’s commitment may be contingent on their ability to exert influence, the group in order to function cohesively needs to maintain conformity. Copying the ‘correct’ behaviour of other members may become a means of instilling conformity and insuring individual’s validate the group’s world view.

Reinforcement or the integration and fulfillment of needs is the third element of McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) SOC model. If the group experience is not seen as providing rewards such as status, a feeling of competence and exposure to others with like-minded values, then individuals will not be attracted.

Similarly, McMillan and Chavis's (1986) fourth and last factor, shared emotional connection, rests on "the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences" (p. 9). If the members' interactions are governed by past conflicts and ill-feeling, potential members may refrain from joining.

According to Lorion and Newbrough (1996), SOC represents an overarching concept whose form depends on referent setting (e.g., church, neighbourhood, workplace), people (e.g., church members, householders, workers) and purpose (e.g., fellowship, attachment, affiliation). Although these features are grounded in everyday language, SOC is a multi-layered concept that has linkages with the need for transcendence or "needs of the soul" (Berkowitz, 1996, p. 452) and a sense of spirituality (McMillan, 1996).

Consequently, McMillan (1996) rearranged and renamed McMillan and Chavis's (1986) four SOC elements: Spirit, Trust, Trade, and Art. These new labels appear to shift the consideration of SOC dimensions to a more abstract level where the ultimate values that bind communities together are considered (Fyson, 1999). Hence, "shared emotional connection" has become the events that "honour the community's transcendent values" or art (McMillan, 1996, p. 323). Membership has become the "spirit" that arises when the "spark of friendship" makes it safe to tell the truth (McMillan, 1996, p. 316). Similarly, the principle of "trust" which is tied to a community's use of power has replaced influence. Finally, integration and fulfilment of needs has become the search for similarities and relationship-based "trade". This trading may build from minor self-disclosures to a firm base of understanding, where differences of opinion are

readily accommodated in a social economy. However, McMillan's (1996) refashioned SOC components have not dampened the continued use of prior SOC conceptualisations and their related measuring tools (e.g., Burroughs & Eby, 1998; Miers, 1999; Prezza & Costantini, 1998).

Measuring Sense of Community

A number of research instruments including Glynn's (1981) 120 item Likert-style Psychological Sense of Community (PSOC) scale, Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, and Wandersman's (1986) Sense of Community Index (SCI) and Davidson and Cotter's (1986) Sense-of-Community Scale (SCS) have been developed to gauge how individual's perceive SOC. Although SOC tends to be conceptualised on a composite level, the tendency for researchers to apply these instruments to specific subgroups suggests that the construct may have greater utility when fragmented (Pretty, Andrewes & Collett, 1994). An individual, dependent on the setting, may simultaneously maintain several different versions of SOC (Pretty, et al., 1994).

Research involving microsystems such as schools (Pretty et al., 1994), workplaces (Burroughs & Eby, 1998; Hughey, Speer & Peterson, 1999; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991), churches (Miers, 1999), migrant communities (Sonn & Fisher, 1996) and the local neighbourhood (Brodsky, 1996; Glynn, 1986) have applied SOC on a context specific level. For example, Pretty et al. (1994) found adolescent SOC varied as a function of domain. To ascertain how adolescents would respond to a neighbourhood-referenced version of the SCI, Pretty et al. (1994) conducted a pilot study involving 108 teenage Canadian students. As "several participants ... commented that their school was more important to them

than their neighbourhood, and that they would have answered the questions differently if we had made school the reference point", Pretty et al. (1994, p. 350) developed and administered a school referenced SCI.

The Pretty et al. (1994) SCI changes simply involved replacing the word "neighbours" with the words "fellow students" in items such as "Very few of my neighbours know me". Importantly, participants completed the original neighbourhood-referenced SCI and amended school-referenced SCI within a school setting. This may have created a response bias favouring the school-referenced SCI. In addition, the study reported that the school staff may have provided a sample of motivated, school-oriented students who were more inclined to react favourably to the school questions.

Whereas Pretty et al. (1994) demonstrated that SOC was context specific, the preceding research of Glynn (1981) reported socio-demographic predictors for the construct. The number of additional years one expects to reside in an area, together with the number of neighbours the participant knew by first name, combined to account for the majority of Glynn's (1981) regression analysis PSOC variance ($R^2 = .613, p < .001$).

However, two factors combine to weaken Glynn's (1981) findings. First, the presence of the possible suppressor variable "number of children living at home" may influence the number of neighbours one can identify by first name. Secondly, some subsequent researchers (e.g., Davidson & Cotter, 1986; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991) have not found a positive correlation between the number of years spent in a community and SOC. Moreover, Hill (1996) linked the lack of consistent research regarding this and other socio-demographic correlates (e.g., income, age,

gender, home ownership) with the setting specific nature of SOC. According to Hill (1996), "...the lack of consistent findings regarding dimensions and correlates is that some significant percentage of these aspects of psychological sense of community differ from setting to setting" (p. 433).

Although Hill (1996) noted that research has not found specific robust findings, subsequent studies have continued to report significant relationships between the SOC and socio-demographic factors. In an Italian study, Prezza and Costantini (1998) found various relationships between gender, age, marital status, children, working in one's own community, owning one's own home, group participation, level of education and SOC. The study reported a significant relationship between SOC and gender in a small city (women scored higher than men). In addition, the study noted that SOC in a small town was significantly related to participation in community groups, having children and being older. Nevertheless, in keeping with Hill's (1996) concerns, Prezza and Costantini (1998) conceded that the higher SOC in a small town was not simply due to a variance in socio-demographic characteristics. In a regression model where all the predictors were entered, the relatively low variance explained level ($R^2 = .29$) suggests that the study's measure was missing some important aspects of SOC.

In an Australian application of the SCI, Miers (1999) administered a questionnaire to 54 members of a Victorian church group. The questionnaire also included opinion seeking items (e.g., "What are the five most important issues the church must face in the immediate future?") that were sorted into themes which were then ranked according to their prevalence.

With regard to the SCI, Miers (1999) reported moderate to high correlations between all the sub-scales. However, as a factor analysis was not undertaken, the presence of the four Chavis et al. (1986) SCI dimensions was not confirmed. The study accepted the four factors, membership, influence, reinforcement of needs and shared emotional connection, without examining the sensitivity of the SCI to the realities of the local church context. Importantly, Sonn, Bishop and Drew (1999) queried the unquestioning use of the SCI and suggested that the instrument be combined with other data gathering techniques.

Neighbourhood Cohesion

Neighbourhood cohesion subsumes “attraction-to-neighbourhood, neighbouring, and sense of community under one construct” (Buckner, 1988, p. 786). By combining attitudinal and behavioural measures, neighbourhood cohesion tools provide a broader indicator of community life than the SCI (Buckner, 1988). Whereas SCI-based studies tend to explore an individual’s perception of the quality of relationships (e.g., “I feel at home in this church”), neighbourhood cohesion research also includes more overt measures of social interaction (Skjaeveland, Garling & Maeland, 1996). In this type of research, quantifiable items (e.g., “Do you borrow things off your neighbours?”) may be tallied to gauge the total amount of social interaction neighbours engage in (Buckner, 1988).

Buckner’s (1988) 18 item self-report, Likert-style, Neighbourhood Cohesion Index (NCI) was originally developed to support a three dimensional view of the components that comprise an individual’s feeling of community. By combining SOC with attraction-to-neighbourhood and social interaction within a

neighbourhood factors, Buckner (1988) sought a more comprehensive community measure. The NCI may be applied on a community-wide level or directed at community groups and neighbourhoods. The NCI may provide an indication of how a community-group bonds with the surrounding neighbourhood or as occurred in Buckner's (1988) study used to compare different neighbourhoods.

The three, middle-class United States neighbourhoods Buckner (1988) administered a mailed NCI to were all located in Washington, DC. They were chosen by the study because they had contrasting reputations for cohesion that were based on characteristics such as public housing and transient populations. Although Buckner (1988) was able to rank the three neighbourhoods in the predicted order, a factor analysis failed to confirm the hypothesised three-dimensional conception of the NCI. Buckner (1988) found the participants answers converged into one large factor, labelled neighbourhood cohesion. The study reported that behavioural indicators (e.g., "I visit with my neighbours in their homes") and attitudinal items (e.g., "I feel like I belong in this neighbourhood") were completed similarly.

External Factors that Influence Community Group Growth

Both the NCI and SCI have relied on individual measures to assess multifaceted community characteristics. A deeper understanding of community-group participation may involve consideration of the local social and environmental context beyond that afforded by these measuring tools (Perkins, Florin, Rich, Wandersman & Chavis, 1990; Sonn et al., 1999). Neighbourhood function (e.g., residential), socio-demographic (e.g., transient population; home ownership) and environmental (e.g., outdoor seating, street width) variables may

combine to influence neighbourhood interaction in complex ways (Royal & Rossi, 1996; Unger & Wandersman, 1985).

Factors including building style, the design of suburban streetscapes and provision of services may have a considerable effect on neighbourhood relationships (Plas & Lewis, 1996). For example, the introduction of a “thoroughfare” car-centred mentality has according to Plas and Lewis (1996) denuded modern urban areas of a neighbourhood feeling. Although the social networks and emotional attachments neighbours form suggest that people make a neighbourhood the converse may be equally true. The formation of people-centred communities may be effected by spatial features including the placement of access paths, having a corner shop and centralised meeting areas (Iannaccone, 1996).

In addition, marriage breakdowns, the declining rate of institutionalised religion, commuting patterns, internet relationships and increasing crime rates impact on community group participation (Royal & Rossi, 1996). Furthermore, community groups must contend with the consequences of the present day weakening of neighbourhood ties (Sarason, 1974). This tendency for individuals to seek supportive relationships outside their immediate urban area has long been noted (Glynn, 1986; Sarason, 1974).

Arguably, a sense of belonging was more achievable in smaller, more face-to-face village-based settings where community boundaries and the workings of the community were clearly defined (Sarason, 1974). While some individuals feel that brief business-like interactions accentuate today’s seeming lack of community, others may simply fail to relate to what a community is and does

(Bardo & Hughey, 1984). The latter group may overlook neighbourhood interaction and view modern urban neighbourhoods in convenience and privacy terms only (Glynn, 1981).

This lack of interaction has perhaps been accentuated in large cities by the likelihood of living close to people with whom individuals do not have an emotional connection (Heller, 1989). As meaningful social ties are sometimes missing, themes such as social isolation and alienation have become synonymous with modern urban communities (Orford, 1992; Sarason, 1993; Trickett, 1996). The structure of neighbourhoods and community groups may either encourage a vulnerable individual to feel a meaningful part of the locality's social fabric, become isolated or seek relationships elsewhere (Glynn, 1981). The pathway taken may rest on the willingness of community groups to step outside established affiliations and the individual's own desire to seek out entry points (Riger & Lavrakas, 1981). A measure of the social quality of a neighbourhood and a means of validating the worth of its SOC may then become the degree to which an individual's attempts to join in are supported by community groups (Glynn, 1981).

Community groups may also need to contend with the existence of negative neighbourhood relationships (Brodsky, 1996). Disliking others, conflict, daily hassles and neighbourhood annoyances (e.g., loud music, car parking problems) appear to be intertwined with the more wholesome aspects of communities. Some neighbourhoods may lack safety, shared values, status, positive experience and success (Brodsky, 1996). Turning these settings that seemingly epitomise a 'negative' SOC into positive settings may involve community groups connecting with the disenfranchised and seeking to improve their quality of life (Sonn et al.,

1999). As such, the positively focused McMillan and Chavis (1986) SOC definition may lack critical negative components (Skjaeveland et al., 1996).

As an individual shifts between community groups they may temporarily become a church member, a student, a worker, or a football supporter (Wiesenfeld, 1996). Although this delineation may serve the beneficial effect of enabling individuals to forge their own unique blend of group identities, Sarason (1974) argued "...it is extremely rare, particularly in cities, for people to have such a positive sense from more than one or two such groupings" (p. 153). Cross-membership may be unlikely if community groups rival each other (Wiesenfeld, 1996). However, in order to grow, community groups may need to seek a balance between the need for in-group solidarity and building bridges with other community factions (Frank & Yasumoto, 1998).

The needs of individual members, and community groups as a whole, might in reality fail to coincide with those of a larger community (Wiesenfeld, 1996). In fact, the interrelationships that form in established groups may lead to views that run counter to those espoused by the larger community. According to Wiesenfeld (1996), many community theorists fail to emphasise society's diversity and consequently "...ignore the antagonistic forces operating within communities" (p. 321).

Internal Factors that Influence Community Group Growth

Not all community groups are likely to create networks that link a neighbourhood's members (Stolle & Rochon, 1998). For example, a group may develop highly privatised internal bonds that fail to generalise to the wider community (Stolle & Rochon, 1998). Ideally, the circle of trust engendered by a

group should extend beyond its boundaries and encompass other neighbourhood members that are not personally known (Stolle & Rochon, 1998). Hill (1996) argued that relationships should not necessarily depend on interactions. An overarching sense of community membership may be attainable by all neighbourhood members regardless of whether they ever meet (Hill, 1996).

Within communities, groups may play a pivotal role in promoting and valuing diversity (Wiesenfeld, 1996). By welcoming internal questioning and resisting dominant members' pressure to conform, community groups may transcend their boundaries and foster outside interest (Wiesenfeld, 1996). Conversely, in some groups, a lack of questioning may influence a leader to mistakenly proclaim all is sound (Fyson, 1999). A form of groupthink may prevail, where outsiders are viewed in a stereotypical way that enables the group to disregard their opinions (Kameda & Sugimori, 1993). The maintenance of an optimal number of members or group closure may then ensure a group is protected from unwanted diversity (Kameda & Sugimori, 1993).

The degree to which groups acquire the potential for redeemable 'credit' (social capital) may ultimately depend on the member's ability to accept others and step beyond their own boundaries (Portes, 1998). By avoiding inclusiveness and engaging in community projects that promote the common good, a group may build up credits that may later lead to community reciprocity (Stolle & Rochon, 1998). Regardless of how representative a group's membership is of a larger community, if the group becomes narrowly embedded in a neighbourhood, social capital may not materialise (Stolle & Rochon, 1998).

According to Stolle and Rochon (1998), there is a relationship between a group's diversity and the membership's perception of community reciprocity and generalised trust. In particular, a homogeneous group (measured by education, age, gender, political ideology, church attendance and occupation) that was ranked low on diversity was less likely to have members that express high levels of trust in other community members. Interestingly, the study's findings were simply based on the so-called homogeneous group members' tendency to respond 'yes' to items that questioned whether other community residents would take advantage of a group member if given a chance.

In some community groups, when personal disclosures are combined with local customs and routines, a powerful barrier can be created between members and nonmembers (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). For instance, this may occur in some church groups where the patterns of fellowship lead to intimate family-like relationships (Wagner, 1986). When this happens the need to access the diverse information and resources offered through links with other groups may diminish (Frank & Yasumoto, 1998). In order to sustain a permeable membership, a community group may need to identify symbols that can be shared on a wider community scale and encourage members to pursue dynamic neighbourhood relationships (Pettigrew, 1998).

The Context: Sorrento Neighbourhood

Sorrento Anglican Church is located in a beachside residential suburb 18 kilometres north of Perth. The suburb consists of two parts. The suburb's southern portion was developed primarily in the early 1970's and the newer northern section commenced development in the middle of the 1980's. A feature of the

area is the recreational facility Sorrento Quay that lies on the suburb's western periphery. The Sorrento profile, as shown in Table 1, is adapted from Glynn's (1986) community characteristics format.

Table 1

Characteristics of Sorrento

Characteristics	Northern coastal suburb of Perth; arterial roads including ocean skirting drive form well defined boundaries on three sides of square shaped area; residential streets comprise less defined southern boundary; mildly undulating coastal sand dune terrain with Sorrento Quay marina and popular beaches on western periphery
Patterns of Interaction	Lacks central meeting place; no library or major shopping centre; surf club and two parks provide venues for weekend sporting activities; access to Sorrento Quay hindered by lack of pedestrian crossing and weekend crowding; predominately car based transport patterns restrict informal neighbourhood interaction. A child-care centre, primary school and secondary school provide after school meeting points for parents; two churches function in rented non-designated premises.
Function	Residential suburb with adjacent tourist facility.

Selected Australian Bureau of Statistics census 1996 data for Sorrento are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Sorrento Demographic Profile

	Population Characteristics		
	Male	Female	Total
Total Persons	3530	3652	7182
Family households			2150
Family without motor vehicle			20
Married Population	1670	1724	3394
Age under 20	1150	1122	2272
Anglican Population	951	1044	1995
Population left school	2740	2897	5637
Employed Full-time	1994	1655	3649
Unemployed seeking full-time work	117	84	201
Median Age			37
Median Weekly Household Income			\$700-\$799
Average household size			3
Use bus only to travel to work	10	11	21
Use two methods to travel to work ^a	88	62	150
Use car to travel to work	1560	1121	2681
Enumerated same address 5 yrs ago ^b	1597	1631	3228

^a Including bus.

^b Applicable to persons age 5 years and over

Of particular note is the number of residents who declared they were Anglicans, the relatively low number of residents who catch buses to work and the small number of family households who do not possess a motor vehicle. When combined with the lack of a central meeting place (e.g., shopping centre) the statistics regarding the limited usage of public transport (e.g., use bus only to travel to work; families without motor vehicles) suggest a lack of informal opportunities for fostering neighbourhood cohesion. Waiting for buses and shopping locally are viewed as informal ways of interacting with neighbours. These factors are arguably as important in determining church growth as in-house “institutional factors” (Iannaccone, 1996, p. 198).

The Neighbourhood Setting: Sorrento Anglican Church

The Sorrento Anglican Church was formed in 1990 and meets in a local secondary school’s performing arts centre. At first the congregation consisted of approximately 10 families that transferred from a nearby Anglican church (Jones, 1997). As the church attendance grew this pattern of attracting families who were transferring from surrounding churches remained (Jones, 1997).

From the outset the church recognised the need to emphasise youth and has developed and maintained a youth group, Sunday school and creche, a mother’s group and a Girls Friendly Society (Jones, 1997). Contemporary services marked by the absence of a formal style of liturgy and ‘modern’ music are youth-oriented features of the church. By 1996 nearly 90% of the households in the congregation comprised parents with children.

The present pastor commenced in July 1996 and reported that the typical member was Anglo-Saxon, middle class and a young parent (Jones, 1997).

Although this profile apparently mirrored the majority of Sorrento residents, these similar individuals were not attracted to the church. Jones (1997) noted that there had not been a significant change in the congregation for five years. New people came most Sundays but they tended to drift away and the church had rarely experienced adult converts.

To gauge the Sorrento residents' receptivity to the church, Jones (1997) conducted a door-to-door marketing survey of 77 households. The themes expressed by the residents included: 1) a need for the church to be known in the community and not be isolationist, 2) that the church service style be casual, avoid pressure and not amount to "bible bashing", 3) for the Pastor to be personally involved and committed to the area and not just filling a role and, 4) the church should encourage family activities. Notably, the study reported that a combination of rented premises, lack of street front location and poor publicity may have led to the church being perceived as isolationist.

A number of outreach programmes were operational prior to the survey but these were not viewed as being totally effective in swelling numbers (Jones, 1997). Church attendance patterns are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Sorrento Anglican Church Active Members as a Function of Year

<u>Year</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>
<u>Members</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>132</u>	<u>135</u>	<u>159</u>	<u>185</u>	<u>141</u>	<u>154</u>

Jones (1997) considered that heightening "...the need to befriend the unchurched and inviting them to appropriate events or occasions" (p. 5) was a

means of facilitating Sorrento Anglican Church's growth. According to Jones (1997), some members may have resisted attempts to raise membership amongst the new people who have moved into the area. For example, initial discussions regarding the "seeker service", which is periodically conducted as a means of building a second congregation, met with comments including "but we would not know everyone then" (Jones, 1997, p. 16). The establishment of this second service is perhaps a way of countering the group closure that may occur in congregations when optimal numbers lead to social needs being satiated (Wagner, 1984).

Wagner (1984) suggested that when churches have a relatively unchanged congregation, rigidly defined fellowship circles may prevent new members from integrating easily. The term "koinonitis" was used by Wagner (1984) to describe a situation where the desire to preserve established patterns of Christian fellowship seemingly dissuades potential members. The word koinonitis was derived from the biblical term for fellowship, koinonia, which is rooted in the notion of shared participation or sharing in common (Miers, 1999). As sharing fellowship and developing interpersonal relationships are important to most Christians, disturbing them may in some circumstances be too high a price to pay for growth (Wagner, 1984).

According to Wagner (1984), church members may conceivably enjoy each other's company too much and lose sight of the need to reach out to potential new members. While the people in the church may not be able to recognise koinonitis, any potential members may become disheartened by what they perceive as social rejection. Koinonitis may become exacerbated in cell-based church structures

when lay people, on being given leadership control, develop a sense of personal ownership (Wagner, 1984). If this occurs the social pecking order may need to be protected from the possible upheaval associated with new people.

Furthermore, Sarason (1974) contended that a changing social climate can result in elements within a neighbourhood perceiving the local church in very restricted ways. This may indirectly lead to a wish on the part of some members to protect the present church structure (Wagner, 1984). Rather than embrace change some church members may want the future to become simply a continuation of the present.

Rationale and Research Aim

The present study is based on research that points to the demise of a locality based SOC in modern urban neighbourhoods (Fischer, 1976; Glynn, 1981). The tendency for individuals to seek SOC outside the local neighbourhood may effect how residents in Sorrento view their area (Plas & Lewis, 1996). Although Sorrento Anglican Church members meet in the local area they may be surrounded by residents who tend to seek community elsewhere and view the neighbourhood in convenience terms only (Glynn, 1981). By exploring SOC and neighbourhood cohesion the present study seeks to enhance the church's potential for vitalising neighbourhood interaction.

The church is viewed as a small community, which is embedded within, but distinctive from, the larger Sorrento suburban neighbourhood. As church members are involved in both the smaller and larger groups they may demonstrate SOC and neighbourhood cohesion levels that differ (Prezza & Costantini, 1998). Sorrento Anglican Church members may simultaneously maintain a high SOC

within the boundaries of the church community and low neighbourhood cohesion in the larger urban setting.

Royal and Rossi (1996) postulated that the facilitation of SOC within a subgroup might be negatively correlated with SOC disruptions in a neighbourhood as a whole. This reasoning is in keeping with Sarason's (1974) contention that it is rare, particularly in cities, for people to derive SOC from more than one or two settings. Given this backdrop, the church members' SOC allegiance may rest firmly with the shared faith and emotional connection found in their voluntary church involvement (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Limited neighbourhood interaction points may have resulted in a close-knit, family-style church where growth is restricted. If this is correct then the present study will provide support for research that suggests SOC varies according to the setting (e.g., Burroughs & Eby, 1998; Pretty et al., 1994; Royal & Rossi, 1996). By using both the neighbourhood and church as reference points, differential SOC judgements may emerge.

Apart from a church-referenced SCI measure, three socio-demographic factors have been selected to act as predictors of neighbourhood cohesion. Based on prior research, years of community residency (Prezza & Costantini, 1998), the presence of school age children in a household (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990) and talking about religion with neighbours (Buckner, 1988) are expected to have a positive relationship with neighbourhood cohesion.

If a church member reports that they regularly talk about religion with neighbours they would also be expected to converse regarding other matters and

consequently score higher on the NCI. Therefore, a positive relationship between talking to neighbours about religion and the NCI is expected.

Similarly, the likelihood of neighbourhood interaction would be expected to be elevated through length of residence and having children living at home. In particular, parents who have children who attend Sorrento pre-primary and primary school may experience more neighbourhood interaction and score higher on the NCI. Hence, the variable children living at home is expected to have a positive relationship with the NCI. In addition, the number of years members have attended Sorrento Anglican Church, the regularity of attendance and whether members walk to church are included in the study for exploratory purposes.

Importantly, Puddifoot (1996) argued that it is advisable to combine the comments of interviews with instruments such as the SCI and NCI. The inclusion of selected interviews should supplement the questionnaire design and explore the church member's perceptions of the church-neighbourhood relationship. Furthermore, the interviews offer the opportunity for participants to report on the unique social, environmental and development features that have influenced the structure and outlook of the church.

Although the SCI may not predict all of the variability in the measure of neighbourhood cohesion, the instrument is expected to contribute significantly to the NCI variance in a regression analysis (Skjaeveland et al., 1996). As the community psychology literature points to the setting specific nature of SOC (Hill, 1996) an elevated SOC in one setting is expected to be predictive of a low SOC elsewhere. A negative relationship is expected between SOC in the church based setting and the SOC encompassing, neighbourhood cohesion measure. It is

predicted that a high sense of community within Sorrento Anglican Church will lead to a decrease in neighbourhood cohesion.

Study 1

Method

Participants

One hundred and eight church members (46 males and 60 females) participated. The gender of two respondents was not reported on the questionnaire. All participants were age 18 years or older and approximately 26% fell within the 41 to 50 mean age span. The under 20 age group comprised 22% and the 21 to 30 age bracket 11%. Those falling between the 31 to 40, 51 to 60 and 61 plus age groups accounted for 13%, 12% and 13% respectively. The age of three respondents was missing.

Of the completed questionnaires, 90 individuals indicated they had resided in Sorrento for at least 5 years and 84 reported that they had been attending the Sorrento Anglican Church for at least 3 years. A preference for attending church weekly was noted amongst 92 of the respondents. Eighty-seven participants preferred to drive to church. Talking to neighbours about religion was undertaken less than once a month by 59 participants. The highest level of education completed was tertiary with 53 respondents, followed by secondary with 49. The children still living at home responses favoured pre-primary and primary (50 responses).

The survey was conducted on the 27th June 1999 when the Sorrento Anglican Church parish directory contained 165 adult names. Those members who were in attendance on the day were informed of the study's voluntary nature, purpose and the anonymity of the information gathered. After checking whether they were in the targeted age group, 87 individuals accepted the invitation to

participate. Of the 41 who were later contacted by mail 21 responded. Overall, 65% of the listed membership completed the questionnaire.

Measure

The 39 item questionnaire incorporated the Buckner (1988) 18 item NCI (items 1 to 18), the Perkins et al. (1990) 12 item SCI (items 19 to 30) and nine items that addressed socio-demographic variables (e.g., age, gender; items 31 to 39). The socio-demographic data and the SCI scale scores formed the regression analysis independent variables. The criterion variable was the NCI scores. With regard to the research question, the phrase “pose barriers to attracting new members” was operationally defined as a low score on the NCI. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix A.

Buckner (1988) reported that the NCI demonstrated internal consistency (coefficient alpha = .97) and test-retest stability on an individual level. The instrument was also considered to possess good discriminatory power between neighbourhoods and criterion-related validity on the neighbourhood analysis level (Buckner, 1988).

Pretty (1990) and Perkins et al. (1990) reported Cronbach’s alpha = .71 and .80 respectively for the SCI. Strong evidence of construct validity for the SCI was reported by Pretty et al. (1996). Pretty et al. (1996, p. 370) also found “significant relationships” between the SCI and other outcome variables. These pointed to the instrument being consistent with McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) four factor SOC model (Pretty et al., 1996).

The NCI items (questions one to 18) were scored: (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neither agree/nor disagree, (2) disagree, and (1) strongly disagree. Items

5 and 15 were reversed before scoring. To facilitate comparisons between measures the SCI (questions 19 to 30) was altered from a 'yes/no' format to a NCI-like, five point, Likert-style "Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree" scale. Scores for SCI items 20, 24, 26 and 29 were reversed before scoring. Data coding information for all variables including socio-demographic items is included as Appendix B. Variable names and an explanation of data base matrix column and row labelling is included as Appendix C.

Procedure

In line with Johnson's (1990) suggestion to seek out key informants, preliminary discussions were undertaken with two church members. These talks suggested that growth, continuation of the youth emphasis and raising the church profile were important SOC related issues. Written church parish council approval was sought and granted prior to the research commencement. A copy of the approval request is included as Appendix D.

The questionnaire was piloted on two church members. Consequently, the participants were instructed to focus on neighbours who were not church members when answering the neighbourhood related items. The voluntary and anonymous nature of the questionnaire was outlined in the church news sheet and in an explanatory talk on the administration day. An information sheet together with the research questionnaire was distributed to interested members of the congregation. A request to complete and return the questionnaire immediately was made. The information sheet is included as Appendix E.

A church membership list was used to mark off those members who were in attendance on the survey day. Those absent were mailed a questionnaire, reply

paid envelope and a mail out version of the information sheet. Completed questionnaires that were returned within a two-week reply by period were included in the analysis.

Results

Prior to the analysis the original data was proof read against a computerised listing and a SPSS FREQUENCIES check was conducted. No outlying values were detected. The number of missing data points were limited and randomly distributed across the variables. As corrective action would amount to a decision “...among several bad alternatives” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996, p. 60) the missing data was not adjusted in the screening phase.

Participants’ scores for both the 12 SCI and 18 NCI items were computed by averaging across their responses. This produced an overall score for each participant with a possible range between 0 and 5. The SCI average (SCI AVG) mean was 3.78 ($SD = 0.52$). The NCI average (NCI AVG) mean was 3.60 ($SD = 0.57$).

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients for the NCI and SCI were approximately .90 and .85 respectively. With the exception of SCI item 25, the item to total Pearson correlation levels for both the NCI and SCI all exceeded .3. The SCI questionnaire item number 25 (“I care about what my neighbours think of my actions”) had an item to total Pearson correlation alpha level of .25. According to de Vaus (1995), “As a rule of thumb, if it is less than 0.3 then the item is dropped from the scale”(p. 255). After considering the marginally superior Cronbach’s alpha level of .86 that would be afforded upon deletion, item 25 was retained. SPSS item-total reliability statistics for the NCI (Table F1) and SCI (Table F2) are included as Appendix F.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlations (see Table 4) were performed for all bivariate relationships. Missing data were excluded pairwise. Although scatterplots suggested that the assumptions of correlation were satisfactory, the relationship between NCI AVG and "talk to neighbours about religion" was of a heteroscedastic nature and therefore should be interpreted cautiously.

Table 4

Intercorrelations Between Questionnaire Variables for Church Members

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	--	.06	.35**	-.13	.17	.13	.13	-.04	-.04	.00	.11
2. Children		--	.07	-.16	-.03	.01	.14	-.15	.17	-.17	-.25**
3. Education			--	.01	.16	-.10	.00	-.13	.03	-.03	.08
4. Gender				--	.09	-.13	-.04	-.11	.04	-.11	-.12
5. Mobility					--	-.09	.04	-.16	-.23*	.04	-.05
6. NCI AVG						--	-.20	.30**	-.35**	.07	.17
7. Part. rate							--	-.44**	.09	.13	-.21*
8. SCIAVG								--	.08	-.03	.18
9. Talk neigh.									--	-.10	-.09
10. Years area										--	.32**
11. Years church											--

Note. NCI AVG = Neighbourhood Cohesion Index average; Part. rate = participation rate; SCIAVG = Sense of Community Index average; Talk. neigh. = talking to neighbours. For complete variable wording see Appendix B.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The four Pearson product-moment correlations of a priori interest were between NCI AVG and SCIAVG, NCI AVG and “talk to neighbours about religion”, NCI AVG and “years in area”, and NCI AVG and “children”. No alpha corrections were undertaken. With an alpha level of .05, a weak positive relationship between NCI AVG and SCIAVG was significant $r(99) = .30, p < .001$. As church member’s SCIAVG scores increased NCI AVG scores tended to increase. The relationship between NCI AVG and “talk to neighbours about religion” was also significant $r(97) = -.35, p < .001$. A higher “talking to neighbours about religion” score was associated with increases in the NCI score. The relationships between “years in area” and NCI AVG [$r(98) = .07, p > .05$], and between “children” and NCI AVG [$r(99) = -.010, p > .05$] were not significant. In other words, neither “children” nor “years in area” influenced neighbourhood cohesion scores.

Principal Components Analysis

As SOC is generally regarded as setting specific (Hill, 1996), the nature of the SCI dimensions was examined via a confirmatory principal components analysis with varimax rotation. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (1996), principal components analysis “...exactly reproduces the observed correlation matrix....[and] since the components are orthogonal, their use in other analyses...may greatly facilitate interpretation of results” (p. 664). Mean values were substituted for missing data. The Lilliefors test statistic ($p < .05$) normality assumption was violated for all 12 SCI items. Although the solution was degraded no SCI transformations were undertaken. The items were all skewed in the same direction. Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) argued analysis improvements with

transformations are often marginal unless “...some variables are skewed and others are not, or variables are skewed very differently” (p. 82).

A random sample of 10 pairwise scatterplots indicated the linearity assumption was tenable. With the use of a $p < .001$ criterion for Mahalanobis distance no multivariate outliers were found. The Bartlett sphericity test, $\chi^2 (66, N = 108) = 424.95$ ($p < .001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy ($KMO = .835$) suggested that the SCI was suitable for principal components analysis (Dziuban & Shirkey, 1974).

Three factors emerged with eigenvalues that exceeded one. These accounted for 58.66% of the variance. The factor loadings, communalities (h^2), and percentages of variance explained after rotation are shown in Table 5. Factor loadings less than .30 were suppressed to aid interpretation. A cut of .45 was applied for inclusion of an item in the interpretation of a factor. Three items were complex. These were retained against the highest factor. The results were different to the Perkins et al. (1990) four-factor SCI. The question number and a descriptor using the Perkins et al. (1990) factor labels, identify each item in Table 5. Items loading on factor one seemed to be concerned with values, while those loading on factor two and three were tied to influence and neighbourhood concern respectively. Hence, the factors were labelled values, influence and neighbourhood concern.

A confirmatory principal components analysis was not undertaken for the NCI. According to Skjaeveland et al. (1996) the NCI “...fails to empirically demonstrate homogeneous dimensions of neighbourhood social characteristics” (p. 414). Hill (1996) and Puddifoot (1996) also noted the ambiguity of the NCI

dimension. As such, the scientific utility of the NCI was based on the Skjaeveland et al. (1996) comment that the NCI is a "...reliable and valid measuring instrument....with acceptable psychometric properties" (p. 414).

Table 5

Varimax Rotated Factor Loadings for Sense of Community Index Items

	Factors			
Identifier	1	2	3	<u>h</u> ²
Factor 1: Values				
Q21 Reinforcement of Needs	.789			.63
Q22 Membership	.606			.68
Q29 Shared Emotional Connection	.576			.36
Q27 Influence	.573			.51
Q23 Membership	.534			.72
Q20 Reinforcement of Needs	.504			.44
Q30 Shared Emotional Connection	.483			.51
Factor 2: Influence				
Q26 Influence		.808		.74
Q24 Membership		.795		.69
Q19 Reinforcement of Needs		.464		.57
Factor 3: Neighbourhood Concern				
Q25 Influence			.755	.58
Q28 Shared Emotional Connection			.660	.62

Note. Q = Item number in questionnaire. For complete questionnaire item wording see Appendix A.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses

Two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were undertaken.

Hierarchical multiple regression was recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) when "...testing explicit hypotheses" (p. 153). In the first analysis the hypothesis that the SCI would have a negative relationship with the NCI was examined. The order of entry of the NCI predictor variables in the first hierarchical regression was SCIAVG, "talk about religion with neighbours", "number of years living in the area" and "pre-primary and/or primary school children living at home". Analysis was performed using SPSS REGRESSION and SPSS FREQUENCIES.

The examination of scatterplots suggested assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity between the standardised predicted NCI AVG scores and standardised residuals were satisfactory. Boxplot examinations for each independent variable failed to detect any univariate outliers. With the use of a $p < .001$ criterion for Mahalanobis distance no multivariate outliers were identified. The ratio of cases to independent variables was deemed adequate. Missing data was excluded from the analysis on a pairwise basis.

Low correlations with the criterion variable were noted for the "pre-primary and/or primary school children living at home" ($r = -.010$) and "number of years living in the area" ($r = .073$) variables. Although these correlations were regarded as unsuitable for regression a model containing the "number of years living in the area" variable was retained for illustrative purposes. The preferred (SCIAVG and "talk to your neighbours about religion") model led to $R^2 = .23$, $F(2, 94) = 13.949$, $p < .001$. As shown in Table 6 the positive direction of the SCI variable was

contrary to the hypothesis. SPSS printouts for the preferred model summary (Table G1), ANOVA test on multiple correlation (Table G2) and coefficient t test data (Table G3) are included as Appendix G.

Table 6

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting
Neighbourhood Cohesion (N = 96)

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	β
Step 1			
Sense of community index	.327	.108	.296*
Step 2			
Sense of community index	.361	.101	.326*
Talk about religion with neighbours	-.269	.065	-.377*
Step 3			
Sense of community index	.362	.101	.327*
Talk about religion with neighbours	-.266	.065	-.373*
Number of years living in local area	.001	.032	.045

Note. $R^2 = .09$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .141$ for Step 2; $\Delta R^2 = .002$ for Step 3.

* $ps < .01$.

A second hierarchical multiple regression utilising the setting-specific SCI principal components was conducted. The SCI subscale labelled “values” and “talking about religion with neighbours” formed NCI predictor variables. The SCI subscale “values” was entered first. Although three dimensions were identified in the SCI principal components analysis, only the “values” factor was included in the regression analysis.

A low correlation with the criterion variable was noted for the “neighbourhood concern” SCI subscale ($r = .149$). As this correlation was regarded as unsuitable for regression the “neighbourhood concern” subscale was excluded (de Vaus, 1996). In addition, the “influence” SCI subscale factor was excluded on stability grounds. The “influence” factor was defined by only two items in the principal components analysis including question 25. Question 25 was poorly correlated to the other items in the SCI reliability analysis and may require further development. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient for the SCI subscale “Values” was .81.

Examination of a scatterplot suggested assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity between the standardised predicted NCI AVG scores and standardised residuals were satisfactory. Boxplot examinations for each independent variable failed to detect any univariate outliers. No multivariate outliers were noted through the Mahalanobis distance statistic with a critical χ^2 value of 13.816 at the .001 alpha significance level. The ratio of cases to independent variables was deemed adequate. Missing data was excluded from the analysis on a pairwise basis and no suppressor variables were found.

The results are presented in Table 7. R for regression was significantly different from zero at the end of each step. After step 2, with both predictor variables in the equation, $R = .47$, $F(2, 94) = 13.403$, $p < .001$. The combined predictor variables accounted for 22.2% of the variance in the criterion variable. Both SCI-subscale “values” and “talk about religion with neighbours” made a significant unique contribution to predicting the NCI AVG. The addition of “talk about religion with neighbours” to the equation with SCI subscale “values”

resulted in a significant increment in R^2 . SPSS printouts for the model summary (Table H1) ANOVA test on multiple correlation (Table H2) and coefficient t test data (Table H3) are included as Appendix H.

Table 7

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting
Neighbourhood Cohesion (N = 96)

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	β
Step 1			
SCI-subscale-“Values”	-.04	.014	.289*
Step 2			
SCI-subscale-“Values”	-.04	.013	.315*
Talk about religion with neighbours	-.27	.065	-.373*

Note. $R^2 = .08$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .14$ for Step 2.

* $ps < .01$.

The two regression analyses produced predictors that account for a similar amount of variance in the NCIAVG. The preferred NCI predictor equation was:

$$NCI' = .0462 \text{ “Values” } -.266 \text{ “Talk about religion with neighbours” } + 3.$$

Discussion

The nature of sense of community (SOC) within a local church setting was explored in this study. The hypothesis that a high SOC within Sorrento Anglican Church will lead to a decrease in neighbourhood cohesion was not confirmed. The influence of the SCI in predicting the NCI was moderate and not in the predicted negative direction. While the SCI and the variable "how often do you talk to neighbours about religion?" formed a statistically significant predictor equation, approximately 75% of the variance in the NCI remained unexplained.

Although the relationship between talking to neighbours about religion and the NCI was statistically significant it was not in the predicted positive direction. In addition, the predicted positive relationships between the NCI and children living at home and between the NCI and years in area were not statistically significant.

Three factors labelled values, influence and neighbourhood concern emerged in the SCI principal components analysis. These labels differed from McMillan and Chavis's (1986) four part theoretical framework and therefore provided support for Hill's (1996) argument regarding the context specific nature of SOC. Contrasts exist between the factors extracted here and those found in other SOC domains. For example, team building and peer support SOC dimensions were emphasised in school (Burroughs & Eby, 1998) and workplace (Pretty et al., 1994) studies. While these characteristics may be equally important in a church setting they were not assessed here.

The factor labelled values predominated here and was substituted for the 12 item SCI in a second NCI predictor equation. This seven-item factor was formed

into a distinct predictor, because it may have been of particular salience to SOC within the church. However, the values and “how often do you talk to neighbours about religion?” variables accounted for a similar portion of NCI variance to the first predictor combination that involved the SCI.

Other studies have also noted difficulties in predicting the complex neighbourhood cohesion and SOC constructs using brief survey instruments (e.g., Hughey et al., 1999; Prezza & Costantini, 1998; Skjaeveland et al., 1996). In particular, Hill (1996) doubted the capacity of the 12 item SCI to fully measure the multidimensional nature and setting-by-setting variability of neighbourhood social characteristics. Importantly, the SCI was designed to be only narrowly referenced to the wide range of neighbourhood interaction variables (Chavis et al., 1986).

The present relationship between the SCI and NCI should be viewed against this background. Importantly, the SCI contributed to a statistically significant neighbourhood cohesion model. The instrument added appreciably to a parsimonious NCI predictor equation and the two selected variables appeared to measure core aspects of neighbourhood cohesion.

Talking to neighbours about religion appealed as overt neighbourhood behaviour that can be associated with church growth. This variable has been positively associated with neighbourhood cohesion elsewhere (e.g., Buckner, 1988; Glynn, 1986; Skjaeveland et al., 1996). Similarly, the SCI values factor represented an important latent variable. Intangible factors, such as values, may be significant determinants of more concrete neighbouring activities. Sharing values and showing neighbourhood concern have been significantly correlated

with neighbourhood cohesion in other studies (Buckner, 1988; Glynn, 1986; Skjaeveland et al., 1996). These and similar qualities, that are perhaps beyond one's level of awareness, appear to be embedded within manifest acts of neighbouring (Unger & Wandersman, 1985).

Church members who talk to and share concerns with neighbours may aid the development of SOC and neighbourhood cohesion on a wider level. This conjecture is in line with the importance Hughey et al. (1999) and Sarason (1974) placed on larger community frameworks. In particular, Hughey et al. (1999) highlighted the mediating role community organisations can play in linking the diverse entities that make up community life. According to Hughey et al. (1999), when the community organisation performs the mediating role poorly the neighbourhood interests of members may be marginalised or subverted. Hughey et al. (1999) reasoned that SOC within community organisations may be promoted not only by internal relationships but also by the intentional fostering of community bonds.

The Sorrento church-referenced values, influence and neighbourhood concern SOC components appeal as prerequisites for developing these wider community bonds. Frank and Yasumoto (1998) also recognised that internal ties in combination with reciprocated agreements and transactions with other neighbourhood moieties define community groups. In order to grow, church and other community groups may need to balance the need for solidarity with the development of permeable boundaries that permit free association between neighbourhood residents (Fyson, 1999; Wiesenfeld, 1996). Similarly, McMillan (1996) suggested that community groups in order to build neighbourhood

cohesion or community as a whole, may need to search for similarities with other residents. Otherwise, they risk becoming narrowly embedded within a neighbourhood (Sarason, 1974).

As the church is a community within a community the members may hold different levels of allegiance (Fyson, 1999; Sarason, 1974; Trickett, 1996). The present findings were consistent with Puddifoot's (1996) claim that these differences may be satisfactorily gauged through survey instruments.

Nevertheless, the present study may have benefited from the inclusion of a neighbourhood referenced SCI. By comparing school and neighbourhood referenced measures, Pretty et al. (1994) demonstrated that SOC was context specific. In the present study, direct comparisons between a neighbourhood referenced SCI and a church referenced SCI may have provided insight regarding the members' SOC in different contexts. An SCI that predicted another SCI may have been more suggestive of possible SOC discrepancies.

The present study took an opposite tack to Brodsky (1996). Whereas Brodsky (1996) suggested that a negative SOC may be associated with a positive outcome, the converse was proposed here. A positive SOC may in some instances be meaningfully associated with a negative outcome. However, Brodsky (1996) adopted an iterative approach that was characterised by expanding concepts as interview insights were gathered. The present study was bound to the set SCI and NCI structures. These fixed instruments fail to include the many environmental, historical and cultural contingencies that effect the meaning of SOC and neighbourhood cohesion in a local setting (Royal & Rossi, 1996).

Nevertheless, a certain SCI threshold may still indicate the point where the desire to preserve established patterns of Christian fellowship effects neighbourhood cohesion (Wagner, 1994). While Wagner's (1994) claim was not confirmed, a SCI range may exist beyond which SOC levels hinder church growth. This reasoning arose from consideration of McMillan and Chavis's (1986) theoretical framework. They tied SOC to the immediate group environment and processes that maximise a member's opportunities for influence, shared emotional ties and support. Arguably, a group may become too socially entwined when these factors are maximised. A church member may demonstrate co-operation, norms of reciprocity and collective thinking within the church setting but fail to act out these qualities in the neighbourhood.

However, the present SCI was applied to a voluntary organisation. Many researchers claim that satisfying social networks and greater access to social support are not unusual in these settings (e.g., Ellison & George, 1994; Iannaccone, 1996; Maton & Wells, 1995). As church attendance is not compulsory, the members may have a higher SOC than more obligatory settings such as schools (Pretty et al., 1996) and workplaces (Burroughs & Eby, 1998). Members may not remain attached to the church if it failed to provide meaningful roles, social identities and a SOC (Sonn et al., 1999).

Several other limitations should be considered when interpreting the present findings. First, the restricted population from which the data was obtained may place limits on generalising about the results. Second, only the church members' responses were sought. To gain a full neighbourhood picture these may need to be

compared with responses from the wider community. Third, the definitions for neighbourhood and neighbour may differ in Australia and North America.

The American developers of the SCI and NCI may have tied the definition of neighbourhoods to the immediate block of streets (Buckner, 1988; Chavis et al., 1986). The American residential neighbourhood, particularly in city settings, appears to be synonymous with a particular street's boundaries (Brodsky, 1996; Pretty et al., 1994). In those settings, stepping outside one's street may represent setting foot in another neighbourhood territory. On the other hand, the Australian definition of an urban neighbour appears to encompass individuals who live further afield (Sonn et al., 1999). The Australian neighbourhood definition may include an area that stretches across a suburb. The nature of community and neighbourhoods may differ markedly in the Australian culture (Sonn et al., 1999). Consequently, the present questionnaire defined neighbourhood as the suburbs surrounding the church.

In conclusion, neighbourhood cohesion and SOC variables may act in combination to influence church growth. The present questionnaire approach found values, influence and neighbourhood concern were core church-referenced SOC dimensions. The values dimension was used in conjunction with talking to neighbours about religion to form a NCI predictor model. The next stage of the research uses an interview technique to study the unique contextual variables that influence the nature and implications for growth of SOC within Sorrento Anglican Church.

Study Two

The second study aimed at determining the church member's viewpoint. The relationship between the church's internal dynamics and any boundaries that pose barriers to attracting new members was of particular interest. In other words, what was the nature of SOC within Sorrento Anglican Church and what implications does that have for church growth.

Method

Participants

The five adult voluntary interviewees (three females and two males) were selected purposively (de Vaus, 1996). According to de Vaus (1996, p.79), purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling where participants are judged as being typical of some category of interest. Here, length of church membership was the only selection criteria. Each interviewee was drawn from a different time period. To protect confidentiality no other demographic details were noted.

Procedure

The variance left unexplained by the study one regression analyses may be attributable to the setting by setting diversity that appears to underpin both neighbourhood cohesion and SOC (Hill, 1996). As such, understanding the church members' perspective through purposive interviewing completed a "methodological triangulation" (Patton, 1980, p. 109) or "multiple strategies of field research" (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990, p. 222) design.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative strategies was undertaken for two reasons. First, this approach capitalises on the relative strengths of the

individual procedures and potentially overcomes the deficiencies in any single data collection technique (Minichiello et al., 1990). Whereas the questionnaire tied the study to the specific dimensions of established scales (e.g., Buckner's NCI), interviewing gave full regard to the unique setting-specific participant viewpoint. Secondly, the triangulation technique addressed validity concerns. These may have arisen if the study had relied on a single method, single set of data and single investigation (Minichiello et al., 1990).

An interview-follow up design (a first interview set and a follow-up interview set) was selected (Guba, 1978). The interviews followed Patton's (1980) general interview guide approach. While seeking the member's viewpoint was the primary aim, the need to link member's SOC and neighbourhood cohesion comments to barriers confronting newcomers guided questioning. Although predetermined questions were formed they were adapted to suit each interview (Patton, 1980). The three questions were used as a checklist to ensure relevant topics were covered (Patton, 1980). The first question ("Can you tell me a little about your experience of attending Sorrento Anglican Church?") enabled participants to talk generally about the church. The two subsequent questions indirectly allowed the participants to raise neighbourhood cohesion issues. The interview schedules are included as Appendix I.

Purposive interviewing was necessary given the time constraints. According to de Vaus (1996), this technique, when undertaken in a representative fashion, may provide sufficient saturation of a stratified sampling frame. A church member assisted in stratifying the church directory according to length of membership. The church has been operating for approximately ten years and each

of the five strata represented two years. One individual was drawn at random from each subgroup and confidentially approached by telephone. All five agreed to a 45-minute audiotaped interview. Prior to commencement an information sheet (included as Appendix J) and consent form (included as Appendix K) were presented. Each participant signed the informed consent form.

Each interview contained a number of ad hoc questions (e.g., "So you regard the small cell groups as being important to church growth?"). These created an informal conversational style and added depth to the information gathered (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998). In addition, insights gained through the progressive examination of each interview transcript guided aspects of subsequent interviews (e.g., "One of the other interviewees also mentioned small 'cell groups', what do you see their role as?"). This cross-checking represented a means of verifying the accuracy of participant responses (Minichiello et al., 1990). The interviews were undertaken in each participant's home and later transcribed.

Data Analysis

To aid the development of subjective meanings, the transcript paragraphs were numbered, reconsidered a number of times and assigned a code. These attributed meanings or codes were transferred to a variation of Miles and Huberman's (1994) question ordered matrix. In the Miles and Huberman (1994) matrix, columns are headed with the interview questions and rows represent participant responses. As the present interview questions varied between participants, potential themes were substituted for Miles and Huberman's (1994) use of questions in the column headings. Hence, the columns represented themes,

the rows participant names and the matrix cells displayed the summary word codes. As additional insights were noted, these summary words were rearranged between columns (Miles & Huberman, 1988). Finally, the columns were collapsed into six preliminary themes. A version of the data matrix is included as Appendix L (Note: In Appendix L the themes, participant names and summary word codes are shown in column form).

Approximately two months after the initial analysis the themes and supporting transcript excerpts were referred back to the church members for checking. Consequently, three 20-minute follow-up interviews were conducted. The remaining two participants were unavailable. One week prior to the follow-up interviews a copy of the preliminary themes was left with each participant. Two questions were asked during these interviews: 1) which themes, if any, accurately fit your experience of attending Sorrento Anglican Church, and 2) can you think of any additional information that may be relevant. All the participants endorsed the preliminary themes. This approval verified that the themes were representative and not merely personal choice.

Results

The findings are organised under the six themes identified. These are

Boundaries: Youth versus tradition, church equates to family, welcoming newcomers, local neighbourhood-church fit, restrictive practices and future directions. Selected quotes from the participants are offered to illustrate the themes. All participant names are pseudonyms.

Boundaries: Youth Versus Tradition

The data analysis reflected the development of a youth culture that possibly dissuades those potential members who are seeking a more traditional service. The youth emphasis may create boundaries, which according to McMillan and Chavis (1986) determine who belongs and who does not belong. For example, Linda Clarke commented:

...it has become gradually far less structured, we do not have prayer books anymore, our music is very contemporary....I think we set out to do this because a lot of our young children were starting to go elsewhere....

Consequently, we probably lost a lot of traditional people...they do not particularly like this type of church.

This theme was also reflected in a Tina Jordan comment:

...we came from North Beach which was a very old church, old parishioners, very traditional way of doing things and that precipitated the movement out to Sorrento because as young people came, there was not the flexibility in that traditional form of worship.

Church Equates to Family

The participants generally likened the church to a family. Linda Clarke articulated the notion of a family:

We have got very close relationships within the church, we are like a family in many respects, there is a lot of support systems both spiritually, physically and emotionally...a lot of members have not got extended families and they have found this sort of extension within the church.

As church services offer regular opportunities for social contact the need for members to draw on other social networks may diminish. Common beliefs and values coupled with a shared history may promote an emotional connection that satisfies fellowship needs (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Encouraging neighbourhood participation may become downplayed when a church becomes too family oriented (Wagner, 1986). Len Jennings suggested the possible dangers associated with this social climate:

...once you start a church like ours you get very close to one another....A lot of churches are superficial in their relationships...once you have got close relationships you are going to see weaknesses and strengths, there is going to be jealousies and all sorts of things that can cause problems.

Frank Baker may have aired the growth implications of a close-knit structure:

It is a church where people are really fairly friendly... and although at first that may seem to be a reason to join, I think there could be a 'clubbiness' about that....an outsider picks up sort of signals, no one is giving them negative signals... but you know we [the newcomers] do not belong here because we are not one of these people.

Although Frank Baker perceived that friendliness maybe "...a sort of barrier" that poses problems to potential members he qualified the remark: "I have been in other churches over the years and friendliness is a common feature of churches". Simply stated, church members may have greater access to social support and develop a denser array of family-like interactions than do their "unchurched" counterparts (Ellison & George, 1994). Nevertheless, the significant question is whether church members are mindful of facilitating face-to-face interactions with people outside their boundaries (Stolle & Rochon, 1998). Frank Baker provided an answer:

There is some people who spend all their time with other church people and it becomes difficult for them. I think a church should encourage people to develop friendships outside otherwise you have no basis to be regarded as community.

Welcoming Newcomers

The family theme arose in the initial interview and was subsequently formed into the questions "How do you think a newcomer would perceive the church?" and "For example, do you see it as being close knit?" The theme welcoming newcomers emerged from the responses to these questions. For example, Diane Martin responded:

...there is many different ways of reaching out to others. The seeker service is a way of reaching out to people who are not related in anyway...to those who do not have a church background or have no church family.

The Diane Martin comment may suggest that members are aware of the need to develop social ties beyond the church family. Nevertheless, Len Jennings noted a possible pitfall that may await newcomers:

The word communion might mean a coming together of people. I do not know why they call it communion...the church does not do community particularly well...how can you become part of a family...it is hard to become part of a family how can we serve the community in a way that they belong.

Len Jennings continued: "...anyone who thinks that they can call the church a community church is being fraudulent....take a step back and ask is that a community church, well you would have to say well it is not because the community is not participating." Len Jennings's comments may have indicated that the church is somewhat homogeneous. Nevertheless, the church appears to be encouraging diversity as evidenced by Diane Martin's statement regarding new people coming in:

We are trying to put in place things, this last weekend we had away was taken up with communication. It was very much from the secular level of how to make people feel comfortable, we were taught to really listen without interrupting and placing our view on them.

Diane Martin added:

There is always the desire to go to the people we know...instead of going to perhaps those who are on the fringe.... People who find it hard to talk to other people feel guilty because they do not know what to say. They are much more comfortable with people they know.

Local Neighbourhood - Church Fit

The “thoroughfare” car-centred street layout, the “imposing housing in the new area” and the “lack of a central meeting point” were features of the transcripts. These variables may indirectly effect neighbourhood interaction and church outreach attempts. Len Jennings encapsulated some concerns:

I lived in a cul-de-sac and I think it gave me a false sense of community...people do not walk the streets particularly here...mainly because there is nowhere to walk...I would say a lot of community use to go on in butcher's shops but we haven't any local shops...the loss of small shops is actually destroying neighbourhoods.

Frank Baker, in keeping with long standing concerns regarding the reality of car-based suburban living (Glynn, 1981; Plas & Lewis, 1996; Sarason, 1974), remarked:

It is just a suburb; it is a modern suburb at that so there is no natural community heart to this place at all...the speed with which people drive through private streets makes you realise that it is not a community. There is no sense of being in this community when you are rushing to get to your houses. Whenever I notice a bus passing, frequently there is no one in it.

Difficulties in finding interaction points to ‘build bridges’ between the church and new citizens were highlighted by Diane Martin:

You can notice a difference going into the wealthy area of Sorrento [new part] where the physical structure of the buildings are quite prohibiting to your neighbours coming in. There are very limited points of interaction in

this suburb. You really have to make an effort to get to know who lives in your street.

Glynn (1981) suggested some individuals view modern urban neighbourhoods in convenience and privacy terms only. Overcoming this tendency and forging the “spark of friendship” that “delimits ‘us’ from ‘them’” (McMillan, 1996, p. 315) is an important outreach issue as Frank Baker alluded to:

I have been here for a while now and I have not seen a lot of people from the neighbourhood coming in [to the church]. Privacy may be an issue in the area. People are very private, yet they want to be accepted and so they are overly concerned and it becomes very hard for them to join something. I think because they pick up things that suggest that may be they do not measure up.

Balancing the need for maintaining the existing church social circle with an external focus that values the pursuit of neighbourhood ties appeared to be of concern to the interviewees (Stolle & Rochon, 1998). For example, Tina Clarke coupled the “development of non threatening entry points” and the need to “go out as people and make friends with other people”. Tina Clarke added, “Often taking someone under your wing develops into friendships and then into the church because you have shown an interest.”

While emphasising the need for individuals to interact with others who hold similar beliefs, Frank Baker summarised the importance of properly locating the church members’ distinctiveness within a larger community context:

For a community to work there is a sense in which it has got to meet your needs and you have got to hold allegiance to it, you are not just a section

but part of a whole. You define yourself by contrast or difference. You have to ask people in the neighbourhood how they make sense of their lives and share what you believe.

Restrictive Practices

In a neighbourhood church setting, local customs and routines can create a powerful barrier between members and nonmembers (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

This concern may have been reflected in Linda Clarke's comment:

We have had situations where the members have decided to suddenly pray in small groups and some newcomers are panicked by that. You have got to be on your toes to ensure you meet everyone's needs. Some newcomers feel separated if people do not notice them while others feel threatened by close relationships. It takes time for trust to grow.

Linda Clarke continued: "With a church it is really people belonging to God and you can not be something different otherwise you just become a club."

Importantly, Linda Clarke added, "We take the bible very seriously in this church and so there are groups of people meeting all week to pray." Reconciling Linda Clarke's comment, "wanting people to come to church and develop a relationship with God" with some neighbourhood members fears over "bible bashing" (Jones, 1997, p. 3), may present a growth-related challenge. The need to keep proceedings in line with the church's religious purpose while making the service comfortable for newcomers was a dilemma Len Jennings summarised:

A church can be quite alien and confronting. I have seen people coming looking for community and not lasting long. If you come looking for

somewhere to belong you are going to be disappointed. If I was looking for community I would not join the church I would join the local bowling club. Interestingly, Len Jennings's subsequent remarks concurred with Hill's (1996) argument that the distinction between SOC and social support can become blurred:

For a long time I did not think I belonged as far as community was concerned, but the reason for going to church was community. Maybe the church is the ultimate community because you are dealing with real issues not just tittle-tattle gossip. But, I mean is that community or just relationships.

The formation of a hierarchy, based on attendance patterns, is perhaps synonymous with group activities. Becoming a regular church attendee may pave the way for acceptance as implied by Tina Jordan:

Unless people are really committed you do not see them on a weekly basis. You see people coming in once a month...strangely they think they belong, they come very spasmodically claiming it to be their church. A few who have children at St Marks school come to meet entry requirements.

Fyson (1999) argued that an important aspect of leadership in community-groups is to foster a vision that encourages pathways to and from the surrounding neighbourhood. As noted by Frank Baker internal difficulties may waylay this external focus:

...past events were very unsettling, especially the way the previous minister left four years ago.... A lot of people left the church at that time. When problems or disturbances happen you get different reactions to that and

either look to your own group or blame others....you do form into groups, reactionary groups....I guess the leadership was wounded and may be the long term effects are not good in terms of being confident and a bit more open. It takes a while to sort things out and not hold onto the past.

Importantly, development considerations may qualify the restrictive practices theme. For example, Linda Clarke noted:

Last year when the youth group were meeting at Duncraig High School at one stage they had 30 to 40 boys from the local area who overwhelmed our own kids. There was a lot of problems. I think our new youth worker wants to get our kids into a cohesive unit first and then bring others in.

Future Directions

The worth of moving towards a cell based structure surfaced repeatedly in the transcripts. As small support groups within the larger church structure, cell groups perform a number of functions including facilitating a newcomers integration with members of the church community. Tina Jordan noted:

The heart of cell-based churches is relationships. It is having smaller groups so instead of people having an arm's length relationship at church where you put on your Sunday mask, if you are in a cell-based church you meet people regularly in homes and get to know them a little more deeply.

However, Tina Jordan added:

My experience is that when people get really involved in a home cell group, they tend to have that as their major allegiance and get less dependent on the Sunday morning services in terms of nurture. Ideally, the cells should funnel towards the Sunday services.

Tina Jordan also viewed the cell groups as a way of making “mini churches” and “widening the neighbourhoods view” of the church:

Cell groups are supposed to be completely open to any newcomers, so that people invite their neighbours, friends, workmates. If held in people's homes it becomes less churchy, because Australians are a little bit suspicious of churchiness. Some people are uncomfortable with church culture.

Apart from joining cell groups, newcomers may experience church through special services. Linda Clarke stated starting a second congregation through the “seeker service” format was important:

I think the seeker service is a good training ground...if it was suddenly full up with people they [the members] would nearly die of shock....Because the seeker service is every few weeks, people do not know when they are on and we need to get flyers out and other forms of advertising and hopefully people will come along.

The church services are conducted in rented premises that are not located on a street front. This may create profile problems as expressed by Linda Clarke:

The lack of a permanent meeting place is a problem....It would be very good to have a place to do things and a place where people know we are. We go to Kingsley for our mother's group, we go to Greenwood for the craft and we meet in homes for the cell groups.

Although building permanent premises may attract new members Diane Martin presented a contrasting view:

The church building is tucked away and that does present a problem.

People can not easily find it. But in terms of the church spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to build a building I think the money is better spent on people than buildings.

Diane Martin added:

The fact we use other church premises for the craft and ladies groups gives us liaisons with other churches. A lot of churches are under utilised and if we can pay them something. I do not think we have to be in a flashy church to show how fantastic we are.

Discussion

The interview analysis provided an understanding of the nature of SOC within Sorrento Anglican Church. In particular, the relatively unchanged congregation and the promotion of a close family-like culture were issues raised by the interviewees that were interpreted as signs of a strong SOC.

McMillan and Chavis's (1986) four SOC components (membership, influence, integration of needs and shared emotional connection) were reflected in the participants' comments. However, boundaries appeared to be the overarching variable that potentially hinders church growth. McMillan and Chavis (1986) argued that group members' have a legitimate need for boundaries to protect their intimate social connections. In the Sorrento church setting these boundaries may be reinforced by three factors.

First, neighbourhood factors including limited points for interaction and the reliance on motor vehicles may have contributed to the nature of SOC within the church. For example, the lack of a Sorrento community centre may limit opportunities for developing Pettigrew's (1998) neighbourhood "friendship potentials". This reasoning appears to concur with the Plas and Lewis (1996) concerns regarding the relationship constraints imposed by environmental variables.

Second, church development factors including the youth emphasis and contemporary style of service may have also created boundaries. According to one participant, the development of a contemporary service occurred when young people started going elsewhere. This may have dissuaded potential members who are seeking a more traditional service.

Third, the characteristics of the Sorrento neighbourhood residents may have indirectly imposed barriers. For example, interviewee comments regarding the “prohibitive housing style” suggested that some residents may view the neighbourhood in dormitory terms only (Glynn, 1981). Consequently, if residents seek supportive relationships outside the suburb, then the church membership may fail to satisfactorily bond with the neighbourhood (Hughey et al., 1999). Arguably, a relatively unchanged congregation becomes the ensuing product.

The church operates out of temporary premises that have resulted in profile problems. In turn, this profile may influence membership levels and the style of internal relationships the members have developed. However, whether or not these relationships are too friendly was difficult to determine. Friendliness and social support are regarded as common features of churches (Bjarnason, 1998; Ellison & George, 1994; Iannaccone, 1996).

No support was gathered for Wagner’s (1984) claim that church ‘over-friendliness’ leads some members to forgo neighbourhood interaction. According to Johnson and Mullins (1990), all churches share a concern for organisational continuity, self-preservation, and perpetuation of belief systems. The interviewees appeared to recognise these issues and the accompanying need to befriend neighbours. The family-like church culture was perhaps the core SOC-related factor that emerged in the transcripts. The church’s close-knit nature may be linked to the McMillan and Chavis (1986) reinforcement of needs and shared emotional connection SOC elements. Although the interviewees generally valued these elements, these factors appear to challenge growth strategies. The membership support systems the church has in place may satisfy fellowship needs

at the expense of neighbourhood participation. Nevertheless, interviewee comments including “clubbiness”, “sort of signals that outsiders pick up on” and “we do not belong here” suggest members were mindful of how outsiders perceived the church.

The interviewees commented that a variety of entry points have been set in place to widen the neighbourhood’s view of the church. Through the establishment of a second congregation, “mini-church” prayer groups and outreach programmes (e.g., ladies craft, mother’s group), non-traditional membership avenues are available to newcomers. As these bypass the traditional Sunday service they appear to negate any feelings of social rejection that new members may encounter (Wagner, 1984).

The question of whether these mechanisms are operating properly caused concern, nonetheless. The second congregation, the home-based prayer groups and the youth group may not be fully functional. One interviewee noted that the youth group is presently concentrating on a core of established members, the home-based prayer groups are not well advertised and the second congregation meets only intermittently. These mechanisms appear to be a means of countering the possibility of rigidly defined fellowship circles that Wagner (1984) suggested effect growth in established congregations.

These comments need to be placed in perspective. For example, the appointment of a youth worker to work primarily with established members, needs to be considered from a development viewpoint. An interviewee suggested that problems were created by neighbourhood youth in previous open invitation youth nights and a decision to start again with a more cohesive group resulted.

This information qualifies any inferences that link the youth development with the church members being too socially entwined.

By selectively extracting excerpts from the transcripts the present study risked losing the overall flavour of the participant's comments. The value of the present approach may rest with the interviewee's approval of the excerpts in the follow-up interviews. However, the participants may have fashioned their responses to suit their perception of the underlying research question (Smith, 1995). According to Smith (1995), researchers must accept that the remarks made have significance to the participants beyond the interview setting. It was assumed here that there was a correspondence between what was said and the underlying beliefs the participants held.

In addition, the assessment of the church SOC from the outside looking in may have disadvantages (Wadsworth, 1997). Wadsworth argued that a researcher, who is not a member of the referent group, might develop questions that are inappropriate. However, the use of key informants may have allayed this criticism in this project. The points raised by the informants guided the questioning and appeared central to the growth related issues confronting the church.

The complex linkages between SOC and neighbourhood cohesion may require further investigation. Future studies may wish to develop more elaborate methods for determining the intricacies of the church member-neighbourhood fit. For example, Brodsky (1996) concluded a similar interview-based study by suggesting an ethnographic approach may have proven more suitable. If applied to the local setting this technique may involve detailing daily interactions within the neighbourhood and interviewing other Sorrento residents about the church.

Interestingly, Brodsky (1996) suggested “that the process by whereby SOC mediates individual and community outcomes may be moderated by qualities both in the individual and within the community” (p. 362). When considered here, this statement suggests that although church members should not abandon their interests, SOC may only translate to growth when the member’s needs are realised among fellow neighbours.

In other words, as McMillan (1996) noted, symbols, ceremonies and rituals may impose integrative social conventions that influence individual and community behaviour. While the church itself is steeped in these SOC building characteristics, the neighbourhood may be struggling to build a spirit of community. As stated previously, church groups may promote social integration and help overcome any weak ties that potentially undermine a neighbourhood’s cohesion (Maton & Wells, 1995). Benefits accrue as individuals bond in community organisations and the resultant sociability creates a valuable resource that may be tapped by the surrounding neighbourhood (Portes, 1998).

In conclusion, the present study attempted to identify the nature of SOC within a local church. The transcript features that stood out were the relatively unchanged congregation and the close family-style structure. On a general level, environmental boundaries may effect the networks that link an urban neighbourhood’s members. Within the Sorrento area, these boundaries may include a prohibitive housing style, lack of local shops and car-centred transport patterns. The temporary church premises and a service that is youth oriented may pose additional barriers that influence Sorrento Anglican Church growth.

Concluding Remarks

Together the two studies provided an indication of the properties that contribute to SOC within Sorrento Anglican Church. In study one, values, influence and neighbourhood concern were the core church-referenced SOC dimensions that emerged. The key finding in study two appeared to be the neighbourhood characteristics that may have influenced the church membership levels.

The Sorrento neighbourhood, especially the lack of a central meeting point, does not appear to facilitate church members reaching out to potential newcomers. The church has the mechanisms in place to overcome neighbourhood hindrances including the second congregation, cell-based structures and outreach activities. However, these changes do not appear to have translated to many new people joining.

Upon reflection, the research question “Does sense of community and neighbourhood cohesion factors within Sorrento Anglican Church pose potential barriers to attracting new members?” was answered affirmatively. Local circumstances including the lack of permanent premises appear to have effected the church profile. While this may have resulted in a close-knit congregation it should not be viewed negatively. The member’s internal promotion of friendliness does not appear to prohibit the establishment of external social networks. Nevertheless, there appeared to be a tension between the need for growth and the impact of change on current valued practices and processes. Paradoxically, strategies for change are perhaps challenged by the need to maintain existing church structures.

In conclusion, the present research attempted to take up a challenge issued by Lorion and Newbrough (1996). Lorion and Newbrough (1996) urged community psychologists to study the circumstances of real people in real settings. The study of neighbourhood organisations provides community psychology with the opportunity to make a distinctive contribution to understanding how people in everyday settings think and act. Identifying the key factors that make community life important and rewarding is central to this activity. The examination of how a local church group's members interact internally and with surrounding neighbours provided a means of contributing to this knowledge.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Sense of Community Questionnaire

The first 18 questions relate to living in the suburbs surrounding the church. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Please answer all the questions. There is no "correct" way to respond, so feel free to respond as truthfully as possible. Circle your answers in accordance with the following scale.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

1) Overall, I am very attracted to living in this neighbourhood.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

2) I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

3) I visit with my neighbours in their homes.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

4) The friendships and associations I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot to me.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

5) Given the opportunity, I would like to move out of this neighbourhood.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

6) If the people in my neighbourhood were planning something I'd think of it as something "we" were doing rather than they were doing.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

Appendix A.2

7) If I needed advice about something I could go to someone in my neighbourhood.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

8) I think I agree with most people in my neighbourhood about what is important in life.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

9) I believe my neighbours would help me in an emergency.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

10) I feel loyal to people in my neighbourhood.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

11) I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

12) I would be willing to work together with others on something to improve my neighbourhood.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

13) I plan to remain a resident of my neighbourhood for a number of years.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

14) I like to think of myself as similar to the people who live in my neighbourhood.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

Appendix A.3

15) I rarely have neighbours over to my house to visit.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

16) A feeling of fellowship runs deep between me and other people within my neighbourhood.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

17) I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

18) Living in my neighbourhood gives me a sense of community.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

The following are statements people might make about their church.
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with them in
relation to Sorrento Anglican Church.

19) I think my church is a good place to belong.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

20) People in this church do not share the same values.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

21) My fellow church members and I want the same things from the church.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

22) I can recognise most of the people who attend church.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

Appendix A.4

23) I feel at home in this church.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

24) Very few of the fellow church members know me.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

25) I care about what the other church members think of my actions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

26) I have no influence over what this church is like.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

27) If there is a problem within the church the members can get it solved.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

28) It is very important for me to attend this particular church.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

29) People in this church generally do not get along with each other.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

30) I expect to attend this church for at least three years.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/ Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-------------------	-------	--------------------------------	----------	----------------------

Appendix A.5

Finally, completion of the following details will assist the analysis.

31) Your Age (please tick the appropriate box)

- ☐ under 20 years ☐ 21-30 years ☐ 31-40 years ☐ 41-50 years
☐ 51-60 years ☐ 61 and over

32) Years living in present area.....

33) Years attending Sorrento Anglican Church.....

34) How often do you talk about religion with neighbours (Tick the box)

- ☐ Once a week ☐ Once a month ☐ Less than once a month

35) Gender: Male/Female (Circle correct answer)

36) Your highest education level completed: (Tick the box)

- ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Tertiary

37) On average do you attend Sorrento Anglican Church.(Tick the box)

- ☐ Once a week ☐ Once a month ☐ Less than once a month

38) If you have children living at home do they fall within the following categories.

Pre primary.....Primary.....Secondary.....Post Secondary.....

39) Do you walk to church services? YES/NO (Circle correct response)

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING.

Appendix B: Data Coding Information

Neighbourhood Cohesion Index (NCI)

Questionnaire items 1 to 18

Scored: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree/nor disagree, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree. Items 5 and item 15 reversed before scoring.

Sense of Community Index (SCI)

Questionnaire items 19 to 30

Scored: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree/nor disagree, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree. Items 20, 24, 26 and 29 reversed before scoring.

Age (item 31):

Under 20 = (1); 21 to 30 = (2); 31 to 40 = (3); 41 to 50 = (4); 51 to 60 = (5);
61+ = (6)

Number of years church member has been living in the local area (item 32)

Two years or less = (1); 3 to 4 = (2); 5 to 6 = (3); 7 to 8 = (4); 9 to 10 = (5); 11+ = (6)

Years attending Sorrento Anglican Church (item 33)

Two years or less = (1); 3 to 4 = (2); 5 to 6 = (3); 7 to 8 = (4); 9+ = (5)

How often do you talk about religion with neighbours (item 34)

Once a week = (1); Once a month = (2); Less than once a month = (3)

Gender (item 35)

Male = (1); Female = (2)

Highest level of education completed (item 36)

Primary = (1); Secondary = (2); Tertiary = (3)

Appendix B.2

Regularity of church attendance (item 37)

Once a week = (1); Once a month = (2); Less than once a month = (3)

Children living at home (item 38)

No pre-primary or primary children living at home = (0)

Some or all children are pre-primary or primary living at home = (1)

Do you walk to church services (item 39)

Walk or push bike = (1); Motor vehicle = (2)

Appendix C: Data Matrix Variable Names

Unlabelled column one = participant number. Each participant assigned a row.

Columns NCI1 to NCI18 = Neighbourhood Cohesion Index (questionnaire item number 1 to questionnaire item number 18).

Columns SCI19 to SCI30 = Sense of Community Index (questionnaire item 19 to questionnaire item 30).

age = Age of participant

ysarea = Number of years church member has been living in the local area

yschurch = Number of years participant has been attending Sorrento Church

talkrel = How often do you talk to neighbours about religion

gender = Gender of participant

educat = Highest level of education completed by participant

partrate = How often participant attends Sorrento Anglican Church

children = Preprimary or primary children living at home

mobility = Do you walk to church services

NCLAVG = Average score for questionnaire items 1 to 18.

SCI AVG = Average score for questionnaire items 19 to 30.

Values = Seven item SCI dimension label (Q20, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q27, Q29, Q30)

Influence = Three item SCI dimension label (Q19, Q24, Q26)

Concern = Two item SCI dimension label (Q25, Q28)

Mah1 = Multivariate outlier check for SCI subscale regression

Mah2 = Multivariate outlier check for SCI Average regression

Appendix D: Letter Requesting Parish Council Research Approval

69 Seaward Loop
Sorrento 6020
10 May 1999

Mr Patrick Peake
Sorrento Anglican Church Parish Council
c/- 68 Justin Drive
Sorrento 6020

Dear Patrick,

I am writing regarding a research proposal that requires Sorrento Anglican Church Parish Council's consideration. As part of my studies at Edith Cowan University I hope to undertake research into the nature of sense of community within the local church. The research may assist church outreach activities.

I have outlined the project to Pastor David Jones and intend working closely with him. Could you please ask the parish council to consider providing a written decision. The following points may be of assistance.

- The study involves completion of a questionnaire and some interviewing.
- A copy of the proposed questionnaire format and accompanying information sheet is attached.
- Participation by church members is completely voluntary. Names will not be recorded, any data collected will be treated confidentially and anyone can withdraw at any time.
- In the second part of the study it is proposed to individually interview five church members to gain insight into their experience of church activities.
- To assist analysis the interviews may need to be audiotaped and transcribed.
- Names will not be reported.
- To ensure confidentiality the School of Psychology Ethics Committee, my supervisor and I will only access the information and responses collected.
- If suitable the proposed study may be published.
- Any data gathered will not lead to the respondents being identifiable.
- It is proposed to administer both the questionnaire and interviews during June 1999.
- If the thesis is completed it remains the property of Edith Cowan University.

Should you require further details please contact either myself on (08) 9448 8722 or my principal supervisor, Dr Christopher Sonn, of the Psychology School, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup Campus, on (08) 9400 5105.

Yours sincerely

Colin Cowie

Appendix E: Questionnaire Invitation

Invitation to Complete Research Survey

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Colin Cowie and I am a 4th year psychology student. I am conducting research to gain an understanding of your church's 'sense of community' for my studies. Sense of community refers to things such as one's sense of place, a sense of belonging and how people interrelate and care for one another. The study complies with the guidelines provided by the Edith Cowan University Committee for the Conduct of Ethical Research and has been approved by the church parish council.

The study involves completing the attached 39-item questionnaire. It takes no more than 20 minutes to complete.

Participation is completely voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw at any time. All data collected will be treated in a confidential manner. Individual responses will be combined and will not lead to your identification. Names will not be recorded. The data may be written up for publication purposes but no identifying comments will be contained therein.

At the conclusion of this study, a report of the results will be made available to Pastor David Jones.

Please keep this page. If you require more details please phone either myself on (08) 9448 8722 or my supervisor, Dr Christopher Sonn, of the Psychology School, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup Campus, on (08) 9400 5105.

Please note you need to consider only neighbours who are not church members in the neighbourhood-related items. If you have any immediate questions please ask me now.*

I am sure you will find the questions interesting. If you would like to participate please turn to the next page and begin.**

Sincerely,

.....
Colin Cowie (Student Researcher) Date

.....
Supervisor, Dr. Christopher Sonn Date

* This sentence was deleted in the mailed version.

**Replaced by "If you would like to participate please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the envelope provided." in the mailed version.

Appendix F: Reliability Data

Table F1

Item-total Statistics for Neighbourhood Cohesion Index

NCI item	Questionnaire	Corrected item-total	Alpha if item deleted
	Number	Correlation	
Neighbourhood Interaction	1	.5077	.8978
Neighbourhood belonging	2	.5709	.8960
Visit neighbours	3	.6891	.8918
Neighbourhood friendships	4	.6859	.8920
I'd like to move out	5	.5585	.8962
Planning activities	6	.6013	.8949
Neighbourhood Advice	7	.5580	.8957
Neighbourhood Agreement	8	.4313	.8998
Emergency help	9	.3489	.9014
Neighbourhood loyalty	10	.6454	.8944
Neighbourhood borrowing	11	.5275	.8977
Work together	12	.3291	.9019
Long term residency	13	.4819	.8984
Neighbourhood similarity	14	.4091	.9004
Have neighbours over	15	.5673	.8962
Neighbourhood fellowship	16	.6742	.8924
Neighbourhood talk	17	.5246	.8972
Sense of community	18	.7488	.8904

Note. NCI = Neighbourhood Cohesion Index. For complete wording of NCI items

see Appendix A.

N = 100. Cronbach's alpha = .9017.

Appendix F.2

Table F2

Item-total Statistics for Sense of Community Index

SCI item	Questionnaire	Corrected item-total	Alpha if item deleted
	Number	Correlation	
Church belonging	19	.6469	.8264
Sharing values	20	.5307	.8334
Want the same things	21	.4364	.8405
Recognise church people	22	.5765	.8308
Feel at home in church	23	.7681	.8156
Members know me	24	.4821	.8373
Care what members think	25	.2508	.8567
Church influence	26	.3929	.8437
Church problems	27	.5712	.8304
Church importance	28	.5886	.8287
Getting along with others	29	.4166	.8410
Attend for three years plus	30	.6061	.8275

Note. SCI = Sense of Community Index. For complete wording of SCI items see

Appendix A.

N = 103. Cronbach's alpha = .8463.

Appendix G: Regression Model Number One

As shown in column four of Table G1 the adjusted R square value decreased when the “number of years living in area” variable was added to the preferred model two. The inclusion of this variable provided no additional information about the NCI. According to Tabachnick & Fidell (1996), adjusted R square has the capacity to reflect the lack of gain from the addition of further independent variables by being able to decrease in value.

Table G1

SPSS Regression Model Summary for SCI Average and “Talk about religion with neighbours” NCI Predictors

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.296 ^a	.088	.078	.5501	.088	9.112	1	95	.003
2	.478 ^b	.229	.212	.5084	.141	17.230	1	94	.000
3	.480 ^c	.231	.206	.5104	.002	.237	1	93	.627

a. Predictors: (Constant), (SUM SCI19 to SCI30) / 12

b. Predictors: (Constant), (SUM SCI19 to SCI30) / 12, Talk about religion with neighbours

c. Predictors: (Constant), (SUM SCI19 to SCI30) / 12, Talk about religion with neighbours, Number of years living in local area

Note. nci = Neighbourhood Cohesion Index. SCI = Sense of Community Index.

Sum SCI19 to SCI30 = Sum of questionnaire scores from question 19 to 30.

As shown in column six of Table G2 all three predictor equations were significantly different from zero, $ps < .01$. Hence, they provided significant evidence of a linear relationship between the predictor variables and the NCI. However, parsimony and predictive ability made model two the preferred equation.

Appendix G.2

Table G2

SPSS ANOVA TABLE for SCI Average and “Talk about religion with neighbours” NCI Predictors

ANOVA ^d						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.757	1	2.757	9.112	.003 ^a
	Residual	28.745	95	.303		
	Total	31.502	96			
2	Regression	7.210	2	3.605	13.949	.000 ^b
	Residual	24.292	94	.258		
	Total	31.502	96			
3	Regression	7.272	3	2.424	9.303	.000 ^c
	Residual	24.231	93	.261		
	Total	31.502	96			

a. Predictors: (Constant), (SUM SCI19 to SCI30) / 12

b. Predictors: (Constant), (SUM SCI19 to SCI30) / 12, Talk about religion with neighbours

c. Predictors: (Constant), (SUM SCI19 to SCI30) / 12, Talk about religion with neighbours, Number of years living in local area

d. Dependent Variable: (Sum nci1 to nci18) / 18

Note. nci = Neighbourhood Cohesion Index. SCI = Sense of Community Index.

Sum SCI19 to SCI30 = Sum of questionnaire scores from question 19 to 30.

Sum nci1 to nci18 = Sum of questionnaire scores from question 1 to 18.

As shown in column six of Table G3 the individual regression coefficients for model two were significant. In other words, both the average of the SCI ($p < .01$) at .1 “talk about religion with neighbours” ($p < .01$) made significant unique contributions to predicting the NCI.

Appendix G.3

Table G3

SPSS Coefficient Table for SCI Average and "Talk about religion with neighbours" NCI Predictors

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.363	.414		5.706	.000
	(SUM SCI19 to SCI30) / 12	.327	.108	.296	3.019	.003
2	(Constant)	2.876	.402		7.152	.000
	(SUM SCI19 to SCI30) / 12	.361	.101	.326	3.587	.001
	Talk about religion with neighbours	-.269	.065	-.377	-4.151	.000
3	(Constant)	2.797	.436		6.422	.000
	(SUM SCI19 to SCI30) / 12	.362	.101	.327	3.581	.001
	Talk about religion with neighbours	-.266	.065	-.373	-4.066	.000
	Number of years living in local area	1.577E-02	.032	.045	.487	.627

a. Dependent Variable: (Sum nci1 to nci18) / 18

Note. nci = Neighbourhood Cohesion Index. SCI = Sense of Community Index.

Sum SCI19 to SCI30 = Sum of questionnaire scores from question 19 to 30.

nci1 to nci18 = Sum of questionnaire scores from question 1 to 18.

Appendix H: Regression Model Number Two

As shown in column four of Table H1 the adjusted R square value increased when the variable “number of years living in area” was combined with the Sci-subscale “Values”. Model two predicted 22.2% of the variance in the NCI.

Table H1

SPSS Regression Model Summary for SCI-subscale “Values” and “Talk about religion with neighbours” NCI Predictors

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.289 ^a	.083	.074	.5514	.083	8.627	1	95	.004
2	.471 ^b	.222	.205	.5107	.139	16.749	1	94	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), SCI-subscale-“Values”

b. Predictors: (Constant), SCI-subscale-“Values”, Talk about religion with neighbours

Note. NCI = Neighbourhood Cohesion Index. SCI-subscale-“Values” = Sense of Community Index subscale labelled “Values”.

As shown in column six of Table H2 both predictor equations were significantly different from zero, $ps < .01$. Hence, they provided significant evidence of a linear relationship between the predictor variables and the NCI. However, greater predictive ability made model two the preferred equation.

Appendix H.2

Table H2

SPSS ANOVA TABLE for SCI-subscale "Values" and "Talk about religion with neighbours" NCI Predictors

ANOVA ^c						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.623	1	2.623	8.627	.004 ^a
	Residual	28.880	95	.304		
	Total	31.502	96			
2	Regression	6.990	2	3.495	13.403	.000 ^b
	Residual	24.512	94	.261		
	Total	31.502	96			

a. Predictors: (Constant), SCI-subscale-"Values"

b. Predictors: (Constant), SCI-subscale-"Values", Talk about religion with neighbours

c. Dependent Variable: (Sum nci1 to nci18) / 18

Note. nci = Neighbourhood Cohesion Index. SCI-subscale-"Values" = Sense of Community Index subscale labelled "Values".

As shown in column six of Table H3 the individual regression coefficients for model two were significant. In other words, the SCI-subscale "Values" ($p < .01$) and "talk about religion with neighbours" ($p < .01$) made a significant unique contribution to predicting the NCI.

Appendix H.3

Table H3

SPSS Coefficient Table for SCI-subscale “Values” and “Talk about religion with neighbours” NCI Predictors

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.469	.390		6.336	.000
	SCI-subscale-“Values”	4.239E-02	.014	.289	2.937	.004
2	(Constant)	2.999	.383		7.822	.000
	SCI-subscale-“Values”	4.624E-02	.013	.315	3.451	.001
	Talk about religion with neighbours	-.266	.065	-.373	-4.093	.000

a. Dependent Variable: (Sum nci1 to nci18) / 18

Note. nci = Neighbourhood Cohesion Index. SCI-subscale-“Values” = Sense of Community Index subscale labelled “Values”.

Appendix I: Interview Schedule

- 1) Can you tell me a little about your experience of attending Sorrento Anglican Church? (Prompt: Any changes you have noticed.)
- 2) Can you tell me how a newcomer may perceive the church?
- 3) What factors in the local area do you think have influenced the way Sorrento Anglican Church has evolved? (Prompt: For example you may wish to consider whether the format has evolved to suit the neighbourhood. Has the housing style, street structure, shopping and school facilities within the neighbourhood influenced the church.)

Follow-up Interview Schedule

- 1) Which themes, if any, accurately fit your experience of attending Sorrento Anglican Church?
- 2) Can you think of any additional information that may be relevant?

Appendix J: Interview Invitation

Invitation to Participate in Audio-taped Interview

Dear

As discussed on the phone I am interviewing a number of church members as a follow up to the survey that was undertaken recently regarding 'sense of community'. As you aware my name is Colin Cowie and I am a 4th year psychology student. The study complies with the guidelines provided by the Edith Cowan University Committee for the Conduct of Ethical Research.

The interview takes no more than 45 minutes to complete. The interview is audiotaped and then typed so that an overall interpretation can be placed on the comments given.

Participation is completely voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw at any time, in which case any data collected will be deleted from the study. Names will not be recorded. Unless required to release information by law all data collected will be treated in a confidential manner. It may be written for publication purposes but no identifying comments will be contained therein. At the conclusion of this study, a report of the results will be made available to Pastor David Jones.

Please keep this page. If you have any questions regarding the project please phone either myself on (08) 9448 8722 or my supervisor, Dr Christopher Sonn, of the Psychology School, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup Campus, on (08) 9400 5105.

I am sure you will find the questions interesting and your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

.....
Colin Cowie (Student Researcher)

.....
Date

.....
Supervisor, Dr. Christopher Sonn

.....
Date

Appendix K: Interview Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

I,....., confirm that:

- I have read and understand the information sheet that forms part of this document.
- I understand that I am not obliged to participate in this study.
- I understand that I can freely withdraw from the study at any time.
- I was given an adequate opportunity to ask questions.
- All my questions were satisfactorily answered.
- I understand that information gathered including this document will be treated confidentially.
- I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided I am not identified.
- I confirm that I voluntarily choose to participate in Colin Cowie's study into sense of community within Sorrento Anglican Church.

Signed at.....on the.....

.....

Signature.....

Participant Name

Contact Telephone Number.....

Appendix L: Interview Analysis Data Matrix

Table L1

Code, Participant Name and Transcript Paragraph Number for Identified Themes

Theme Identified	Participant	Paragraph Number	Code
Youth versus Tradition	Linda Clarke	1	Danger emphasising youth
	Linda Clarke	5	Youth worker
	Tina Jordan	1	Clash youth/tradition
	Tina Jordan	2	Youth: A different culture
	Tina Jordan	3	Youth from out of area
	Tina Jordan	6	Young children
	Tina Jordan	7	Build on youth
Church equates Family	Linda Clarke	2	Like extended family
	Linda Clarke	8	Closeness
	Len Jennings	17	Church equals family
	Frank Baker	1	Ways of doing things
	Frank Baker	2	Few outsiders come in
Neighbourhood Fit	Linda Clarke	17	Walls; big debts
	Len Jennings	4	Local status seekers
	Len Jennings	5	Pressure to conform
	Len Jennings	14	Layout; local environment
	Len Jennings	21	So called local church
	Frank Baker	6	No community hub
	Frank Baker	7	Just a suburb
	Frank Baker	8	Rushing; No belonging
	Frank Baker	12	Need to attract families
	Frank Baker	13	Area lacks youth activities
	Diane Martin	14	Concrete wonderland
	Diane Martin	15	No physical heart
	Diane Martin	17	No natural interface points
	Diane Martin	18	Church / societal values
	Tina Jordan	8	Take a cut lunch if walking
Church Structures	Linda Clarke	23	Worth of seeker service
	Len Jennings	7	Cell group stepping stones
	Frank Baker	4	Cells provide introduction
	Frank Baker	9	Leadership in cell groups

Appendix L.2

Code, Participant Name and Transcript Paragraph Number for Identified Themes

Theme Identified	Participant	Paragraph Number	Code
Church Structures	Diane Martin	3	Leaders fulfil to many roles
	Diane Martin	4	Cell groups versus structure
	Diane Martin	5	Friends - the heart of cells
	Diane Martin	6	Main allegiance to cells
	Diane Martin	7	Sunday the be all / end all?
	Diane Martin	8	Making more cell groups
	Diane Martin	9	Cells counter churchiness
	Tina Jordan	15	Perhaps cell groups first
Building Profile	Linda Clarke	15	Need new premises
	Frank Baker	6	Church invisible
	Frank Baker	17	New church premises
	Diane Martin	11	Church tucked away
Individual Boundaries	Frank Baker	10	Define yourself by contrast
Future Pursuits	Linda Clarke	3	Find local entry points
	Linda Clarke	4	Offer something different
	Linda Clarke	19	Employ 'help' workers
	Linda Clarke	20	Build a skateboard ramp
	Linda Clarke	21	Reach out make friends
	Frank Baker	15	Friendships via children
	Frank Baker	16	Use contact time wisely
	Diane Martin	10	Touch lives or up numbers
	Diane Martin	12	Seek out the peripheral
	Diane Martin	13	Combat shyness
	Linda Clarke	7	Claim to be their church
	Linda Clarke	10	Some feel threatened
Welcoming Newcomers	Linda Clarke	11	Listening to new ones
	Linda Clarke	12	Tread warily with new ones
	Linda Clarke	13	Support the vulnerable
	Linda Clarke	22	Dispelling funny ideas
	Len Jennings	1	Church is confronting
	Len Jennings	3	Fellowship is it community
	Len Jennings	6	Alien for newcomers

Appendix L.3

Code, Participant Name and Paragraph Number for Identified Themes

Theme Identified	Participant	Paragraph Number	Code
Restrictive Practices	Linda Clarke	6	Work on own first
	Linda Clarke	14	Rituals panic some
	Linda Clarke	16	Gauge welcoming level
	Linda Clarke	24	Different from a club
	Frank Baker	11	Change leaders - unsettling
	Frank Baker	14	Stick to areas we know
Community	Len Jennings	11	Find community in church
	Len Jennings	13	Manufacturing community
	Len Jennings	15	Find escape in bowling club
	Len Jennings	16	Community or friendships?