



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

by LOVE CHILE and XAVIER BLACK



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Article

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ABSTRACT

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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



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

BRIEF HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF AUCKLAND INNER-CITY LIVING

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

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

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

THEORIZING COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

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

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



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

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

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

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

ETHNICITY, DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

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



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

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

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

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

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

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

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

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

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

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

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

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

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

Another participant defined community as:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

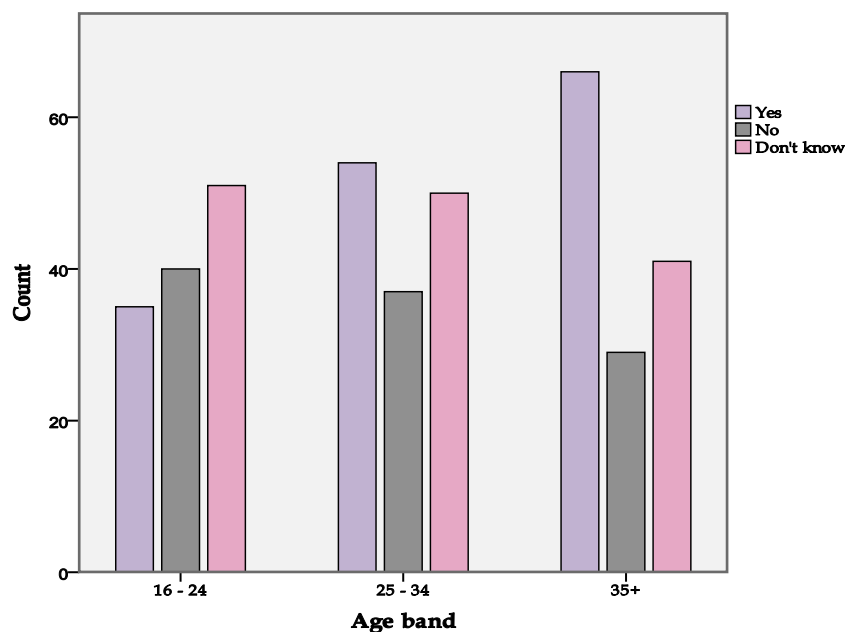


Figure 1. Perception of an inner city community across age groups

Source: Chile et. al, 2012, p.63 [figure 4.3]

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

RESIDENTS’ PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

Table 2. Respondents who undertook social activities with their neighbours

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

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

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

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



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

Table 3. Respondents who reported they knew their neighbours

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AUCKLAND INNER-CITY RESIDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND EXPRESSIONS OF COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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