

Community Newspapers and Social capital:

The power to empower

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Introduction

What does a longitudinal study of independent newspapers tell us about sustaining and developing communities? This article outlines findings from a recently completed research study *The Relationship between Community Newspapers and Social Capital: the power to empower (2005)*¹. As a longitudinal study from 1910 to 2000, it explored community newspaper content in Tasmania and investigated the timing and establishment of their production. Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and a mixed-method case study, the study explores the number and distribution of community newspapers in Tasmania, the issues presented, and the relationship between community newspapers and social capital. Data were gathered through a content analysis of the community newspapers, as well as semi-structured interviews with newspaper editors/coordinators.

A number of articles discussing specific aspects relating to theoretical and methodological approaches used to generate the findings within this research have already been published². This article takes the form of a more general overview of the research and as a synopsis discusses the findings relating to the importance of community newspapers as cohesive and developmental structures empowering and sustaining communities.

This article identifies four aspects of the research study: firstly, the issues arising in literature that initially fired the research interest followed by the purpose structure, rationale and outline of the research. Thirdly, study findings are presented in relation to areas of:

- community cohesion, and
- sustainability engender by and through the production, processes and content of community newspapers.

The paper concludes by discussing future possibilities for research and the implications for practice and policy from the research.

¹ <http://eprints.utas.edu.au/283/>

² Papers pertaining to: Content analysis framework, McManamey, 2001; text analysis and initial results, 2003; identification of community cohesion and social capital in hard times, 2005b; growth rates of community newspaper and population change, 2005c; longitudinal study of community newspapers and content analysis, 2006a; content analysis focused specifically on the four dimensions of social capital, 2006b.

What issues fired the research interest?

Newspapers ... become more necessary in proportion as men become more equal and individualism more to be feared. To suppose that they only serve to protect freedom would be to diminish their importance: they maintain civilization.

deTocquedville, 1840, Vol. 11, p.

Three major areas of interest arose from the preliminary research and literature igniting research interest in community newspapers and social capital: that of the theoretical debate over declining social capital related to the surprising growth rates of community and weekly newspapers; secondly, methodological practice examining the concept and causes of social capital; finally the paucity of research on community newspapers generally and in Tasmania in particular.

Debate, decline and growth

The concept of social capital has been in practice since pre-history and rises theoretically though not named in literature from the eighteenth century (Hume, 1739, deTocquville, 1840). While named and noted in a number of individual studies over the twentieth century (Dewey 1900 cited in Farr, 2002; Halifan, 1916, Jacobs, 1965, Loury, 1977), the concept of social capital, has only been significantly qualified and applied in research from the 1980's. The three major approaches from this period are informed by Bourdieu, (1986); Coleman (1988, 1990) and Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000). In discussing definition, the OECD Report, *The Well-Being of Nations: the role of human and social capital* (2001), stresses that there is no single definition of social capital, and outlines four approaches, i.e. anthropological, sociological, economic and political (2001, p.40). Where globally social-economic, political and organisational policy has lent increasingly on the concept of social capital³, social capital has also been debated as declining (Putnam, 1993, 1995). One of the main indicators of declining social capital was its relationship to increased television viewing⁴. However, literature on theoretical argument both supporting the argument (Levi, 1996; 1996; Lappe & Du Bois, 1998; Moy et al., 1999; Galper, 2002) and challenging the argument (Ladd, 1996; Norris, 1996; Paxton, 1999; Sullivan, 2002) support a strong association between readership and social capital.

³ 'The World Bank's preferred definition of social capital is that it refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society, 'it is the glue that holds them together'. Refer to www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/whatsc.htm (OECD, Paper, 2001, p. 62)

⁴ Putnam's arguments surrounding the 'decline of social capital' are expounded in three key sources (1993, 1995, 2000). The arguments are that: civic behaviour including active membership in community groups is down; joining groups and positive social outcomes are inextricably linked; the generation of key 'joiners' is dying off; there is a trend toward replacing associational time with time spent watching television (McManamey, 2005, p. 72).

The links between civic engagement and television viewing can be instructively compared with the links between civic engagement and newspaper reading. The basic contrast is straightforward. Newspaper reading is associated with high social capital, TV viewing with low social capital. (Putnam, 1996, p. 14)

Theoretically, exploring newspapers as a means of understanding social capital is well substantiated. While independent community newspapers may be a small area of research interest, there is strong support for the newspaper as a socialising agent, acting as to generate social capital, from philosophical and democratic studies. It is also consistent with media theory and research (de Tocqueville, 1840; Tonnies, F 1887; Janowitz, 1967; Blexrud, 1972; Tichenor et al., 1980; Stamm et al., 1983; Stamm, 1985; Becker & Fredin, 1987, Kreteurs et al 1998; Sullivan, 1999; Galper 2002). For example, the theoretical interrelationship between a community and its newspaper, described in communitarian terms (Christians, Ferré & Flacker, 1993), is clearly identified in de Tocqueville's writings. Describing, though not naming, relational elements of social capital and newspapers, he holds that:

There is a necessary connection between public associations and newspapers: *newspapers make associations and associations make newspapers*; and if it has been correctly advanced that associations will increase in number as the condition of men become more equal, it is not less certain that the number of newspapers increases in proportion to that of associations. (de Tocqueville, 1840, Vol. 11. p. 135)

While circulation figures in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia suggested readership of daily newspapers was declining, regional, community and local weekly press circulations are growing (Bomann, 1999; Mason, 2000; Lewis, 2001; Newspaper Society Report, 2003). Lacy et al. (1995, p. 336) found the growth of weekly newspapers (including free and paid) increased by 160% in the United States between 1960 and 1992, compared with daily papers in the same period having a growth rate of 2%. The Centre for Community Research (Mason, 2000) lists five times as many weekly newspapers as daily, and a 6% growth of circulation of weekly newspapers from 1996 to 1999. Literature suggested that there was a highly escalating growth of community/weekly newspapers over the last three decades of the twentieth century. Literature on the growth of community/weekly newspapers also drew attention to the paucity of research surrounding the topic and its implication (Lacy, Robinson & Riffe, 1995; Riffe, Lacy & Fico 1998). While Community newspapers are a large segment of the United States newspaper market, Mason (2000) observed that there is surprisingly little published research on weekly community newspapers. Therefore the contrast between the relatively unexamined escalation of community newspaper numbers and circulation growth and the well-documented diminishing daily newspaper numbers and circulation rates related to social capital theory suggests a global movement and trend at a grass-roots level that has broader implications outside the frame of media theory and circulation analysis (2005, p.11).

Methodological practice examining the concept of social capital

While the relationship between readership and social capital is acknowledged theoretically, there does not appear to be a way of examining causal patterns within newspaper content that encompasses the issues surrounding that

relationship and their implications. Hence, the investigation of community norms and values, as seen in newspaper content, is highly appropriate.

Although social capital is generally perceived as a community characteristic, it is usually measured by asking questions of individuals and aggregating their replies. This is considered problematic because collective social capital can not simply be the sum of individual social capital. It is suggested that there is a need to measure the quality of social capital not merely the quantity.

Social Analysis and Reporting Division, (National Statistics UK, 2001:3)

Social capital indicators and the concept have primarily been measured by survey and interview methods. Where *newspaper readership* is placed as an indicator of social capital, the Australian Bureau of Statistics publication (Edwards, 2004), for example, includes *Social and Community Participation* as referring to measuring 'degree of newspaper coverage/readership' (p. 5). However, in spite of the high occurrence of this indicator in social capital research, no measure of the social capital in 'what' people read appears in the literature suggests a major oversight in social capital research and measurement.

Why research community newspapers in Tasmania?

Tasmania was an appropriate site for the current study. It is significant in Australian media history. It was the first settlement, then colony in Australia, to win free and independent press in 1824 (Schultz, 2002). There has been rich documentation of Tasmanian newspapers and early provincial press history (Moore-Robinson 1933; Miller, 1952). Hence Tasmania is also noted for its contribution to newspaper and Australian literary history and chronology (Miller, 1940, 1952). However, little has been documented on Tasmanian community newspapers.

Tasmania differs in a number of ways from the general demographic trend of urban population increase in other Australian states. It is the most decentralised state: presently, 58% of the Tasmanian population live in communities outside the capital city area (Chris Sweeny, ABS, pers. comm. 4 May 2003). From the period 1978 to 1998, Tasmania had the lowest population growth rate of any of the Australian states, experiencing a population decline from 1996 to 1998 (ABS, 2001). It has very low overseas immigration, receiving only 0.01% of the nation's migrant intake, although it has 2.4% of the nation's population.

Underlying the high out-migration from Tasmania is low economic performance. Identifying and discussing Tasmania's economic performance in relation to the rest of Australia, Rae (2003) points out that all key indicators of economic performance were consistently inferior in the 1980s and 1990s. Since the last recession in the 1990s, the Australian economy has grown at two-and-a-half times the rate of the Tasmanian economy. Rae considers that poor economic performance has acquired Tasmania the status of the 'Tasmanian problem' in national political policy, and has been examined at a national level since Federation in 1901. Rae suggests that the implications of this performance have encouraged young Tasmanians to leave the state to seek employment due to perceived deteriorating prospects. The population leaving the state are predominately young people with tertiary qualifications and the greatest potential to

make the greatest contribution to the state's economic development. What impact must this have on its communities and their structure?

How was the study executed?

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between community newspapers⁵ and social capital by analysing the newspaper content, and investigating the timing of the establishment and production of independent community newspapers published in Tasmania between 1910 and 2000. The aims of the study were to:

- examine patterns of community newspaper *establishment* across the twentieth century in Tasmania;
- examine the pattern of issues and content that have been presented within Tasmanian independent community newspapers over the last century;
- devise a content analysis framework containing dimensions of social capital that examines the concept of social capital from a number of perspectives, so as to investigate how social capital is evident in community newspapers;
- investigate the relationship between content, production process and community contribution to the newspapers to further understand the relationship between community newspapers and social capital.

Questions arising from the purpose of the study were structured into three areas of enquiry. The first question lay the grounds with descriptive and statistical data related to a set geographic area in a longitudinal investigation. The second question examined content of papers related to issues and changing interests over time. The third question opened the way for a fusion of community newspaper content, development of a new approach to social capital through both theoretical and models interposed within a content analysis and triangulation of findings through qualitative interview data. The questions were:

Community newspapers in Tasmania:

1. a What community newspapers have been published in Tasmania in the period 1910 to 2000? 1. b. Does the geographic distribution of newspapers relate to changing demographic, economic and social factors?

Issues in community newspapers:

2. a What issues have been reported in community newspapers in Tasmania in the period 1910 to 2000? 2. b How have issues been presented?

Community newspapers and social capital:

⁵ Community newspapers within the study was defined as:

Independent community publications, of geographic locale, published bi-weekly or less frequently, arising as a result of local initiative and not attached to a mainstream media organisation. Independent community newspapers are grass-roots communications echoing and mirroring their community. They can be produced by voluntary community organisations or commercial operations. (2005, p.21)

3. What is the relationship between community newspapers and social capital?

Research Design

The research design contains a descriptive statistical analysis of community newspapers in Tasmania, a content analysis, the major tool of analysis, and thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. (Summary of the research design McManamey 2005, p. 82) Case study was chosen in part due to the 'bounded-ness' of the sample, Tasmania being an island state, and further, to support a longitudinal study. A sample of 16 independent community newspapers was selected from the total number of 67 independent community newspapers established over the period studied. There were 200 issues analysed containing 6427 items coded. Figure 1 following shows the position of the sample community newspapers. Table 1 gives the sample community newspaper locations, commencement dates and area population in 2000. The community newspaper sample was based on the length of establishment, starting with the earliest published, and the presence of 'complete' archival records. The study included interviews with current and recent editors/coordinators of the community newspapers in the sample.

The methodology employing a content analysis as the major tool of analysis exploring social capital in community newspaper content is innovative. The study is therefore significant because:

- it gathers and analyses secondary data pertaining to community newspapers in Tasmania which have not been previously cited in research;
- it observes patterns of issues and interests within communities by content analysis of their community newspapers as a longitudinal study over the twentieth century;
- it formulates a content analysis framework based on theoretical literature and research practice for analysis of social capital;
- it offers a means of measuring social capital within newspapers and *what people read* as opposed to measuring *how long/and how many people read* as an indicator of social capital.



Figure1 Location of the sample community newspapers

Number on map	Publication dates	Paper	Abbrev.	Population in 2000	Circulation in 2000
1	1977–	<i>Bagdad News</i>	BDN	680	400
2	1995–	<i>Brid rePort</i>	BRP	1,234	200-250
3	1980–	<i>Bruny News</i>	BYN	680	250
4	1906–	<i>Circular Head Chronicle</i>	CH	8108	2,500
5	1998–	<i>Devonport Times</i>	DEV	24,279	10,000
6	1910-	<i>Huon Times (Huon Valley News)</i>	HT/HVN	7,259	2000
7	1954–	<i>Island News</i>	IS	875	200
8	1983–	<i>King Island Courier</i>	KINC	1,719	1,000
9	1912–1989	<i>King Island News</i>	KINN	N/A	NA
10	1981–	<i>Lilydale Progressive</i>	LP	1,000	750
11	1909–	<i>North Eastern Advertiser</i>	NEA	7,097	2,900
12	1991–	<i>Rossarden Mountain re-echo</i>	RMR	100	80-90
13	1998–	<i>St. Helens Herald</i>	SH	750	250
14	1962–	<i>Valley and East Coast Voice</i>	VEC	700	300
15	1980–	<i>Western Tiers</i>	WT	10,000	2,000
16	1989–	<i>Zeehan Community News</i>	ZN	750	120

Table 1 Sample community newspaper locations, commencement dates and area population in 2000

Close up of the content analysis structure and its rationale

The research provides an insight across time in content pertaining to issues and interests of communities in Tasmania, an area of research that to date has not been formally investigated. It also allows innovation by the use of a content analysis framework constructed to contain conceptual and research-founded indicators of social capital. The framework structure is contained in the thesis (2005, p.105 or (<http://eprints.utas.edu.au/283/02/02Main.pdf>) and shown in Appendix A of this article. Appendix E 1 (2005) shows a table of simplified categories. The full framework categories, variables, codes and definitions are shown in E1 (2005). Content analysis code book, definitions and rationale table is in Appendix E 3 (2005). Social capital is most frequently examined through survey and interview techniques.

The content analysis framework was structured into three areas, *Identification*, *Description* and *Social Capital*. The social capital dimensions and their variables are shown as a multi-level path in Appendix B of this paper (McManamey 2005, P. 109). The four dimensions of social capital (2005, p.110) were: elements (theoretical), networks (structural), knowledge and identity resources, and Incorgov⁶ (both models from practice).

- The elements listed are conceptual foci arising from theoretical writings across the twentieth century: futuricity (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000), historicity (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000), inclusivity or inclusion/exclusion, (Loury, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986), reciprocity (Fukuyama, 1995), relationship building (Loury, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986; Cox, 1995), shared values (Halifan, 1916), participation in voluntary organisations (Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000), and vision (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000).
- The networks dimension consists of three components: social bonding, bridging (Coleman, 1990; Gittel & Vidal, 1998) and linking (Woolcock, 1998).
- The third dimension of social capital is knowledge and identity resources, from a model Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) derived from empirical data. Knowledge resources are knowledge 'of who, when and where to go for advice or resources and knowledge of how to get things done' (p. 105). Identity resources are persons 'being able to and willing to act for the benefit of the community and its members' (p. 105).
- The fourth dimension has been termed Incorgov and follows from the Woolcock and Narayan (2000) study. Woolcock and Narayan (2000) describe the synergy approach identifying social capital as the 'dynamic professional alliances and relationships between and within state bureaucracies and civil society' (p. 17). In arriving at this approach, Woolcock and Narayan cite six studies containing 36 indicators. These are synthesised and combined into 15 variables in the Incorgov category of the framework. The studies and the synthesised category variables used in the framework are shown in italics in Table 7 (p. 111).

An example of coding in the framework is show in Appendix D.

⁶ Incorgov is a heading derived from the amalgamation of indicators from research pertaining to the *synergy* approach (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000) involving individuals (I), community (C), organisations (OR), and government action (GOV) (McManamey,2005, p. 197).

What emerged from study findings?

The study findings will be presented in relation to each research question.

1. a *What community newspapers have been published in Tasmania in the period 1910 to 2000?* 1. b. *Does the geographic distribution of newspapers relate to changing demographic, economic and social factors?*

The largest proportion of community newspapers established over the century was independent community newspapers of geographic locale (56%). The growth rate of newspapers established between 1970 and 2000 was 330%. Also 94% of papers established were in rural areas and 73% of these were established by volunteer associations. The largest proportion (79%) of community newspapers in Tasmania have been established in periods of high out-migration and poor economic performance showing a possible relationship between community newspaper commencement and hard times.

The State Library of Tasmania (SLT) archives record 120 entries categorised as Tasmanian community newspapers published in the period 1910 to 2000. There are 85 independent newspapers reflecting community *of interest* and community *of geographic locale*. Of the 85 community newspapers, 67 (56%) are independent Tasmanian community newspapers *of geographic locale* that have been or were in production for over 12 months.

The largest proportion of community newspapers established over the century was independent community newspapers of geographic locale.

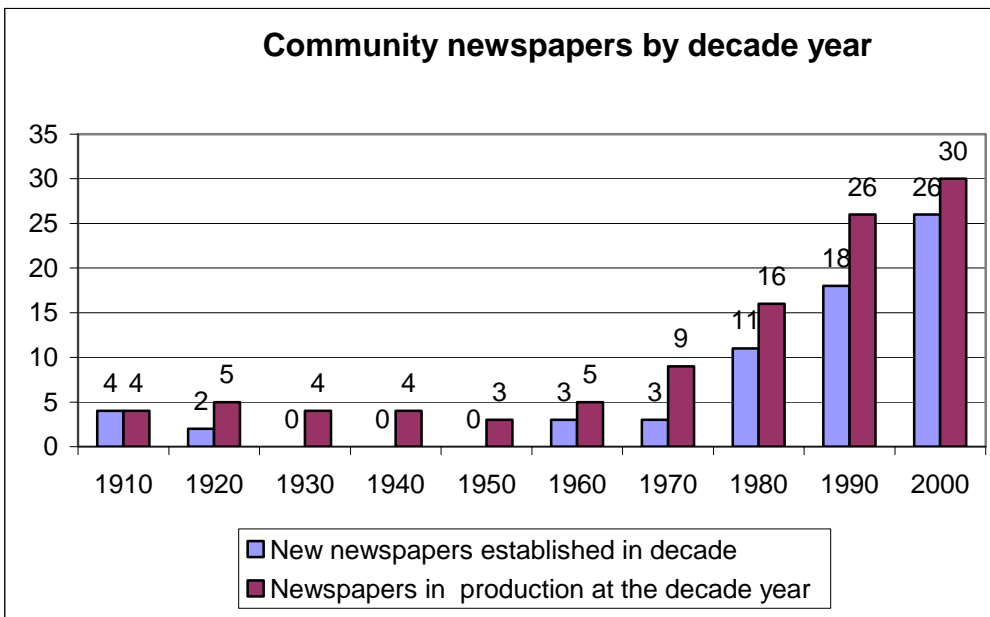


Figure 2 Number of community newspapers in production by decade year, 1910 to 2000

As shown in Figure 2, community newspaper numbers in Tasmania indicate increasing and strong growth in the last three decades of the twentieth century. The growth of new community newspapers established in Tasmania over the past three decades of the twentieth century is greater in proportion than that the proportions of community newspaper growth reported in the literature from the United Kingdom and the United States. While the increase in community newspaper numbers suggests an increasing civic involvement, community participation and a significant social trend at the grass-roots level, the findings in the current study suggest an unusual or perhaps undocumented trend underlying the establishment of community newspapers in Tasmania. Findings in the current study suggest that times of social and economic hardship draw communities together to build and affirm their identity through the publication of a community newspaper.

Figure 3 following contains diamond markers representing the year of establishment of all new independent community newspapers of geographic locale over the century. The position of each diamond is in relation to the right-hand axis, which indicates the number of newspapers established.

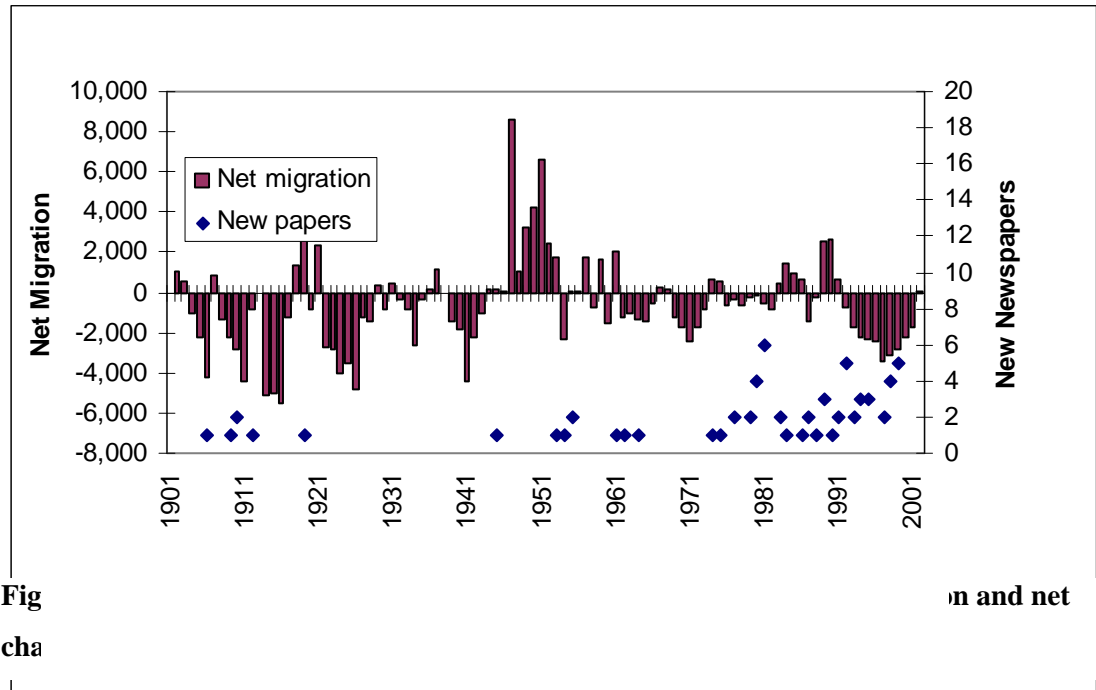


Figure3 Net migration patterns and introduction of community newspapers in Tasmania 1901 to 2001

Source: Jackson, N.O. (2004) *Tasmania's Population*, School of Sociology and Social Work, University of Tasmania (<http://www.taspop.tasbis.com>)

There is a possible relationship between net migration and numbers of new community newspapers. Their commencement dates are shown in Appendix B. Of the 67 newspapers established over the century, 53 (79%) were established in periods of net migration loss. It appears there is a weak negative correlation between the level of net migration loss and numbers of new papers established over the period 1906 (when the first paper *Circular Head*

Chronicle was established) and 1999 (when the most recent papers were established)⁷. However, when the ability of communities to publish is taken into account, and when only the period 1974 to 1994, when changes in technology impacted on the ability of communities to publish is considered, a stronger negative relationship between net migration and newspaper establishment⁸ is noted.

The current study identifies that hard times/difficult circumstances can frequently set in motion social capital resources and outcomes. Such circumstances can include the impact of Information Technology (IT) on the establishment of community newspapers in Tasmania in the later decades of the twentieth century, findings in the current study support a strong relationship between periods of net migration loss and the establishment of community newspapers. This fact links community action and empowerment directed towards establishing stronger cohesive structures in communities in times of population loss and in hard times.

Community newspapers established during periods of social and economic downturn represent the use of social capital resources to strengthen communities in Tasmania during these periods. The building of social capital as a response to difficult circumstances is documented in the literature. Bonfil (1994) notes that voluntary confraternities in thirteenth century Spain, forerunners of modern voluntary associations, sprang up to support community members 'under disparate and trying conditions' (p. 195). Further, the Migros cooperative established language schools in 1941, promoted cultural activities and published free community newspapers to establish communications and understanding between communities (Alderson, 1999). The editors' interviews provided examples of establishment of community newspapers (the *Rossarden Mountain Re-echo*, the *Brid rePort* and the *Devonport Times*) as a result of hard times.

This thesis suggests that there is a significant link between hard times/difficult circumstances and the establishment of community newspapers as an outcome of social capital. The theoretical relationship between 'hard times', sympathy and social capital has been discussed fully in McManamey 2005 b & 2006a.

2. a *What issues have been reported in community newspapers in Tasmania in the period 1910 to 2000?* 2. b *How have issues been presented?*

A change in pattern of content from 'of human interest' to 'community' occurred in the 1960 decade year, marking a major shift relating to production, tone, horizons and the role of the independent community newspapers. The social issues reported equally *goods and services* and *health/public and personal safety*. The increase in subjects in the social issues category was a key change over the century. Furthermore, over time major issues were addressed both in a covert and overt manner in content. In terms of being critical, mediatory or humorous, the content of community newspapers tended to be positive in their tone. Most notably, editors' contributions contained the highest proportion of positive content.

⁷ Pearson $r=-0.05912$

⁸ Pearson $r=-0.3$ correlation

The increase in variety of issues related to subject variables (McManamey, 2005, Appendix H 2) is also identified in the increase in the numbers of new newspapers and the variety of their focus seen in the wide number of community contributions. From another perspective, when information is drawn from a smaller field of experiences, the expectation is that the number of experiences would tend to be more homogeneous. Given the high proportions of global and international information from foreign correspondents reflecting overseas horizons in the decade years 1910 and 1940 in particular, there was an expectation of greater variation in social issues and subjects in the early decades compared with later decade years. This was not the case. Given that there were far more community organisations in the latter decades than in the early decades, numbers of subjects present in relation to social issues reflected the increased community activity in the latter decades (2005, Appendix H 2).

While findings show that community newspapers reflected the impact of the major socio-historical events and economic trends across the twentieth century, these events and trends are reflected in a covert rather than overt manner. What evolves from the content analysis and from the editors' interviews is that there is a covert manner of addressing issues, not only in relation to external happenings, but also apparent in addressing local issues. The mode of reporting issues is the result of a filtered and *sympathetic* (empathic, compassionate and understanding) response to community needs.

Covert support is identified in the findings related to how individual communities can be subtly sustained in difficult socio-economic circumstances through their community newspapers. The presence of jokes, quotes, and small humorous stories serves to lift community spirits. An example is given in the research study of a front page items from the *North Eastern Advertiser* on 26 July 1940 with no mention of the World War II events, but including a number of uplifting and innovative stories and reports.



Source: *North Eastern Advertiser*, 26 July 1940, p. 1.

From a historical perspective, it is not surprising that the highest levels of jokes, quotes and small humorous stories occurred in the Great Depression decade year, 1930. Findings from the content analysis of community newspapers and editors' interviews indicate that communities in the study reflect Tonnies' (1887) *Gemeinschaft* model of community interaction (that is, community of persons closely knit by strong sentiments based on kinship and spirit). Danielson and Larsorsa (1997) hold that studies on daily newspapers over the 100 years indicate a recurrent and often 'bewildering change' voiced in daily newspapers, which depict a world where deeply held values and beliefs are on the decline. Danielson and Larsorsa suggest this supports the view of the world moving from Tonnies' (1888)

Gemeinschaft to the notion of Gesellschaft (that is, a secular society loosely bound by impersonal interactions based on formal contracts and social functions). Tonnies' interpretation of social change may apply to major urban social structures, whereas social change in Tasmania over the period 1910 to 2000, evidenced through analysis of rural community newspaper content and editors' interviews, reflects developing and enduring networks that work to bind and develop community spirit in a period of growing global intransigence. This trend to a Gemeinschaft community model is supported by the growing number of community newspapers in Tasmania identified in the findings and represents a remarkable social trend in rural areas, based on strengthening communications between members, identity building, and increasing the avenues for voicing and addressing issues by local communities.

3. What is the relationship between community newspapers and social capital?

There is a necessary connection between public associations and newspapers: *newspapers make associations and associations make newspaper*; and if it has been correctly advanced that associations will increase in number as the condition of men become more equal, it is not less certain that the number of newspapers increases in proportion to that of associations. (de Tocqueville, 1840, Vol. 11. p. 135)

The findings showed that in Tasmania, between 1910 and 2000, 11.6% of community newspaper content reports or generates social capital (shown in Figure 4). Social capital content in community newspapers in Tasmania doubled over the twentieth century and this shows major increases in social capital in content between 1920 and 1930 and between 1980 and 2000. 73% of community newspapers were established by volunteer organisations related to increasing social capital. Participation in voluntary associations and year noted in content suggest a strong positive association ($r=0.853579361$) (McManamey 2005, p 200).

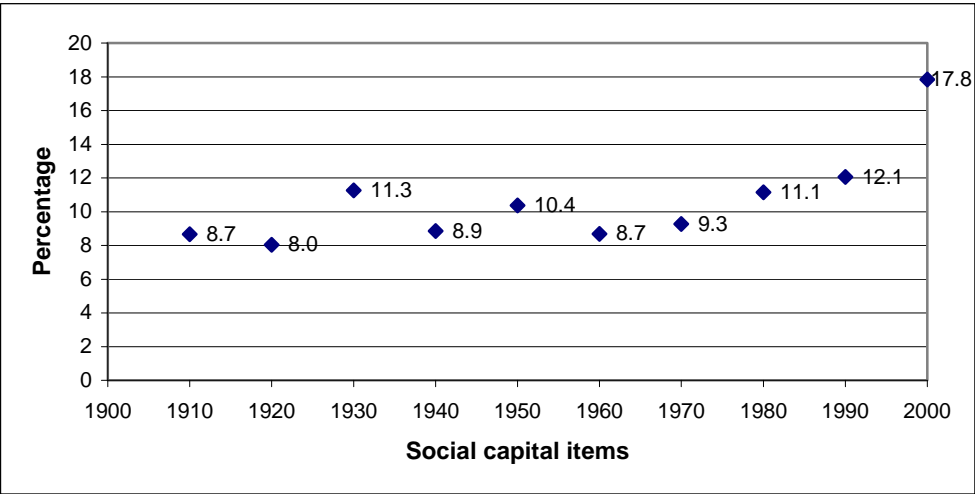


Figure 4 Proportion of social capital items in content of each decade year

The proportion of social capital content increases over time. It doubles between 1910 and 2000. A pattern of social capital items in community newspaper content over time is shown in Appendix O (McManamey, 2005) both as a

percent of social capital and a percent within each decade year. Figure 4 above also indicates that the level of social capital in content in 1930 was not overtaken till 1990. While social capital levels in content increase from 1960, the greatest increase in social capital in content is between 1980 and 2000.

The presence of community newspapers within communities can be argued as a proxy for social capital. They are primarily democratic and independent communications resulting from and engendering civic participation. They act as a proxy for social capital through the dynamics of their production team, through content and through the newspaper's continuity. Content analysis of community newspapers allows a view into what social capital is present within specific communities. This is quantifiable though dimensions and variables indicating community issues and interests. The implications of those variables or measurements, however, are of great benefit when applied to specific communities rather than when used as a comparative tool of assessment between newspapers, though they can also provide an indication of the types of and differences in social capital between newspapers. Great value lies in examining the quality of interactions within individual communities through noting which social capital variables are present and to what degree. While the content analysis does provide statistical data, it also provides a means of describing content related to social capital through coding definitions.

Summary of research findings

Question 1: Community newspapers in Tasmania

- The largest proportion of community newspapers established over the century were independent community newspapers of geographic locale (56%).
- Growth rates of 330% 1970-2000: 94% rural: 73% volunteer associations.
- Largest proportion (79%) Community newspapers in Tasmania have been established in periods of high out-migration and poor economic performance – weak negative and possible relationship between community newspaper commencement and hard times.

Question 2: Issues in community newspapers

- A change in pattern of content from 'of human interest' to 'community' occurred in the 1960 decade year, marking a major shift relating to production, tone, horizons and the role of the independent community newspaper.
- Social issues reported equally on goods and services and health/public and personal safety. Change over the century was the amount of subjects occurred was much larger at the end of the century than the early decades.
- Issues are addressed both in a covert and overt manner in content.
- Excluding neutral, the highest occurring tone associated with community newspaper content is positive of which Editors' contributions contain the highest proportion of positive content.

Question 3: Community newspapers and social capital

- 11.6% of the content of community newspapers in Tasmania from 1910 to 2000 can be identified as reporting or generating social capital.
- Social capital content in community newspapers in Tasmania doubled over the twentieth century.
- Major increases in social capital in content between 1920 and 1930 and between 1980 and 2000.
- 73% of community newspapers were established by volunteer organisations related to increasing social capital.
- Participation in voluntary associations and year noted in content suggest strong positive association ($r=0.853579361$).
- The study did not set out to prove or disprove the debate on diminishing resources of social capital. It suggests that increasing number of independent community newspapers both as grass-roots democratic voice and the levels of social capital in content from 1970 to 2000 in Tasmania, indicate that social capital appears to be increasing at the community level, refuting Putnum's argument of declining social capital.

Limitations

There were four distinct limitations within the research (McManamey, 2005a, 2005b):

- i. *Generalisability.* The study aims to explore the relationship between community newspapers and social capital through research and literature and by content analysis of a sample of community newspapers in Tasmania over the twentieth century. Tasmania is an island state, therefore a bounded geographic area. Differences between mainland Australian states and Tasmania have been reflected throughout the last century in respect to Tasmania's economic performance which is seen as poor in comparison with mainland states (Rae, 2003). Economic growth differences are paralleled by a low population increase from immigration and high levels of emigration, offset by natural increase. Tasmania's present demographic profile highlights an aging population (Jackson & Kippen, 2001; Campbell, 2003). A third difference between Tasmania and the mainland states is the higher proportion of population living outside major cities. While Tasmania may not be generalisable to other states of Australia, it could also be argued that Tasmania has experienced economic and demographic change over the twentieth century in line with reports on rural depopulation in both an Australian, and a global context (Kenyon & Black, 2001; Population Referencing Bureau, 2003). The study therefore may have relevance to other rural communities in Australia and internationally.
- ii. *Semi-structured interviews.* The size and emphasis of data from interviews with editors and community newspaper coordinators could be extended considerably. Time and focus on the content analysis data limited the development of what would be a fertile area for future investigation of social capital and communities.
- iii. *Classification.* While a number of definitions of community newspaper exist, this study has focused on independent community newspapers of geographic locale. This definition was chosen to explore social capital as 'a collective asset, a feature of communities' (Warren, Thompson & Saegert, 2001, p. 3). This is further discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5.
- iv. *Statistical analysis.* The thesis is a preliminary study exploring content analysis as a means of profiling social capital in written and visual text. The major focus in the content analysis was to build and derive suitable categories. Social capital is analysed and measured in content by using simple descriptive statistics in order to further understand the relationship between social capital and communities. Further investigation of the concept and methodology could employ more sophisticated statistical analysis techniques.

Future Agenda for Research

The current study suggests that processes of evaluation of social capital and the dimensions in which it occurs within documents will be a valuable, hitherto unutilized resource, for a wide number of research applications. The framework can be applied to a broad range of documents in order to examine social capital content in a historical or current context.

- *Social capital:* The current study is a case study of a bounded geographic area. Further investigations of the relationship between social capital and community newspapers could be performed based on a wider subject area, for example, rural regions of the mainland (Kenyon & Black, 2001).
- *Framework:* One area for the application of the content analysis framework analysis of social capital resources present in weekly/monthly newsletters is to analyse membership in larger organisations. Use of the framework offers a profile of social capital dynamics related to schools/companies/organisations. As a means of further qualifying social capital not only in textual content, the use of the four dimensions and their variables may provide a further framework for examining relational interactions.
- *Community development:* Comparative studies of the growth and implications of community newspapers in other areas of Australia could confirm and/or extend the findings from this study. Identification of patterns of establishment and publication of new community urban and rural newspapers in other Australian states to ascertain similarities to the Tasmanian case study would be valuable.
- Further qualitative research is needed to examine the dynamics within groups making up community newspaper production teams, and the relationship to social capital outcomes within the community. Such research would contribute rich data in relation to social capital, community needs and capacity building. Community enterprise and dynamics highlighted in the 2000 Saguaro conference, 'Better Together' were based on the same theme as in the United Nations Millennium Forum 2000. During the Millennium forum, the Secretary-General advised members to build on their communities and the great value in further exploration of undocumented community interaction. The focal swing to examine what is working and positive examples of social capital in communities (Kenyon & Black, 2001; Putnam, et al., 2003) shows a transition in research considering how outcomes of social capital can also build social capital.
- *Social history:* As Tasmania was the first Australian colony to obtain independent press in 1824, documentation of the history of independent community newspapers in Tasmania from 1910 to 2000 would be an important addition to social history research resources. The extent and value of resources within community newspapers are vastly underrated, and to-date has been ignored. Much social history lies untapped due to the small geographic audience for which it was first published.
- *Content analysis:* A major innovation of this study is that it has explored social capital resources using a tool of investigation that expands social capital inquiry to include a method other than survey and interview. The implications of applying content analysis as a major analysis tool to social capital, whether through the framework developed in this study or subsequent framework structures building from this study, will allow enormous stores of data, documentation, visual and multi-media information to be operationalised in the quest for understanding of causes (Glaeser, 2001) and implications (Woolcock, 1998) of the dynamics surrounding the concept of social capital.
- *Economic implications:* While the study did observe Tasmania-wide geographic patterns related to demographics, and social and economic change, it did not extend into a profile of economic factors within the areas of sampled community newspapers. The literature suggests that high levels of social capital have certain economic implications for the communities in which they are identified. By further examining economic

indicators applied to the locations where community newspapers report high levels of social capital, or as a comparison between newspapers, a further understanding of the 'cause and effect' dynamics within communities may be gained.

Implications of this study for practice and policy

By examining data from semi-structured interviews with editor/coordinators, and related to newspaper closures, a number of recommendations are made to ensure community newspaper continuity:

- Implement widespread support for production teams, help promote community publication networks, whereby a number of individuals sustain the newspaper in changing circumstances;
- Rotate roles of the production team to increase community learning and contribution to the newspaper's continuity;
- Negotiate with new or competing publications as to how to best serve community needs together by staggering publication dates, diversifying subject interests and focusing on specific needs or groups;
- In the instance of amalgamation or takeover by mainstream press, safeguard the outcomes of the publication by agreements;
- Establish a seminar/annual meeting/conference for shared experience between editors/coordinators/teams of independent community newspapers within the state. These meetings/seminars/conferences would act to support and further identify the social and cultural significance for smaller-population community newspaper production teams and offset the high percentage of newspaper closures.

Although it is noted in the literature that policy and legislation may contribute to the destruction of social capital, the current study suggests there is an area where policy can assist independent community newspapers maintain and build social capital, appropriate to the last dot point listed. Social capital is built in the process of producing community newspapers. Their establishment and continuity are based on community needs and contribution. Therefore outside support in any form would need to be sensitive to community structures (and non-intrusive of the cyclical reciprocity that is in place).

It would be of great value to give support to an independent community newspaper association, such as the newly formed Community Newspaper Association of Victoria (CNAV), where shared experiences and a collective store of information generated by editors and coordinators would accumulate. The establishment of an independent association would thus maintain the stores of social capital already in action, and further generate community social capital. This in turn may generate interest from other communities to establish a community newspaper, and so strengthen community bonds. Therefore the independent association would play an ongoing and strengthening role in developing the relationship between communities, community newspapers and social capital.

A united body for community newspapers could also engender further research interest from a broad number of disciplines and provide access more readily to obtaining data underpinning a most valuable and relatively unexplored

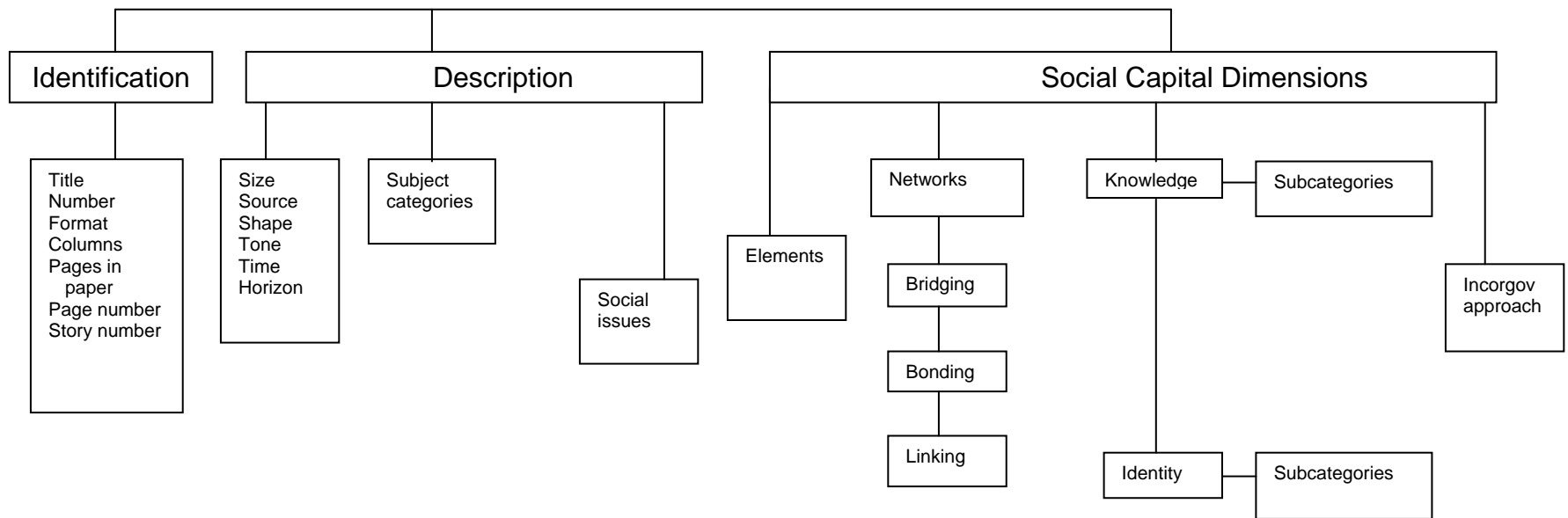
social phenomenon contributing to individual community sustainability and cohesion through changing modes of communications.

Conclusion

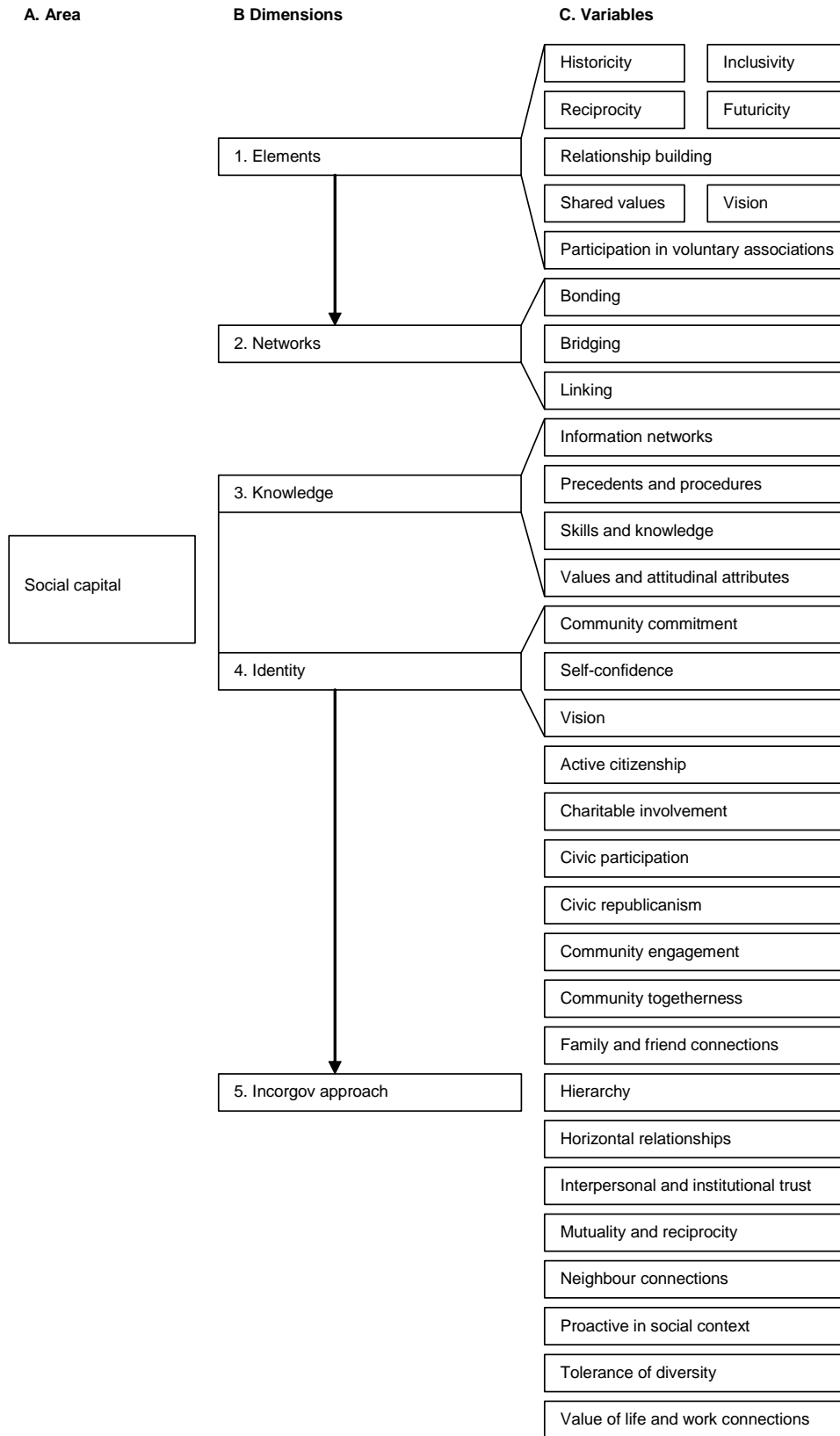
The study provides valuable insights into community dynamics and patterns of social capital. This has implications for community development practice and policy. The study contributed a new perspective to social capital research by devising a content analysis framework to explore both the quality and quantity of social capital. Unlike other social capital research, the framework provides a means of analysing historical data and profiling social capital by means other than interview and survey. This has implications for expanding future social capital research. There is a major lack of research and policy attention given to the processes and community cohesion brought about by community newspapers. The valuing of independent community newspapers that provide insights into socio-economic and political issues associated with geo-specific areas and rural issues in general are a means of far greater communicative discourse. Community newspapers stand as beacons of democratic deliberation in times of the growing discomfort over new legislation in Australia over cross-media ownership laws impacting and diminishing democratic deliberation. The combination of extending and perceiving one of mankind's oldest socialising ideals, social capital, through rapidly increasing numbers of small independent community newspapers to communicate, access and address social needs at a grass-roots level suggests new and vital areas of investigation ahead.

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Appendix A Content analysis areas and categories framework, simplified (McManamey 2005, p. 106)



Appendix B Content analysis social capital area, dimensions and variables:

A multi-level path (McManamey, 2005, p. 109)

BARRY AND MANN, (NICE) (1998)	NCCR (1999) NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CIVIC RENEWAL	VARSHNEY (1999)	ONYX & BULLEN (1997)	SUDARSKY (1998), BASED ON WORLD VALUES SURVEY	NARAYAN (1998)
GIVING CLIMATE	POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	INCLUSIVITY	PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL COMMUNITY	<i>INSTITUTIONAL TRUST</i>	DENSITY OF GROUPS
<i>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</i>	POLITICAL AND SOCIAL TRUST	SOCIAL TIES TRANSCENDING DIFFERENT COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES	<i>PROACTIVE IN SOCIAL CONTEXT</i>	<i>CIVIC PARTICIPATION</i>	HETEROGENEITY OF MEMBERSHIP
<i>CHARITABLE INVOLVEMENT</i>	ASSOCIATIONAL MEMBERSHIP		FEELING OF TRUST AND SAFETY	POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	<i>INTERPERSONAL TRUST</i>
SPIRIT OF VOLUNTEERISM	FAMILY INTEGRITY		NEIGHBOURHOOD CONNECTIONS	<i>MUTUALITY AND RECIPROCITY</i>	PARTICIPATION IN GROUPS
<i>ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP</i>	STABILITY		<i>FAMILY & FRIENDS CONNECTION</i>	<i>HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIPS</i>	VOLUNTEERISM
	CRIME		<i>TOLERANCE OF DIVERSITY</i>	<i>HIERARCHY</i>	HETEROGENEITY OF EVERYDAY SOCIAL INTERACTIONS
			<i>VALUE OF LIFE & WORK CONNECTIONS</i>	SOCIAL CONTROL	<i>COMMUNITY TOGETHERNESS</i>
				<i>INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY</i>	
				<i>CIVIC REPUBLICANISM</i>	

Appendix C Indicators from studies from which Incorgov variables were derived (McManamey 2005, p. 111)

Identification	Paper	CH
	Vol	3
	No	197
	Date	21.4.10
	Form	T Tabloid
	Pages in paper	4
	Col	7
	Page	2
	Item.	5
Description	Size	M Medium
	Source	S/UN/Staff/ Unacknowledged
	Shape	R report
	Subject	C Community
	Tone	P Positive
	Time	P Past
	Horizon	L Local
Social capital	Elements	SV Shared values
	Networks	BR Bridging
	Knowledge and identity	I Identity
	sub-categories	SC Self-confidence
	Incorgov	CT Community togetherness
	Effect	BO Building outcome

Tennis Club

The idea has been mooted to establish a Public/Tennis Club in Stanley, and a meeting has been convened to bring back the suggestion to fruition. In order to raise funds for laying out of a court, a grand concert was given in Shaw's Hall last Thursday evening by Stanley and Smithton talents, assisted by the Wayback Dramatic Club. There was a fairly large audience considering the super abundance of amusements that has been engaging public attention of late and the profit of over 5 pounds resulted. The concert was a big success, the programme being varied and every item received its due share of appreciation. Mr. A Penrose, acted as the chairman, and the programme contributed was as follows; -

Overture, Dorothy – Mrs Cowley; Song, A pack of Cards – Mr E Anthony;
 Cornet Duet – (triple tongue polka) Messrs Smith and Holmes;
 Song, Lullaby – Mrs C Smith; Recitation, Only a Tear – Miss Freeman;
 Song, Always in the Way – Miss L Anthony;
 Comic Song, Stick to me tight – Mr E Hazelwood (encored)
 Trombone solo, The Village Blacksmith – Mr Penrose; Piano solo, Gavotte, Miss Myra;
 Mouth Organ selection – Mr Godfrey;
 Duet, San Toy – Mrs Cowl and Miss C Smith;
 Miss M Wilkins and Mars Cowley manipulated the accompaniments.

The chairman, after thanking the people for their patronage, intimated that a public meeting would be held shortly to form the club, and it was anticipated a strong membership would be enrolled.

The entertainment concluded with the production of the amusing farce "Sour Grapes". It went off splendidly, each part being splendidly sustained, and the costumes of the principals added to the merriment. The general get up was excellent. The characters were ably taken by: Mr F G Hargraves as Ephraim Bateman (a man with a jealous wife). Mr A W E K Grubb as Jonathan Waddell (his bachelor wife). Miss M Wilkins as Miss Dorothy Snooks (a meddler) Mr Alan Young, (maid of all works). The piece was most amusing and sent the audience home in a thoroughly good humour. A dance held subsequently was very well attended. The proceeds from the concert and the dance were about 7 pounds.

It is probable the Dramatic Club and a party of entertainers will give a concert at Forest shortly in aid of the same object.

Source: *Circular Head Chronicle*, 21 April 1910, p 2.

Appendix D Item and coding example of content framework

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