Does Our Amazing Place build community resilience?

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ABSTRACT

Objective
The objective of this research was an evaluation of Our Amazing Place Treasure Hunt Events held in Unsworth Heights in the North Shore of Auckland and Massey in the West of Auckland respectively. The research focused on the question “Does Our Amazing Place build community resilience?”.

Methods
During the event participants were asked to fill out an evaluation form of their experience of the event and to provide some demographic data

Results
The statistics showed participants rated fun/fitness activities as the most enjoyable activity of the event. Secondly, they experienced a greater connection to their community in terms of becoming more aware of what their community had to offer and a high percentage of participants said they would continue connecting to their community after the event. Results also showed that a high percentage of participants engaging in the event lived locally and over eighty percent of participants rated the event between 8 and 10 out of 10.

Conclusion
We identified some important patterns and themes that contribute to the building of community resilience if implemented within a community development framework. We also found that that the Our Amazing Place Treasure Hunt event is grounded in sound community development principles as it attempts to build connectedness and social capital within communities thus building community resilience in the process.
INTRODUCTION

On a late summer afternoon we found ourselves in a neighbourhood that was unknown to us and it was our first visit and yet we were welcomed visitors. We were there to help as volunteers for the inaugural Unsworth Heights Our Amazing Place Treasure Hunt (OAP). What greeted us was an excited and engaged community organising themselves into teams, gearing to take off and with great anticipation for what lay ahead. And indeed what actually lay ahead was their own community, streets, pathways and parks, often hidden from consciousness, transformed into greeting stations with everyone wearing a friendly welcome smile.

Our Amazing Place Community Treasure Hunt is both a process and a community event based on an original “treasure hunt” event run by Transition Towns in Pt Chevalier in 2009 and developed and “tool-boxed” by Violence Free Waitakere, a West Auckland Community organisation, The event is aimed at cultivating a greater sense of community identity and belonging.

“It gives individual communities across New Zealand the opportunity to both discover and showcase their treasures should it be their services, places, historic icons, and other unique and special factors available within that community. It creates an event for the whole family to have with the community, in the community. To create a collaborative model that can be adapted by any other community and run to achieve similar outcomes” (Violence Free Waitakere, 2012).

Our Amazing Place Treasure Hunt is a community event where people spend 2-3 hours following a series of trails exploring the ‘treasures’ of the community. “These treasures may include unique parts of the community landscape, community resources, and small and large projects that are happening in the community” (Violence Free Waitakere, 2012).

The day comprises of mini events, special tasks, information or refreshments and a fun-filled day for families. The participants work in teams and are issued with a map and passport. The local participatory organisations and businesses that man-the-stations on the map route, have activities for people to involve themselves in, to earn their passport stamp, examples may include; playing volleyball, planting trees, participating in games or quizzes. The events' ideas have come from the local community themselves. Prizes, which have been donated from local community, are distributed at the end of the event at a gathering such as community BBQ or picnic.

An event like Our Amazing Place is not simply organised for a community to enjoy a fun day out, it has an underpinning philosophy, built on principles of asset-based community development and it endeavours to build and sustain positive social capital. It provides an opportunity to cultivate community networking and socialising and for local organisations and groups to showcase themselves within the community. The event has a capacity focus on neighbourhoods and a core intention is to develop and foster foundations for increasing community resilience.

The Our Amazing Place event is structured in a way which allows for local organisations, community places, and “treasures” to be showcased to participants so that social interaction, acquiring local knowledge about community assets, and bringing people together to experience
what their local community is all about happens in an organic and fun way. The event organisers provide a treasure map where each location has an activity to do, requiring participants to partake in an activity were they learn about their community in an interactive and fun medium.

The two neighbourhoods, Massey and Unsworth Heights, that we have examined for our research are framed by their own unique composition of demographics. This research will describe their key demographic elements such as who lives in these areas, what ages they are, ethnicity, salary spectrums etc. We will also be exploring current literature in relation to what is already known about community resilience. Resilience within a community is often referred to during or just after a disaster but in fact there are many different types of resilience and in fact there are new emerging resilience factors globally. Our research intends to describe and quantify the question “Does ‘Our Amazing Place’ build community resilience?”

**A statement of orientation**

As Researchers, we are a diverse group holding different worldviews but what we have in common is that we are keen community developers and new researchers. Our group was interested bearing witness to two events that perpetuate our community development framework of ecological and social justice principles.
What is “Community”?

The Oxford Dictionary definition is “a body of people or things viewed collectively” or “the generality of people; the people as a group” (“community”, 2012). Tesoriero (2010) talks of the difficulty of defining the term ‘community’ and says that Bell & Newby (1971) found 98 definitions. He says the descriptions are both evaluative and normative and that by evaluative he means value-laden and by normative, he means, what are the implied norms or rules.

Willmott (1989) (as cited in Twelvetrees, 2008) defines community as having two parts. First communities can be either of a geographical nature or be ‘communities of interest’, where the link between people is something other than locality. Secondly, there is both attachment and interaction between members of a community. Twelvetrees (2008) also says there is something real but intangible about a ‘sense of community’. He describes this as “feelings of solidarity, sharing, and help make life worth living, especially when times are hard”. He finally offers ‘community’ as “a form of social organisation with the following five related characteristics: human scale, identity and belonging, obligations, Gemeinschaft, culture”.

Dominelli talks of entities rather than parts, “communities are fluid and constantly changing entities grounded upon ties that are based on geography, sometimes conceptualised as virtual space; interests; and/or identity” (2007). With this definition there is an acknowledgement that ‘community’ changes and is possibly adaptable. Ife & Tesoriero. (2006) strengthen this idea:

“Each community comes with its own uniqueness and is determined by so many factors such as the demography, political, economic and cultural determinants and these factors also change over time, with this in mind there is not one community the same as another and communities do not remain the same” (p54),

In this project we are primarily concerned with geographical communities, but recognise that geographical communities are connected to each other and world, by communities of interest. Communities themselves should build and define ‘community’ using their own constructs and determinants, as each community situation is entirely unique.

A community development approach

A handbook cannot be given for determining exact pathways for community development workers from one project to another however community development principles can be, applied guidelines, to determining the integrity of the process. To facilitate with this Ife and Tesoriero highlight that we can locate ourselves within various community settings by using “process principles of community development.” (Pg. 175) Twelvetrees supports this by saying “community development work can be described, first, as a set of values and, second as a set of approaches linked to those values” (2008, pg. 11).

At the heart of Our Amazing Place are both good community development skills and values. The process endeavours to develop community building which in turn helps to create social capital. The work is grounded in the processes of change from below and the belief in valuing local
knowledge, resources, skills and culture. According to Mendes (1998), in order for a community project to succeed it must be done in such a way that the people involved and the community as a whole are empowered by the process. He believes the way to achieve this, the people must be encouraged to take control of the project themselves and from this process they can learn that they indeed can have more control over their community and their lives.

Community resilience can be seen to be developed with a greater understanding of who's who in the community and who is doing what and, as Ife & Tesoriero (2006) say, contributes to bringing people together for a common cause, wedded to their community, engaged in their own processes and no-one is left out of the decision-making. The resilience can be built through the community itself, the local people creating their own local support systems and, “such an approach can help to persuade members of a community that they may actually have the knowledge necessary to work on their particular issues, and this can be a first step towards action for change”, Ife & Tesoriero (2006).

Our Amazing Place as an event is determined by the local community, it is the community itself that decides the when, where, who and what of each event. The community often collaborates with local agencies and networks and these relationships help mobilise the event. Endorsements from the event organisers claim that OAP is indeed achieving these outcomes, “Of course the main treasure that people discover is their own community and each other” (Richelle Kahui-O’Connell, 2011) and “We know this is a great way of bring a community together” (Tracy Winther, 2011).

**Resilence**

Our Amazing Place endeavours to create an environment where resilience can develop. In questioning how Our Amazing Place might foster resilience we need to first define ‘resilience.’

The Oxford dictionary definition of resilience is “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness” Oxford English Dictionary, 2012). Implied here are several constructs. Firstly, there is an exposure to a form of risk - an experience of what we define as ‘difficulties’ or ‘tough times’. Secondly, there is the prevalence rate - is the risk or difficulty a one off, is it infrequent or does it occurred at regular intervals? Lastly, is the theory that there must be an adaptation or ‘recovery’ from adversity. In this definition, resilience capacity is described as a recovery which is ‘quick’ it could also be described as the ability to ‘get back’ or ‘bounce back’.

In community terms we need to develop an understanding of resilience as a “contextually and culturally embedded construct” (Unger, 2012) by this we mean that every community is unique and will have its own unique identity, processes and resilience characteristics and how it functions will be a response to these characteristics. Broadening out the term ‘resilience’ we can examine it in sub categories, which include community disaster resilience, everyday community resilience, resilience to climate change and resource depletion and indigenous resilience definition.
Community disaster resilience

Examining a community responding to a disaster their resilience will be about how well prepared they were before an event, how they cope in the immediate aftermath and also how in the longer term a community can begin to get back to ‘normal’ functioning life. During the recent disasters in Japan the active fostering of community solidarity and strength has been highlighted as a key beneficial factor, “disaster management and effective preparedness and response was heavily reliant on networks and community solidarity” (Nagle, 2012). The community’s resilience response will be about their ability to respond to change and whether this event is a one-off or if there are persistent further threats.

Individual capacity is paramount to the community recovery also, Windle says, “resilience is the process of negotiating, managing and adapting to significant sources of stress or trauma. Assets and resources within the individual, their life and environment facilitate this capacity for adaptation and ‘bouncing back’ in the face of adversity” (as cited in Ungar, 2011, p).

Everyday community resilience/socio ecological systems

Unger (2012), however, critiques the “dominant view of resilience as something individuals have rather than as a process that families, school, communities, governments facilitate,” suggesting instead an ecological perspective to resilience that is not reduced to an individual abilities. Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker (2000) also point to this personal traits versus a dynamic process argument. Ego-resiliency is a construct developed by Jeanne and Jack Block (1980) (as cited in Luthar et al) that reflects the idea that an individual may possess a set of traits, which allow for “general resourcefulness and sturdiness of character and flexibility of functioning in response to varying environmental circumstances.” Early research around resilience suggests that it is reduced by “multiple adverse conditions such as socioeconomic disadvantage and associated risks, parental mental illness, maltreatment, community violence, urban poverty and catastrophic life events” (Luthar, et al, 2000). These studies were focused around the hypothesis that resilience was based on personal qualities, but as research progressed a linkage to the social-ecological system emerged as a principle to resilience.

The Resilience Alliance (2008) talks of resilience in terms of our relationship to our environment around us. Their philosophy in relation to resilience is around our connection to the social-ecological system – linked systems of people and nature. They define ‘social-ecological system’ as “a multi-scale pattern of resource use around which humans have organised themselves in a particular social structure (distribution of people, resource management, consumption patterns, and associated norms and rules).” (Resilience Alliance, 2008) A community is defined as one of the “scales” in the pattern. Thus it is understood that the foundation of community resilience is the building blocks of positive social connections, and that through better social capital building we are actually preventing the occurrences of crime and violence, which in turn fosters safer and more active communities in the long term.

Further, according to Luthar et al (2000) the:

“focus of empirical work also has shifted away from identifying protective factors to understanding underlying protective processes. Rather than simply studying which child, family,
and environmental factors are involved in resilience, researchers are increasingly striving to understand how such factors may contribute to positive outcomes.”

*Climate change and resource depletion community resilience*

Climate change and the effects of resource could provide the series of repeated shocks that undercut individual and community resilience. With the intensifying momentum of information and studies around climate change, resource peaks and inevitable economic crisis’s there has been a growing trend of communities using collective responses at grass-roots level to prepare themselves for the challenges that may lay ahead.

The ideas and values of sustainability form part of ecological principles that underpin good community development. It means holding an awareness that the work you are carrying out is, where possible, sustainable and includes that the use of non-renewable resources is minimised, outputs to the environment are minimised e.g. pollution and that where possible recycled materials are used. Ife & Tesoriero (2006) also believe that another important feature of sustainability is that growth must be limited. If a structure or event requires growth to maintain it, then that in itself is unsustainable. They believe it is important for communities to accept the philosophy that ‘small is beautiful’ and that in fact attaining balance, harmony and equilibrium is a critical ecological perspective.

Today, there are communities who are using and building resilience together, to form a basis that will have them prepared for some of the inevitability of these combined crises. The international Transition Towns movement is an example of community’s preparing by organising themselves towards being ready for these challenges. Their philosophy is one of:

“proactively creating a positive vision of their communities in a world with less cheap abundant energy, changing climate and a changed social, environmental and economic environment. Whilst this process is informed by anticipating what particular risks or threats may be present in that community, the focus will be on creating the world we would like to see for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren” (Transition Towns, 2009).

They believe that settlements and communities presently lack the resilience, to enable them to weather the severe energy shocks that will accompany peak oil and their goal is about collective action and now.

*Indigenous resilience definition.*

So far our discussion has ignore the cultural energies that contribute to resilience. Māori resilience has a direct connection to Māori identity, cultural practice, values and the Māori worldview. Within the New Zealand context these views also have a framework of demographic and historical factors.

Dorie (2005) discusses Māori resilience with a context of Māori endurance and specifically as a testimony to progress and an expression of the effort needed to steer a steady course. He further notes that resilience celebrates strength of purpose, determination, the capacity for adaptation and a propensity for turning adversity into accomplishment. Hudson (2008) believes
the interpretation also requires “need for a sound understanding of Māori philosophy and an equally sound appreciation of contemporary Māori aspirations.”

Issues of Pasifika resilience also need to be part of our resilience overview. Research shows that Pasifika resilience is connected to belief systems. Belief systems for Pasifika people include but is not limited to family values, spiritual values and cultural values; “which give authority to moral, ethical and behavioural precepts that underpin not only individual identity but also a sense of wellbeing and social cohesion”, (Waldegrace, King, Maniapoto, Tamasese, Parsons, Sullivan, 2011).

Identifying causes of erosion of Community resilience

To identify the different aspects of what makes a community resilient, it is necessary to take a brief look into what causes community erosion. Here we focuses on one community development theory that identifies what causes community erosion (Social Disorganisation theory) and how the corresponding model of community development, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), seeks to re-build strong and empowered communities. In addition it will be outlined in the final section, how OAP uses ABCD to inform it’s philosophical position when attempting to build resilience in communities.

Communities, which are characterised by low capital investment, are not adequately funded, and have high percentage of crime within their neighbourhoods are identified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2001) as being predominantly located in low socio-economic environments that eventually leads to weak social capital in communities.

“It is argued that the lack of social networks and social ties in a neighborhood marked by high crime, single-headed households, high unemployment, poor housing, and the prevalence of illicit drugs results in a neighborhood that is lacking in the traditional definition of social capital. This lack of social capital leads to what some scholars call “social disorganization.” These are the communities and neighborhoods that lack the necessary social networks necessary to support and engender positive social behavior, i.e., that behavior encouraged by society for the peaceful and productive maintenance of social order.” (Coleman, 1988) as quoted in Payne (2006).

Social Disorganisation theory

Social Disorganization theory studies the lack of positive social capital and the link to the deterioration of negative social behaviors such as violent behavior and delinquency. For example it was found that ‘shifts in capital investments in urban communities that were once well-to-do neighborhoods but have had capital investment withdrawn, are no longer seen as the place to live and people move to the outer city where there are more developments and higher standards of living, such as spacious living arrangements. As capital investment is pulled out of the neighborhood the affects are that house prices drop, businesses close down and the neighborhood becomes a place for disadvantaged minority populations who can only afford cheap rent and low paid jobs as their means of livelihood. This vacuum creates a concentration of poverty and low social capital, characterized by youth violence and delinquency, with the
overall affect of disempowering neighborhoods from realizing their community goals’ (Wilson, 1987 as quoted in Payne 2006). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2001)

“When economic investment and positive social capital are lacking in a community what results is the building of negative social capital (crime, gangs, and violence) because of the resulting lack of opportunities for young members to fulfill their needs for positive social identity. Risk factors indicating negative social capital include but are not limited to; living in a deprived low socioeconomic environment, isolation of family members from positive social interaction (anti-social behavior), weak ties to conventional peers, ties to anti-social or delinquent peers, and risky lifestyles where carrying a gun (in America), drug abuse and promiscuous sex are the normal behaviors youth engaged in. These conditions can be attributed to the social development and behavior of youth, who produce violent behavior”.

The above discussion on disadvantaged communities has highlighted the need for community development approaches to address issues that cause the erosion of social and economic capital in struggling communities. There is a need to re-establish or create new social capital based around a process of development that empowers people and creates a positive identity. Asset Based Community Development attempts to engage with communities using community development theory and a model that encourages community participation in all areas of development from design through to completion of projects and the continued ongoing maintenance needed to sustain health community.

**Asset Based Community Development and building resilience capacity**

Payne, (2006) argues that building of social capital alongside economic capital is the objective of Asset Based Community Development. One without the other will not be sufficient in building a self-reliant and self-sustaining community structure. He outlines that through social capital building and economic capital building a community can become resilient to the crisis and problems emerging in economically and politically difficult times. This view of community development sees that for community resilience to take place there first needs to be “informal social control” characterised by the notion of neighbourhoods trusting, having mutual dependence and supporting one-another in order to lessen the effects of transitory mobile communities. The critical point of ABCD is to re-establish a “collective efficacy” to bring positive change for the common good, into a community that is struggling with the effects of social disorganisation, as already discussed in the previous section.

Traditionally, government and non-government social services organisations used the needs analysis model to assess what the community needed. A needs analysis focuses on the community deficits, for example poor housing, drug abuse or youth violence and determines what needs to done for the community. One of the effects of this method is dependency of the community on outside help for ongoing survival to meet required needs and the focus on all the negative aspects of a community, without looking for the strengths of the same community, leaves a disempowered neighbourhood without the ability to help themselves. In other words, the community becomes the customer of the organisations and social services agencies who
provide services to these customers resulting in them being seen as the only source of help. In effect this creates a power imbalance where the recipient of the service is dependent on the service provider for all their needs. If their service provider’s funding ceases to exist, then the community is left to again fend for themselves after being dependent on the provider for a length of time, but without having learned new survival strategies.

**The Process of Asset Based Community Development**

**Figure 1.**

![Example of Asset-Mapping for community engagement](image)

From *Adopting Asset Mapping in Urban Ward in Madurai City* (Rengasamy, 2009)

In contrast to the needs analysis model, ABCD attempts to build empowered community by focusing on assets already embedded within the community. The diagram above/below shows one way of conceptualising the potential assets of a community. Individuals, associations and
institutions are the community’s social capital, while the two areas represent economic and environmental capital. Kretzmann, & McKnight (1993) suggest that when people are willing to invest themselves and resources into their neighbourhood then effective community development can take place. For this reason, the ABCD model seeks to strengthen neighbour-to-neighbour relationships by facilitating the identification and mapping of local community assets and resources through mutual co-operation of neighbours to build and expand their community resources.

“The ABCD model of community development uses Asset Mapping as a tool to bring people together in the community by linking local people using horizontal power relationships with associations and organisations based in the neighbourhood. Asset mapping is the process by which local community can identify and assess their human resources, local associations and local institutions for the development of social capital in their community. Each of the above levels of social capital is mapped with the corresponding abilities, skills and resources which are identified as useful for building current and future requirements for the community,” (Payne, 2006).

The process of ABCD is based on the values of local participation, connectedness and co-operation between all the levels of social capital to pool together and contribute their capacities to bring positive change for their community and thus building social ties in the process. The relationships built through the process of asset mapping are theorised by this model as strengthening the local social capital of the community and at the same time mobilising economic capital around the community that, most importantly, has been identified and activated by the people themselves (see figure 1, above, as an example of resources that might be identified in an asset mapping process).

In summary,

“this model provides an opportunity for local residents to get together to find solutions using the assets they already have, thus keeping ownership and control of their own goals and vision with the support of government, local institutions and organisations in an equably co-operative manner with the goal of building social capital and empowering local residents,” (Green, & Goetting, 2010).

**Building Community resilience**

Violence Free Waitakere (VFW) is West Auckland community organisation that delivers programmes that aim to prevent all aspects of violence within the community by using a one hundred percent prevention strengths-based focus. As set up by VFW, Our Amazing Place (OAP) uses the ABCD model of community development as a theoretical stance when working with neighbourhoods. OAP aims to connect people to services and resources with the objective of building social capital within neighbourhoods.

The Waitakere Violence Free Mission Statement 2012, states:

“Our work increasingly focuses on renewal. We promote alternatives to violence and the prevention of violence, but there is more to it than that. Our objectives are not
focused on the restoration of “normality” nor solely the promotion of strategies to avoid harm, but on the renewal of communities, the discovery of the potential within – what it’s actually like when violence is no longer grimly present.”

McKnight (2012) says that for too long, neighbourhoods put their faith in outside professional organisations to provide safe and healthy living conditions for families but despite the involvement of large professional organisations, neighbourhoods are still dangerous and sometimes unhealthy places to raise a family. This is in spite of all the good work the police do to provide safe neighbourhoods and hospitals to provide health care for citizens. According to McKnight (2012), it is at the level of citizen involvement that these organisations are lacking.

If citizens are actively involved in the building and shaping of their communities this active involvement produces social capital, which strengthens, neighbourhood ties, and empowers them to grow their own assets. This approach sees that all communities have strengths and by mapping the community’s assets we focus on the ‘haves’ rather than the ‘have not’s’. ABCD is a strengths-based approach to community development, which brings together the individual skills, local institutions, and organisations of a particular community to enhance the competency and capabilities of the neighbourhood to help themselves.

“Through the co-operation of local government and support from local organisations and institutions a community neighbourhood can use what they have, (individual skills, supportive organisations/institutions) to get what they don’t have. Neighbourhood health and safety can be greatly enhanced when organisations seek this kind of civil involvement and active participation in co-creating safer violent free communities,” McKnight (2012).

As Our Amazing Place is modelled after the ABCD model of community development it focuses on the existing assets of a community and connects neighbourhoods to these resources with the intention of building collective consciousness within the community. It is theorised by Our Amazing Place that through a fun-filled day where local residents get to familiarise themselves with their local institutions, organisations and natural treasures, opportunities will be created where people can begin to develop social connections with these agencies and create new possibilities for future developments.

**Our two event communities - background and demographic information**

*Massey Community.* In 2011, 'Massey Matters', a local community development organisation in West Auckland, were the lead event organiser in collaboration with Violence Free Waitakere. The event was co-sponsored by Community Waitakere. There was some funding for the event provided through Auckland City and Violence Free Waitakere.

*Unsworth Heights* In 2012, on the North Shore of Auckland, Unsworth Heights held their Our Amazing Place event that grew out of their local Meadowood Community House. The guiding group for this event was a group of local residents and they worked under guidance from Violence Free Waitakere. The event was held on Neighbours Day Aotearoa.

The Area Profiles for both Massey and Unsworth Heights are shown below (figure 2). They identify, firstly, the low socio-economic status of both communities, and particularly Massey.
Key indicators are low incomes, low levels of tertiary achievement and housing ownership. The demographic profiles also identify the cultural diversity of both communities.

Another way of reviewing socio-economic status is to use the decile rating system designed by the Ministry of Education to assess “the extent to which [a school] draws its students from low socio-economic communities” (Ministry of Education, 2011). The ratings are from 1 to 10, with “10” being most affluent. The decile rating for each community (4 for Massey and 7 for Unsworth Heights) are amongst the lowest in their wider environments of North Shore and Waitakere.
METHOD

Methodology
The data collection method that was selected was a questionnaire. Using both quantitative and qualitative questions means our research method philosophy sits firstly within positivist-analytical area as a research paradigm. The three key elements of this approach are empiricism, objectivity and quantification. A “distinguishing feature of the positivist-analytic perspective is the reliance on probability theory to draw conclusions from the data rather than assume absolute certainty.” (Clare, 2003, p173). However we also agree with Wood’s (1999) post-positivism that “there is not one truth, not one single explanation of anything, but many overlapping truths operating at different levels and constantly subject to change” and honour this by including qualitative questions and seeking understanding of how things are, rather than causal proof of relationships.

With the different methods of gathering the data both qualitative and quantitative, this will offer different perspective of the results, this method is called triangulation. It tells more than one part of the story e.g. our quantitative data tells us for example that 10% of participants in Unsworth were Māori and 23% in Massey but our qualitative data tells us not only that fitness and fun were the activities they enjoyed the most, but something of the quality of that enjoyment.

The data gathered was to be used for three key evaluation purposes. These included Formative Evaluation work; ideas around developing the project, what worked well and what didn’t work, were there any unforeseen results, good or bad, how can we measure the success of the event? Process Evaluation; planning, resources, budgeting, etc. and this information is gathered for the purposes of knowing how to repeat the event again and at other locations e.g. future planning? Outcome Evaluation; assessing and measuring how well the event went, whether objectives were achieved, did community building/networking occur, was it a fun day out, did people want to do it again, was community resilience enhanced?

Participants
The expected participants of the event included for example residents, people who worked in the area, played sport in the area, were visiting friends, were part of a community organisation, did volunteer work or had children who went to school there. A wide mix of ages and ethnicities is expected. We were expecting anywhere between 25 –100 teams at each event. Completing the questionnaire was voluntary.

The event is constructed in such a way that participants are given a passport to have a stamp/sticker put in their passports after the completion of an activity at each station. There are some ‘compulsory’ stations and the VFW evaluation station was one such station, and as it is also the last station of the day, the participants experience of the event is, hopefully, fresh in their minds and bodies. The participants were keen to hand the evaluations in, in order to get another stamp in their passports and completing their passport made the participants eligible for the prizes.
Our aim was to survey everyone who participated in doing or completing the event. We hoped to give an evaluation form to one team member (to fill in on behalf of the team) from each team. A ‘team’ may have constituted 1-10 people. At the Massey Heights event there was an adult’s questionnaire and a team questionnaire. At Unsworth Heights there was an adults questionnaire and one for children. More than one child from a team could complete the child’s survey.

**Procedures**

The research procedure method was a questionnaire. It generated qualitative and quantitative information. Open and closed questions were included and there was a rating (1, no fun at all – 10, wonderful day) question. The questionnaire took between 2-5 minutes to complete and participants wrote their answers while standing at the evaluation station and then handed them in to volunteers manning the station.

Reasons for choosing a questionnaire format would of included: The Our Amazing Place event attracts a large number of participants for a relatively short period of time, it was written, it was able to be completed by all participants who could write, most people are familiar with a questionnaire format/s and therefore providing the information was relatively uncomplicated, a questionnaire only takes a short amount of time to complete (e.g. under ten minutes), the issues to be covered are well defined and it would suit the participants who were just coming for the event and would not be known to us afterwards. The questionnaire was structured in a way (a mix of scale questions, qualitative questions and quantitative questions) that allowed the capture of not only the demographics of the participants, giving us quantitative data which allowed us to see patterns of data around groups e.g. gender but with the qualitative data we could see and measure variability and differences, it also privileged organisers to the knowledge and stories of the participants personal experience of Our Amazing Place.

Choosing a questionnaire with both qualitative and quantitative questions maximises the coverage of all the information that we needed for our research project, particularly for the outcome evaluations. The quantitative questions covered the demographic information of the participants for both the Unsworth Heights OAP event and the Massey OAP event. In addition, as our research will be comparing these two separate events for possible indicators that build community resilience, the demographic information will be necessary for us to determine demographic patterns which can be studied immediately after the event, for a snapshot of the participants, and over time as more Our Amazing Place events are initiated. The demographic information collected also provides statistics for future Our Amazing Place development strategies.

The questionnaire also has qualitative questions that have been designed to gather the emotional, social and personal impact of Our Amazing Place on the participants. The qualitative questions provide more in-depth information, which will inform our research about what participant’s liked, and what they thought could be improved. These answers will give us valuable feedback to inform our research when comparing what participants experienced on the day to building community resilience in neighbourhoods. The qualitative questions ask the participants to write a short sentence describing a particular experience on the day, which can
be compared with other participant’s experiences and will be used to create results that will be categorised and evaluated for our research hypothesis.

An example of this type of qualitative questioning includes; what did you like the most about today’s event? What particular activities did you like? Information gathered in this way helps document the process and again provides suggestions for future improvements for upcoming OAP events. Our Amazing Place organisers will get necessary evidence for not only any alterations but also confirmation about which aspects of the event went well and what needs development to improve the quality of the event. This information will also be used to create evaluations of OAP events, and will help promote the programme to future potential interested neighbourhoods.

Slightly different versions of the questionnaire were used in the two OAP sites. In Unworth Heights adults and children filled in individual questionnaires, whereas in Massey one team questionnaire was filled for each team. The Unsworth Heights allowed for a more fine grain analysis, but it was a challenge to catch all the participants. The Massey approach allowed for greater coverage.

Ethical issues
The application to the Ethics Committee for Ethics Approval was completed when the first Our Amazing Place evaluation took place. We were able to use this same approval for the ongoing collection of data using the same forms and at the same event (Our Amazing Place). The information from the questionnaire was confidential.

There was no personal or identifying information gathered. However there is an option at the end of the questionnaires for people to give their contact details if they wish to hear from either VFW or the organizing groups of the event. It is not sensitive information. No information sheet was required. The researchers did not hold the data collected.

Analysis
The questionnaire data has been entered into spreadsheets. A descriptive quantitative analysis has been done on the quantitative data and the qualitative data where this has been broken down into categories. The qualitative questions will also be thematically analysed. We have used the data to compare, contrast and find differences and emerging patterns.
RESULTS

In the introduction to the day for Our Amazing Place there were a variety of events happening and differing activities going on at both events. The participants from these two events were made up of teams who were families and extended families, groups of teenagers and young adults, and other combinations. Often an adult filled out the questionnaire for the whole team and, for instance, Unsworth Heights had a separate questionnaire for children, which we have recorded as a youth group.

Table 1: The culture of the participants compared with the 2006 Census and age and gender data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unsworth Heights (69)</th>
<th>Massey West (126)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European/Pākehā/New Zealander</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MELAA*</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other / not given</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Average age of participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Gender of participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MELAA = Middle Eastern, Latin American, African

Who came on the day?
Table 1 above shows the diversity of the participants that attended. The cultural diversity of the participants in the Unsworth Heights and Massey OAP event has been broken into categories taken from Statistics New Zealand’s Ethnic Group breakdown for the 2006 NZ Census. Comparing the 2006 Census with both geographic areas, there are similar patterns of cultural mix, noting, Massey OAP participants having larger Māori and Pacific Island representation and Unsworth Heights OAP, a larger Asian and Middle Eastern/Latin American/African representation. The above table also shows how many participants filled in evaluations sheets on the day and what proportions were male, and female. (women outnumbered men) and the average age of the participants as recorded by themselves on the day. 107 evaluation sheets were completed, covering 195 participants. Both events had more than 200 participants on the day.

The statistics presented here rely on the information from the questionnaires gathered at both events, and do not take into account other participants on the day who either just 'joined in', without officially taking a 'passport' around the various 'stations' or participated but as a team or
individual, did not evaluate the day. Because only one team member filled out forms ‘on behalf of the team’, we cannot claim that the entire team’s experiences are always truly reflected.

**How participants are involved in their OAP community?**

Table 2 shows how the participants were connected to the OAP communities. While more than two thirds of both communities said that they lived in their community, less than a third indicated that *most of my friends live here* and less than a quarter that they send their children to school in their local community. Only 12% are *part of a local community organisation* and half that figure *work* there and even less *do* *volunteer work* or *play sport* in their local community. To extent that our participant groups are a cross-section of their communities, this data suggests that our communities are dormitories which participants leave for most of their vocational, social, educational and recreational needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection to OAP community</th>
<th>Unsworth Heights (44)</th>
<th>Massey (126)</th>
<th>Pākehā/European/NZer (60)</th>
<th>Māori/Pacific Island (48)</th>
<th>Asian/MELAA* (23)</th>
<th>Culture not stated (40)</th>
<th>Total (170)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I live in here</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of my friends live here</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My kids go to school here</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m just an interested visitor</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am part of a local community organisation</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work here</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do volunteer work here</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I play sport in here</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MELAA = Middle Eastern, Latin American, African

One in six of the participants was *just an interested visitor* and this was most true for the Asian/MELAA participants, for whom only 39% actually lived in the OAP community. On the other hand the Māori/Pacific Island participants were the most likely to live in their community (75% did).

**How did participants hear about our amazing place?**
A summary of how participants heard about the Our Amazing Place event is illustrated in table 3. Promotion of the OAP event was across a variety of mediums, and from the collated responses, the most successful communication overall was via *poster/billboard* at 44%, with *preschools and schools* being also important at 26%. *Word-of-mouth, leaflets, local paper and community organisation newsletters* all played a minor, but useful role (15-18% heard about OAP through these sources). On the other hand, *email/internet* did not seem to be a good way of finding out about the event, and *radio* even less so.

However, the pattern varied across the localities and for different cultural groups. *Pre-schools / schools* did little to promote the event in Unsworth Heights (only 13% heard about in this way), but in Massey the event finished on a school ground and clearly learning about it through the school (39% did) played a big part in the event’s promotion. The *internet*, on the other hand worked to some extent in UH (16%), but hardly at all in Massey (4%) a less wealthy community with little internet access. *Posters* were not effective for Asian/MELAA (17%) nor were *preschools/schools* (10%), whereas *leaflets* (23%) were more effective. *Community organisation newsletters* were nest most effective for this group. This suggests some language barriers need to addressed and that migrants and refugees may not be sufficiently engaged in pre-schools and schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Unsworth Heights (44)</th>
<th>Massey (126)</th>
<th>Pākehā/European/NZeR (60)</th>
<th>Māori/Pacific Island (48)</th>
<th>Asian/MELAA* (23)</th>
<th>Cultur e not stated (40)</th>
<th>Total (170)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community poster or billboard</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/Preschool newsletter</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflet</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Paper</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community organisation newsletter</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through email/internet</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Station</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MELAA = Middle Eastern, Latin American, African*

However, overall the marketing mediums used to inform local people of the OAP community event have been effective in that there have been multiple ways of finding out about the event and that almost all have helped build participation. Clearly, promotion of this event is needed across a variety of mediums in order to catch participants across many different ethnic groups (see Table 3 above).
What did participants enjoy?
The data collected for table 4 on activities or places that were the most interesting or enjoyable was divided into 4 categories. The range of activities was not same in each location. For example, there were more Nature activities in Unsworth Heights on offer than Massey, a bush walk and tree planting. Table 4 shows the following from the 107 completed surveys.

Table 4: The favourite activities and places named by the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Fitness and fun activities</th>
<th>Getting to know your neighbourhood activities</th>
<th>Nature activities</th>
<th>Religious activities and spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsworth Heights adult (44)</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsworth Heights youth (25)</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massey (126)</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pākehā/European/NZer (66)</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori/Pacific Island (52)</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/MELAA* (35)</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture not stated (43)</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (195)</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MELAA = Middle Eastern, Latin American, African

- **Fitness and fun activities were named by 93%,** as one of the most favourite activities of the day, and rated highest overall by all groups and cultures
  - *Fitness/sports* activities were identified as the most popular overall, at 54%, volley ball, netball, basketball, kung fu, skateboarding, running, cricket (“I had fun throwing the ball”), in2it street games, fitness circuit for kids, fitness machines, playcentre balancing beam and tunnel. One group loved “the race - the whole competition”.
  - *Games* activities were picked by 21% as a favourite. Participants named coconut throw (free coconuts if you hit one), picking things up with “disability prong stick”, “ball in a cup”, indoor bowls, lawn bowls, water games, “throw sponge at people & knock down tins”, treasure box pick, wishing tree, “finding the dragonfly”, and “just having fun”, “walking”, “doing all the activities”.
  - *Children’s pre-school and art activities were enjoyed (18% one of the most favourable)*
    These had a younger child focus. There were puzzles, toys, games face painting, “touching gloop” and “somewhere to play and things to do for our 2-year-olds” with a creche (loved “the magnifying glass at PORSE), kindergarten (‘great with kids”) and playcentre (the “children were so glad”) involved,
  - *Dancing and music* such as zumba, hip-hop, kanikani (Māori dancing), line dancing singing was noted by 14%.
A range of fun things like “speed puzzles”, “learning about bikes and walkway rules” were named 13% of the time. As one participant commented: “There was a good (another said: “unique”) range of activities that were suited to all ages and likes/dislikes”.

Other fun and fitness activities noted were motorsports (“speedway display”) (7%). refreshments, “BBQ,” “drinks and cookies”, “free sausage sizzle” (6%), and “bike-safety helmet checks” – one person

There was also a lot of general feedback that fitted broadly into the fun and fitness category reflecting the high energy of the day such as, we’ve “got to do stuff, they were a challenge, having a go at so many things”; “It was hands on and really fun”; “Great activities and fun”; “I got a lot of exercise and it was a lot of fun to do”.

Getting to know your neighbourhood activities themes were identified as favourites by 68% of participants. This theme was particularly strong in Massey.

Family engagement in their community was noted by 28% as in “fun for the whole family”, “great to be out and about with family”, “family participation”, “getting the family working together”: and that it was interactive as in “it was Interactive and the kids could do it, and “it was fun and you interacted with your team, we had heaps of laughs”.

Connection with neighbours was a favourite thing for 25% of participants. This from as little as a “neighbourhood greeting”, to “knowing your neighbour”, “meeting people”, the “locals” and “talking to the people and meet them as they put a face and a name to their place”. Staking ownership of their community. Finding out that they are “friendly”, “interactive” people, that there are “lots of friendly places” and that we can find them “by walking [with our family] on the street we usually only drive on, [and see] local places, local people, many happy smiling faces everywhere”. “All the people were nice”.

And then there was the joining together of different cultures – “they got us interacting with others, we were against other teams”, “the smiles and laughter” when “we get to know each other more” and feel the “happiness of good things being done for the community. It becomes a “fun place” with “fun people, GO MASSEY”, Some wanted to thank the organisers “for promoting neighbourhood awareness” and “for organising this event to open up our minds about the community, thank you, love community based days”

Fire service: 20% loved this agency saying how “informative” it was “they kept us up to date on what to do when there is a fire” and how “to prevent fires”. One commented on how they were “:learning alot about our community” from being at the Fire service.

Agencies: another 20% mentioned one or other of the many agencies that had opened their doors to support the project as a favourite activitiy. These included education, health, dental, disability, the police, transport, community development and community support agencies. Several of these were Māori or Pacific Island services. People said they “learnt [about] different things and places”, about “Neighbourhood Watch” and Pacifika Safety & Prevention.

Real estate agent: this agency proved a hit for 10% of the Unsworth Heights participants. They had created a “display with history of Unsworth Heights and photos of past and present”, backed by a “real estate agent talking about local history”. They asked
participants to do a quiz, “finding different places”. Participants got “to see things you wouldn’t normally”, learning “more about the community/area” and feeling “great” about “learning heaps” of this “interesting” stuff.

- **Nature activities**, engaged 45% of the participants, mainly from Unworth Heights and centred around *bushwalks* and “the various reserves in the neighbourhood”. Participants named as a favourite “treking through the reserves” on the “new boardwalk”, “on the bridges in the bush” enjoying “nature”, the “rock reserve” and the sights during the pleasure of a “long walk”. “It was very green and natural” – “loved the reserves”. Participants felt they were “helping to retain the park [and] learning about native bush” This feeling was not just confined to the *bushwalk* but to other places “natural and noticing things not seen from a vehicle” and to seeing places “in a different light”.

The other equally important part of *nature* was *planting*. For some in was “learning about the [Massey] community garden”, looking at seeds and trying to guess their names and then planting them. For other it was getting their hands “dirty”, having appreciation of “how things like planting a tree can make such a difference”, and then imagining a future in which it will be “awesome to see my tree grow!”, and being thrilled by “planting trees that will last forever”. Some participants just named as a favourite the project groups involved in planting and creating unique natural environments.

- **Religious activities and spaces** were a favourite activity for 7% of the participants and particularly the youth and Asian/MELAA groups from Unsworth Heights. Generally the pleasure was felt of being inside a church, one of which “was a great spot for a rest & refreshments”. Another provided a “Letterbox” and some participants “got to write a letter to God”.

Overall the responses to the question on favourite activities drew out an extraordinary range responses that showed the value of having great variety in the event, but also the power of single events such as the *bushwalk* and *planting*. Across the the groups (UH adult, UH youth and Massey) and cultures there was a strong shared enjoyment of the three main categories. Differences between Massey and Unsworth Heights were mainly to do with the presence of a specific activity in one place only. Religious activities were favoured by young people and Asian/MELAA participants (see table 4 above).

**Connection with their community**
Participants clearly enjoyed the OAP event, but did they feel more connected to their community? Table 5 shows the extent to which the day’s experience of Our Amazing Place made the participants feel *hugely or a good amount more* aware of, part of, safer in, etc their community. The overall impressions is that people felt strongly that the events had made them *more aware of what’s available in community, feel more a part of community* and encouraged to use community services and resources. Three quarters felt strongly that the event had made them *feel safer in this community*. Two thirds felt that the events had put people in *closer touch with*
neighbours and friends, and half that they had been helped to make new friends. The events seem to be building social capital, and two thirds strongly feel they have ideas about changes in life they would like to make.

The impact of the event in relation to these issues seems to have been stronger in Massey, (particularly the Māori and Pacific Island participants in Massey feeling safe in their community) than in Unsworth Heights, possibly because of Massey participants greater connection with community as shown in table 2. The Asian/MELAA migrant community, predominant in Uninsworth Heights, were clearly less engaged with the community, but were stronger in making connections and friendships than the Pākehā/European/NZer participants. They and the Māori and Pacific Island seemed eager to build relationships, whereas the Pākehā/European/NZer may feel more at home already.

**Table 5:** The extent to which participation in the OAP event contributed hugely or a good amount to the following: (No youth data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of possible contribution</th>
<th>Unsworth Heights (44)</th>
<th>Massey (126)</th>
<th>Pākehā/European/NZer (60)</th>
<th>Māori/Pacific Island (48)</th>
<th>Asian/MELAA* (23)</th>
<th>Culture not stated (40)</th>
<th>Total (170)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>making you/your team more aware of what's available in community</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making you/ your team feel more a part of community</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encouraging you/ your team to use services/ resources you have had contact with</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making you/your team feel safer in your community</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>putting you/ your team in closer touch with neighbours/ friends</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giving you/ your team some ideas about changes in life you would like to make</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helping you/ your team members make new friends</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MELAA = Middle Eastern, Latin American, African

The enthusiasm of the Asian/MELAA participants shows table 6 where 100% wrote about how they want to actively continue connecting with the OAP community. The other groups were also keen to continue connecting but at a lower level. In their comments participants wanted to keep in touch to be alert to local happenings in their community, to attend more community events like this one, to get more involved, to interact more and to join a community organisation and
volunteer. They wanted to stay in touch with new friends and to have a cup of tea with neighbours. Religious activities, planting trees and bushwalks, and telling others about OAP were also mentioned.

Table 6: What are some things you are going to do to continue connecting with your community? (No youth data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Unworth Heights (44)</th>
<th>Massey (126)</th>
<th>Pākehā/European/NZer (60)</th>
<th>Māori/Pacific Island (48)</th>
<th>Asian/MELAA* (23)</th>
<th>Culture not stated (40)</th>
<th>Total (170)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively going to continue connecting to the community</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious activities</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting trees and Bushwalks</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell others about OAP</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* MELAA = Middle Eastern, Latin American, African

Changes suggested to the event

Table 7 looks at the recommendations for improvement made by the participants. Massey participants (18% of the total) wanted to be able to spend more time on the route. Enough time is needed so participants are able to visit all of the stations. People should come earlier and there could be a staggered start so as not to get bunching at the stations. Participants were upset at stations closing early (many were packing or packed up by 12.30). Getting the stamps was important and not every station has stamps. These were not issues for Unworth Heights.

Table 7: How this event could be improved if repeated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Just great as it was</th>
<th>More time for the route</th>
<th>Better Information</th>
<th>More interactive activities</th>
<th>More traffic safety</th>
<th>More Refreshments</th>
<th>Footwear:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massey (126)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unworth (44)</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pākehā/European/NZer (66)</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori/Pacific Island (52)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/MELAA (35)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture not stated (43)</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unworth children (25)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults/team (170)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (195)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another 16% wanted improved event information. This was partly about having more signs and directions on the route as some stations are hard to find. This particularly true for the bush track walk where there was confusion as to where to go. The creation of a slightly shorter route for little kids to walk possibly with activities on both sides of the road, and routes that are easier for prams, would also help. Having a bigger clearer map, flags to really make places visible from a distance, clearer instructions & organisation at start & end, and bigger passports were further suggestions.

Twelve percent wanted more activities, almost all from Unsworth Heights. Not unsurprisingly what the Unsworth children wanted was more interactive activities, more prizes and better prizes. Some wanted the event to be longer with more stations. One recommendation was to make it more like a race so everyone has to line up at the start and can go at the same time. The Asian/Melaa also wanted more stations, more activities (e.g., a balloon game), better prizes, too. The other adults wanted orientation type events with puzzles or clues to decipher where the next station is, more quizzes, mystery prizes and more water games if HOT!!

Also important for 11% of participants were safety issues, particularly in Massey, which started and finished on a major road. Participants were concerned that kids crossing the road could cause accidents and wanted improved traffic control around major intersection. Traffic safety for cyclists was also important as some participants rode bikes around the route. Using less busy roads/ back roads, setting up a pedestrian crossing on a busy road, and creating a variety of routes to reduce congestion were suggested. Other safety issues were about access to first aid and toilets.

Refreshments and footwear were important issues for a few participants. Some wanted to get drinks along the way and food. The lack of halal meat for the BBQ was noted. When people are not used to walking they need to bring proper shoes, bring proper gear. Organisers should tell everyone to wear sneakers.

Not everyone wanted improvement. In fact 56% thought the event was great just as it was, particularly the adults. Children and Asian/MELAA were the least likely to positively comment here. Participants felt it nothing may need to change- it was awesome and well organised (you've done such a wonderful job!), it was well balanced, and that they couldn't really fault it. Their advice was to keep it the same as they really enjoyed it as is - good distance to walk and good variety of activities. Some liked everything and enjoyed every single bit of it and wanted it to be an annual event, please.

Overall evaluation of the day
Table 8 shows how the participants rated their experience on the day. ‘No fun’ being 1 and ‘wonderful day’ being a 10. Nearly two thirds of the participants rated the day as 9 or 10, and none rated under 6, although 7% did not rate it at all. Massey and Unsworth shared the overall honours, but the Unsworth children and Māori, Pacific Island, Asian and MELAA cultures gave the the highest 9 and 10 ratings.
In their final comments participants were enthusiastic about family and community:

*Great day for my family, it was fun to have time with my son & work together, loved spending the day with my family and community, we all had lots of fun,*

loved the concept:

*What a great fun idea, Awesome job, we salute you for your great concern for our community. On behalf of Lata, I would like to thank you for organising this event to open up our minds about the community*

and were, otherwise, just blown away:

*Cool, love this!, fun, exciting, awesome day, awesome day, we had an awesome time, what an awesome day, Perfect event*
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction
Our research intended to find links and relationships that may have existed to determine the question “Does ‘Our Amazing Place’ build community resilience?” The Our Amazing Place process endeavours to encourage and enable community building which in turn helps to develop social capital. We have determined that at the heart of Our Amazing Place is the foundation work around it, built on community development frameworks, process principles, and makes good use of ecological and social justice philosophies. This aligns with Twelvetrees (2008, pg11), who says that “community development work can be described, first as a set of values, and second as a set of approaches linked to those values”.

OAP uses a treasure map or an asset mapping tool developed through participating community organisations which have the effect of bringing people into contact with local organisations and community facilities in such a way that locals meet with other neighbours and create social networks that otherwise may not have developed. It is theorised that an extended benefit of these relationships may mean that these social networks will develop into sustainable relationships to meet the felt needs of the community, thus enabling the community to cater for its needs without reliance on external agencies. External agencies may, inadvertently, effectively disempower local communities by intervening in a way that creates dependency on the agency.

According to Ife & Tesoriero an ecological perspective is not able to assert social justice or human rights principles on its own. They call for an integrated response from both perspectives for the realisation of a society that is equitable and sustainable. The work of OAP is grounded in the processes of change from below and the belief in valuing local knowledge, resources, skills and culture. An example of how OAP does this includes the community organising and running the event, they find the treasures that they want to highlight and they shape the narrative. All the resources are found within their own setting and every community event is uniquely different. The Our Amazing Place is solely organised by the community itself and is therefore in line with current community development building methodology.

Our data revealed clear patterns and themes. We discuss six main points from those results.

Participants loved the event
The information in tables 7 and 8 and associated comment data, show that the people that did the OAP events found then exhilarating, informative and bonding. Particularly revealing is the 56% of participants who asserted that both events were wonderful as they stood. This level of engagement with the local community creates major opportunities for positive development.

Sport creates unity and community resilience
The evaluation question, What was the three or four activities or places that were the most interesting and enjoyable, (table 1) generated the result that the category of ‘fitness and fun activities’ rated the highest in both Massey and Unsworth Heights with a total 93% of the
participants. Some stations, for example, offered a sports lesson as their station activity and each participant was required to complete the sport activity before moving onto the next station. Other stations had a fun game to engage in and this also was a popular choice by participants who responded 21% to the “enjoying games” category.

The results of the popular ‘sports and fun’ category tend to indicate participants preferred activities which required physical activity and exertion over other activities. Comments such as, being out as a family, interactive for kids, get the family working together, enjoyable fun exercise, sports, got to work together as a family, indicates that sport can bring families and neighbours together. Sport creates a chance for people to meet and do physical activity and it may influence at the same time that they learn more about each other during such activities.

A research report on sport and community development done by the University of Edinburgh, (Coalter, 2002) recommended that sport could be used to develop community building. The report indicated through social inclusion sport can be a powerful medium to break down barriers and build personal and technical skills, employability as well as rejuvenating communities. The report found the best way to build community using sports is by local organisations getting involved and links being created between school, sports clubs and the wider community. For the programme to be successful in attaining its goal of social cohesion, the main challenge is that the organisation and promotion of sports activities must be from local grass-roots community initiatives and sports development resources with community inclusion in the planning and implementation. Conversely it was found that sports activities initiated from top down conventional methods of implementation had no lasting cohesive effects on the community.

What was happening in these OAP events was having fun while doing “sport-like” activities. It may that this combination accompanied by laughter, a bit of excitement, and a pleasant feeling of mild exhaustion and all in good company, provides the glue for community cohesion. The “fixer” for that glue is all the activities that involved community relationship building (see table 4) – activities that engaged families, connected neighbours, joined cultures together and created a sense of place and history. What is clear from table 2 is that only 4% of OAP participants are playing sport in Massey and Unworth Heights and big opportunity for fun and connection is being missed.

Access to Nature activities was rated highly across all groups
All cultural groups involved in the treasure hunts rated nature and nature related events as one of their most preferred activities during Our Amazing Place events. The Unsworth Heights bush/reserve walk and associated activities was the single most named event for Unworth Heights, and community gardens were also well liked in Massey. There is a considerable amount of research around the benefits and effects of ‘greener’ surroundings in neighbourhoods (e.g. Branas, Cheney, MacDonald, Tam, Jackson & Ten Have, 2011) Studies have shown that green spaces like community gardens can actually help reduce crime. Residents living in ‘greener’ surroundings report lower levels of fear and less aggressive and violent behavior in their neighbourhood. Community gardens help to foster a community identity and community spirit and they help offer a focal point for communities, which can lead to more community based efforts to help tackle other local social problems (Wakefield, Yeudall, Taron, Reynolds, & Skinner,
2007). The opportunity provides space, a purpose and promotes well-being and belonging within the community. OAP has major part to play in the greening of neighbourhoods and promoting their use.

**What is the role of faith in the OAP process?**

The Asian/Middle Eastern/Latin American/African group responded most positively to the faith-based activities. For example, in table 1 one liked that we got to write a letter to God. As Shirley (2007) says, “...we have much to learn from our colleagues in the third world. They have that certain critical quality that comes from knowing you have a history and a culture and a place to stand tall. They know the meaning, if not the terminology, of Tu Tangata”.

Another MELAA participant wrote that community church was a great spot for a rest & refreshments. Could faith-based activity be a stronger contributor to support this group and others in their desire for inclusion and connection as they reshape their lives in a new community? Closer attention to the cultural data as further OAP events are will help us see what local strengths are shown as more favourable and of relevance for different groups.

**To what extent have participants connected with their community?**

The community connection outcomes of the evaluation (table 3) have shown a strong relationship to questions about feeling and learning about your community. This may illustrate how OAP is a building block of community resilience, people engagement, and social capital building and how it encourages the use of local resources.

In a sense Our Amazing Place can be seen as a ‘social capital’ asset map for the local community. OAP becomes a guide for relationship building, not just data. Getting to know others in the community that have similar interests, and it creates space for groups to gather for a common cause. All ages, ethnicities and genders become connected and sign-on for the OAP Treasure Hunt, discovering the many treasures in their community. People become awakened to the social benefits of a stronger sense of community and a sense of security that comes from neighbours watching out for one-another. In table 4 and 5, participants showed strong desire to “get to know [their] neighbours”. People are starting to see that one of their greatest asset is the strong sense of community, and discovering how interconnected they are within their community.

In comments summarised in Table 6 participants named that they were actively going to continue connecting to the community and stay connected with [their] friends. OAP planning at the grassroots of the neighbourhood opens space for everyone’s involvement, and just by participating, stakeholders/people are building their own strong sense of community. Participants wanted to befriend neighbours, meet people. People sharing their ‘gifts’ of the head through things they know about, ‘gifts’ of the hands through things they know how to do, and ‘gifts’ of the heart through things they care deeply about. OAP opens up the possibilities of how all these ‘gifts’ create the building block of community resilience.
How participant experience of the day affects future connection with their community.

A majority in the Asian/Middle Eastern/Latin American/African and the Māori, Pacific Island group felt strongly that the OAP events had helped them *make new friends* (table 5), whereas only a third of Pākehā/European/NZer participants felt this way. The Asian/Middle Eastern/Latin American/African group also has a stronger response to ‘thinking about change’ at 60% (table 3), compared to 48% for Pākehā/European/NZer. This may indicate that as new immigrants, and refugees, there is a stronger need to engage with their new community. This data may also be saying something about who has the power in communities, who feels comfortable and who does not. OAP is helping to shift the balance so that more people can feel comfortable.

Our Amazing Place created awareness of community assets. Ninety three percent of adult participants on the day felt that OAP had increased in their awareness of what was available to them in the community by a *huge or good amount* and 85% felt much more a part of their community (table 5). This is an important result in terms of creating resilience in communities, as it is through creating awareness in local residents and neighbourhoods that lasting change can happen. Through connecting people with community owned and operated assets, strong social cohesion can develop, leading to more resilient communities.

The OAP event brings people and community assets together in an interactive way using asset based community development theory. It is theorised that through local participation and involvement that social capital will be strengthened thereby creating social networks that are able to utilise the community’s available assets for community purposes and to their advantage. In our experience of OAP it has been the local people’s active participation that has contributed to the success of these events, where people are actively engaged in strengthening their community and, “the people themselves awakened to their own empowerment” (Alinski, 1971). Eight-five percent rated the event as 8, 9 or 10 out of 10. They really liked it. Forty-one percent said 10/10. In other words, *awesome!*

**Conclusion**

Of course this is not where it ends. The work of the organisers in creating such successful events will have been rewarded and energy for taking community resilience building to the next stage will be there. Many of the OAP participants will be hungry for further community connection. Some will now have options to explore, but others will need to be sought out and given further opportunities for connection. Whether OAP has been successful in providing sufficient momentum for real change, only follow-up research can tell. What we do know is that a good foundation for more resilient communities has been set.
REFERENCES


