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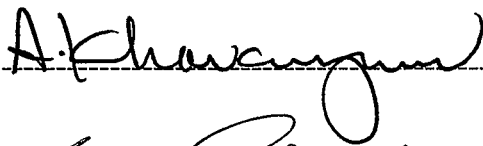
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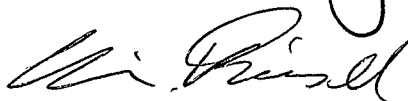
*Unravelling the paradox of community participation:
if the process is so good why don't people participate?*

by
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Submitted as part of course requirement for
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ABSTRACT

Community participation is recognised as a basic human right and an important human need. Benefits of the process of community participation for individuals and the community are well documented and structures are established at the community, and organisational level, to facilitate the participatory process. Despite the potential benefits of participation the reality is that relatively few people choose to participate when given the opportunity. In order to facilitate effective community action it is necessary to know which individuals will participate, under what circumstances and the level of participation involved. A review of studies in the participation literature reveals that the identification of a number of social-psychological factors and cost/benefit variables associated with participation has contributed significantly to systematising an understanding of participation in voluntary organisations. Research suggests that by increasing the benefits and reducing costs in effective management systems it may be possible to increase participation. However, longitudinal studies are needed to clearly define which characteristics predict participation and which characteristics are consequences of participation. Although caution must be taken in generalising the findings of the studies conducted in the United States, given the complete absence of Australian data, the studies provide important direction for Australian research.

CONTENT

Declaration	
Title Page	
Acknowledgments	i
Abstract	ii
Content	iii
List of Figures	v
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	4
2.1 Defining Participation in Community	6
Health	
3. MODELS OF PARTICIPATION	10
3.1 Frameworks for Evaluating Community	14
Participation	
4. AVENUES OF PARTICIPATION	19
5. PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIA	23
5.1 Historical Perspective	23
5.2 Participation in Local Government	26
6. RESIDENT ACTIVISM	29
6.1 The Australian Perspective	29
6.2 The United States Perspective	32
6.3 The Role of Resident Action	33
Groups in the Local Neighbourhood	

7. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES & PARTICIPATION	38
7.1 Demographic Factors & Participation	39
7.2 Social Psychological Factors &	40
Participation	
7.3 Costs and Benefits Associated	46
with Participation	
8. ORGANISATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS &	53
PARTICIPATION	
9. CONCLUSION	60
REFERENCES	62

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	The Community Development Continuum	13
Figure 2	Ladder of Citizen Participation	15
Figure 3	Pentagram Visualisation	17

1. INTRODUCTION

Community participation is a strategic principle recognised in the Declaration of Alma-Ata and the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (Wass, 1994). Regardless of the role of participation in community health, the participation of people in decisions directly affecting their lives is regarded to be a democratic imperative and reinforced as a social norm of community life (Bracht and Gleason, 1990; Martin, 1995).

Perceptions of the benefits of community participation at the individual and community level are well documented (Florin and Wandersman, 1990). On an individual level, the process of community participation has been associated with increased personal and political efficacy (Prestby et al, 1990). At the community level, participation has reported to be associated with improvements in physical conditions, decreased deterioration, and increased social services (Prestby et al, 1990).

Despite the proposed benefits of participation, and the development of structures to facilitate the participatory process, programs attempting to establish meaningful participation in decision-making have had a mixed record of success (Bracht and Gleason, 1990; Kroutil and Eng, 1989). Voth and Jackson have concluded that the citizen participation process is "*not easily stimulated or managed*" and that "*the proportion of citizens involved may be limited and these may be primarily community elites*" (cited in Bracht and Gleason, 1990 p. 112). Many of the difficulties experienced in assessing community participation outcome result from a lack of clarity in defining the concepts, and processes, of community participation and the absence of systematic frameworks for

evaluating the participation process (Heller, 1989; Kroutil and Eng, 1989; Martin, 1995; Mullins, 1987; Rifkin, 1986).

The issues of who will participate, under what circumstances, and the level of participation involved, is a major area of interest in community psychology and has important implications for community health practitioners advocating increased community action (Wandersman and Giamartino, 1980; Bracht and Tsouros, 1990; Wandersman et al, 1987). However, early studies, exploring the characteristics and motivation of participants in voluntary organisations, were limited by the narrow range of explanatory variables used and the absence of theoretically grounded explanations using quantitative empirical data (Smith, cited in Wandersman et al, 1987).

Recent studies have adopted a social psychological approach, exploring an individual's perceptions and attitudes, or a social exchange perspective, investigating the costs and benefits of participation (Carr et al, 1976; Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Wandersman et al, 1987; Prestby et al, 1990). Identification of the motivations and characteristics of participants have enabled appropriate recommendations to be made on the key variables which need to be addressed in further studies in order to increase participation in voluntary organisations in the long term and to expand the benefits of participation at both the individual and community level.

In reviewing the community participation literature a large number of studies exploring participation in neighbourhood associations in the United States were identified, reflecting

the attention received by these associations during the 1970s and 1980s for their role in mobilising grass-roots participation and providing instrumental and social benefits for members and the community (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). Despite the difficulties of maintaining these organisations in the long term, neighbourhood associations proliferated throughout the country during this period and were found to have a higher impact on community conditions than other community structures, such as model cities programs and advisory boards (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985).

The studies exploring the characteristics, motivations and the costs and benefits associated with participation which are reviewed in this study were primarily conducted in the United States and the generalisability of the findings to participation in an Australian context must be done with caution. Although case studies of participation in voluntary organisations have been documented in Australia (Young and Jamrozik, 1982) there is no systematic quantitative data available on individual differences which may promote and hinder participation. However, given the complete absence of Australian data, and the applicability of the processes associated with participation, the studies provide some direction for Australian research.

2. DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Many of the problems experienced by workers attempting to facilitate meaningful community participation in decision-making have resulted from a lack of clarity in defining the concepts of community, community participation and the range of processes participation encompasses (Heller, 1989, Kroutil and Eng, 1989; Mullins, 1987; Rifkin, 1986). Mullins (1987) argues that this ambiguity is the result of community being a transposed term, originating in feudal and other pre-capitalist societies, where community was used to refer to a series of small, geographically localised, social organisations where the spheres of work, home and politics were integrated into a communal whole (Mullins, 1987). In these feudal societies the community consisted of a village, the landlord's dwelling and the lands, which were used for agricultural and pastoral purposes. In addition to owning the land, a system of traditional authority gave the landlord total political control (Mullins, 1987).

While community had a distinct meaning in feudal societies, the communities were vastly different from those in capitalist societies where organised systems, based on commodity exchange and division of labour, are established and there is a marked segregation between employment, homelife and politicisation (Mullins, 1987). The only remnants of feudal communities, and other pre-capitalist societies, are in some rural areas where the organisation of agricultural and pastoral production contain elements of the primary production processes similar to those of feudal societies (Mullins, 1987).

In addition to using the term community to describe a specific geographical area or locality, community is also used in the literature to refer to a relational community and the social cohesion that develops as a result of close interpersonal ties, and as an entity with collective political power (Heller, 1989; Rissel, 1996). The concept of the relational community accounts for the current trend in Western societies, where the geographic concept of community has become increasingly obsolete and the communities within which people live and work are not necessarily those containing the associations that are most significant to them (Heller, 1989; Rissel, 1996). Unlike geographical communities relational communities are not limited by location. The availability of resources such as mass transportation, communication and global media have enabled the formation of communities of common interests and needs, such as ethnicity and religion (Florin and Wandersman, 1990; Heller, 1989; Rissel, 1996).

According to Berger and Neuhas, relational communities have a role in society as mediating structures, connecting individuals to the larger social order and enabling personal needs to be satisfied through group attachments (cited in Heller, 1989). These mediating structures provide a diversity of opportunities for participation and may engender a greater sense of community than locality based communities (Heller, 1989).

The use of the term community as an entity with collective political power recognises the power of organised constituencies as a leverage for social change, irrespective of whether the leverage stems from localities, organised interest groups or both (Heller, 1989, Rissel, 1996). According to Arnstein, citizen participation is the:

"redistribution of power that enables have-not citizens, presently excluded from political and economic processes, to be involved in the future " (Arnstein, 1969 p. 216). Without this redistribution of power participation can be an *"empty and frustrating"* process (Arnstein, 1969 p. 216).

The term community development, or community mobilisation, is often used to describe the process of acquiring collective control over resources and gaining access to decision-making. This process of community development and mobilisation is acknowledged as one of the few remaining strategies in today's complex societies which citizens can use to develop social structures that are responsive to their needs (Heller, 1989; Rissel, 1996).

2.1 Defining Participation in Community Health

The ambiguity of the concepts community and community participation extends to the field of community health where the terms have been the subject of various interpretations and used to encompass a range of activities and processes (Hawe, 1994; Kroutil and Eng, 1989; Rifkin, 1986; Rissel, 1996). This has important implications for the evaluation of community health programs as there is considerable variation in the expected impact and outcomes of programs with a participation component (Kroutil and Eng, 1989).

Hawe (1994) and Rifkin (1986) have identified a number of approaches to participation in health programs. In the medical approach, health is defined as the absence of disease and community participation as health promoting activities undertaken by people under the

direction of health professionals (Rifkin, 1986). The aim of these programs is often to reach as many people as possible with the outcome evaluation limited to calculating the number of changes made by individuals, in relation to the problem of interest, and the proportional change result for the population (Hawe, 1994).

At this end of the community participation continuum, participation exists at the level of health professionals attempting to get community groups to take ownership of a professionally defined agenda, without the community having any real input in deciding if these are issues of concern (Robertson and Minkler, 1994). As Rifkin states the programs:

"merely have the cloak of a new, community-based approach under which the traditional health care delivery system remains" (Rifkin, 1986 p. 240).

In the health services approach, the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of health as the physical, mental and social well being of the individual is adopted and community participation is defined as the mobilisation of people to participate in health service delivery (Rifkin, 1986). The community is often regarded as a setting with aspects of the setting used to support and maintain individual behavioural change (Hawe, 1994). As in the medical approach, aggregate changes made by individuals in the population are determined and some attempts are also made to measure community involvement and cooperation (Hawe, 1994).

In the community development approach, the impact of the social, economic and political

environment on health is emphasised and the community is regarded as an ecosystem with the capacity to work towards solving problems identified by the community (Rifkin, 1986; Wass, 1994). Health promotion interventions, on the other hand, are designed to enhance the problem-solving processes in the community (Hawe, 1994) and to "*gain a more equitable distribution of power and resources*" (Kroutil and Eng, 1989; p.306). In contrast to the medical and health service approaches, where health professionals have the role of deciding how the program should progress, in the community development approach emphasis is placed on the community determining the ways in which change can best be achieved. The changes in community processes and structures in this approach are evaluated as program outcomes (Hawe, 1994; Rifkin, 1986).

According to Rifkin, Muller and Bichmann (1988) three characteristics are common to the concept of participation in the community development approach: participation should be *active*; participation must involve *choice* and the right of people to have power over decisions which effect their lives; and the choice must have the possibility of being *effective* with mechanisms being in place or created to allow the choice to be effective (Rifkin, Muller and Bichmann, 1988).

Rifkin (1986) has contributed, in part, the difficulties experienced in defining participation and determining clear and measurable objectives to the perception of community participation by many, medically trained, health planners as a solution to a disease problem and in terms of cause and effect. As a result, community participation does not have a defined terminology and the meaning of the process of community participation

will differ between professional and community people (Rifkin, 1986).

Rifkin (1986) concludes that the search for a definition of community participation may be futile as community participation is a dynamic process and in a constant state of change. Health service personnel need to remain flexible as people and objectives change (Rifkin, 1986). For the purpose of this study community participation is defined as:

"a process in which individuals take part in decision making in the institutions, programs and environments that effect them " (Heller, Price, Reinharz, Riger and Wandersman, quoted in Florin and Wandersman, 1990 p. 43).

3. MODELS OF PARTICIPATION

Although there have been numerous models of participation documented in the literature, the experience of workers in community health, and other disciplines, has shown that there is no one model of participation that can be universally applied (Bracht and Tsouros, 1990). For example, the application in Australia of models of participation developed in the United States may be inappropriate as a result of cultural differences in social structure, settlement patterns, models of health care and philosophies of volunteerism and unionism (Khavarpour, Rissel and Butler, 1996). However, although the models of participation differ, many of the processes and activities associated with the process of participation are applicable (Bracht and Tsouros, 1990; Khavarpour, Rissel and Butler, 1996).

The community development approach to participation in community health has its roots in both public health and social science (Bjaras, 1991). The community-based, confrontational policies developed by Alinsky in the United States in the 1960s was one of the earliest models of community-based social action (Fisher, 1995). Building on the labor organising style, conflict strategies and direct-action politics used in union-based models of social action, Alinsky introduced the community organiser to the process as a catalyst for change (Fisher, 1995). Alinsky's goal was the empowerment of neighbourhood residents, especially lower and working class, black and latino community residents, by teaching them political and organising skills in order to make fundamental community changes, including the redistribution of power and resources and gaining

access to decision- making (Fisher, 1995; Rothman, 1995).

According to Alinsky, lower and working-class neighbourhoods were disadvantaged as external decision makers controlled the internal distribution of services and goods. The task of the organiser was to establish a coalition of leaders from organisations within the neighbourhood, including the churches, ethnic groupings, political organisations, and labor, which could claim representative status for the group (McKnight and Kretzmann, 1984). The concern of the coalition was with the *"tactic of taking: how the Have-Nots can take power from the Haves"* (Alinsky, 1971 p.126). Confrontational tactics were emphasised in order to achieve change in policies and practices of institutions and legislative change (Rothman, 1995).

Although Alinsky's projects were not always successful, the social action approach has been used by a number of groups, including the women's movement, consumer and environmental protection organisations and the civil rights movement (Rothman, 1995). In recent years, social action movements have expanded on their confrontational style and employed a wider range of adversarial tactics in response to increasing public intolerance of traditional disruptive methods (Rothman, 1995). Coalition building has also become a characteristic of social action as groups have found it difficult to achieve significant results on their own due to the growing concentration of political and economic power at the local, national and global levels (Rothman, 1995).

Freire's work in Brazil and Chile, to empower impoverished peasants to act against

oppressive forces, also reflected a social action orientation (Rothman, 1995). According to Freire's concept of critical consciousness oppressed people often live in a culture of silence without the capacity for critical awareness and response (Freire, 1972). To raise a critical consciousness, education should be used "*as the practice of freedom*" to assist people to see realistically their objective state of being (Freire, 1972 p.69). Feelings of isolation and powerlessness are targeted and a framework provided to support group consciousness raising and collective action (Miner and Ward, 1992). With this information, oppressed people can take the necessary steps to transform the unjust societies that have been oppressing them for decades (Rothman, 1995).

Freire argued that such education for critical consciousness was in direct contrast to traditional forms of education, where representatives of the power groups in the community merely impose their view on less powerful ones in order to maintain the status quo (Wass, 1994). To achieve a more just social system, according to Freire, education must focus on the environment rather than the individual, and examine problems in the context of the underlying issues and structures surrounding them (Wass, 1994). According to Freire, social action can only be achieved by the active participation of the group and built on critical reflection and action by all concerned (Wass, 1994).

A model of participation developed in an Australian context, adopting strategies from other models, is the Community Development Continuum developed by Jackson, Mitchell and Wright (1989) (Figure 1). The five points along the continuum including

developmental casework; mutual support; issue identification and campaigns; participation and control of services; and social movements define modes of development work appropriate to individuals and communities at particular times (Jackson, Mitchell and Wright, 1989). Each mode of development contributes towards the overall goal of developing links, amongst individuals and groups with common interests, in order to address common problems and achieve a more equitable distribution of power (Jackson, Mitchell and Wright, 1989). The model also accounts for individuals entering the process at different points along the continuum and for individual participation moving back and forth along the continuum over time (Jackson, Mitchell and Wright, 1989).

Figure 1

*	*	*	*	*
Developmental Casework	Mutual Support	Issue Identification and Campaigns	Participation Control of Services	Social Movements

The Community Development Continuum

Source: Jackson, T., Mitchell, S. and Wright, M. (1989). The Community Development Continuum. *Community Health Studies*, Vol. XII (I) p. 68.

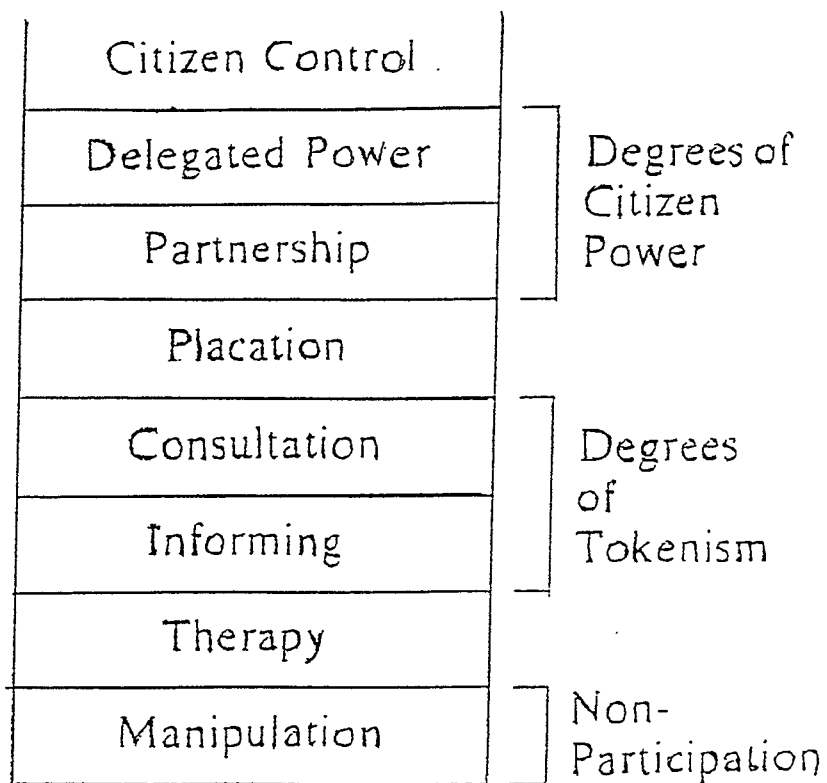
3.1 Frameworks for Evaluating Community Participation

Regardless of the model of community participation, a framework must be used to assess the quality of participation (Bjaras, 1991). Recognition of the need for such a framework helps overcome the tendency for program organisers to regard participation as a unidimensional and an all-or-none process (Wandersman, 1981). Factors that need to be considered include the representativeness of community members, the degree of local ownership perceived and achieved, satisfaction with the process of participation and long term maintenance of effort (Bracht and Tsouros, 1990).

Gradations of community participation were first identified in the social planning movement of the 1960s when Arnstein developed a ladder of citizen participation (Kroutil and Eng, 1989; Robertson and Minkler, 1994). Arnstein identified eight levels of participation, ranging from manipulation to citizen control, in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens' power in determining the end product (Figure 2). The more control community members had over decisions and resources the more participatory the program was determined to be (Arnstein, 1969; Kroutil and Eng, 1989; Robertson and Minkler, 1994). The bottom of the ladder was characterised by manipulation and tokenistic forms of participation. Manipulation can be used to draw people away from involvement in the real decision making process, thereby removing them further from resources which may be available for allocation, or used to achieve legitimisation of policies and programs and resulting compliance by the community (ACOSS, 1974; Dywer, 1989). Informing, consultation and placation are seen as forms

of tokenism where people may be heard but their ideas not necessarily acted upon (Arnstein, 1969).

Figure 2



Ladder of Citizen Participation

Source: Arnstein, S. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, July, p. 217

The other end of Arnstein's ladder represented the highest levels of participation where citizen groups exercised decision-making authority over policy and personnel issues and

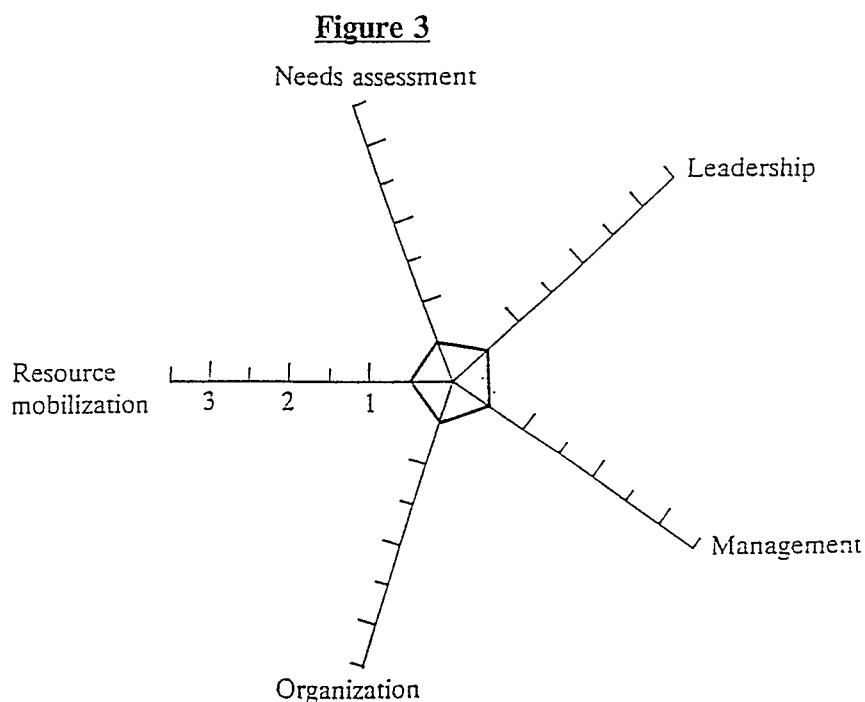
ultimately over program funds (Arnstein, 1969; Kroutil and Eng, 1989; Robertson and Minkler, 1994). It is only at the level of partnership and above that people are given true decision-making power (Arnstein, 1969; Wass, 1994).

While Arnstein's ladder successfully identified the different levels of community participation, the model was developed from programs in the United States in which citizens were represented on boards and citizen groups had opportunities to receive funding for programs. In countries without policies for citizen involvement difficulties were experienced in applying the model (Kroutil and Eng, 1989). In addition, the ladder focused on power, only one dimension of the community participation process. Other factors which influence participation, such as training, were not adequately addressed (Kroutil and Eng, 1989).

Aguelo extended the framework of Arnstein and developed a model which compares participation between programs (Rifkin, Muller and Bichmann, 1988). In Aguelo's model, numbers are assigned to rank participation in the following areas: management; the range of participation in terms of community "agents" present and operating; and community support and financing. However, the model does not include mechanisms for assessing participation in decision-making, the process by which participation takes place or changes in the process of community participation which may occur throughout a program (Rifkin, Muller and Bichmann, 1988).

In order to address some of the problems in Aguelo's model Rifkin, Muller and

Bichmann (1988) developed a model which evaluated participation using a relative measure in contrast to a specific, static standard. A pentagram model was developed using a series of indicators which inform the evaluator if participation has become narrower, broader, or remained unchanged (Figure 3). The indicators, identified in a review of over 100 case studies, include needs assessment; leadership; organisations; resource mobilisation and management. A continuum was developed with wide participation at one end (characterised by people planning, implementing and evaluating the program) and narrower participation at the other end (characterised by professionals making all the decisions without community participation) (Rifkin, Muller and Bichmann, 1988).



Pentagram Visualisation

Source: Bjaras, G., Haglund, B. and Rifkin, S. (1991). A new approach to community participation assessment. *Health Promotion International*, Vol.6(3) p. 199-206.

Using the continuum process indicators for participation are defined by the width of participation on the continuum for each of the factors and can then be used to compare participation at different times. To obtain a baseline for future evaluation of the program marks can also be connected in a spoke figuration. The difference between the baseline and assessments at a future date indicates whether movement has taken place and if the movement is great or small (Rifkin, Muller and Bichmann, 1988).

Although the pentagram model has been successfully used to describe the breadth of participation in programs and to guide decisions on future directions of the program, further research is needed to address some of the limitations of the model (Bjaras, Haglund and Rifkin, 1991). Limitations include the possibility of some indicators being neglected in favour of others; difficulties in using process indicators to quantify or standardise change (and evaluate whether a change has been successful) and the absence of any factor in the model for assessing equity (Bjaras, Haglund and Rifkin, 1991).

A review of the relevant literature on evaluation of participation in community health also reveals a number of ethical and political issues that have not been resolved (Dixon and Sindall, 1994; Hawe, 1994; Wass, 1994). For example, while it is acknowledged that the evaluation process should be participatory, and reflect the aspirations of the community, in instances where the judgement of the program differs between the community and professionals it must be determined whose view should predominate in determining future resource allocation (Dixon and Sindall; 1994).

4. AVENUES OF PARTICIPATION

The development of effective and appropriate structures to facilitate participation, and strategies for recognition and reinforcement, are important factors in encouraging effective participation (Bracht and Tsouros, 1990). In Bracht and Tsouros' review (1990) of the literature two approaches have been identified. The first approach consists of participation in formal decision-making mechanisms, which enable community members to participate in policy-making, planning and/or implementation of decisions. The second approach consists of participation in activities and mechanisms at the community level (Bracht and Tsouros, 1990).

The mechanisms available for ongoing participation in formal decision-making include the involvement of community representatives in formal decision-making structures such as management committees, advisory committees, commissions and taskforces (Bracht and Tsouros, 1990). Structures established for periodic participation include community forums, public meetings, telephone phone-ins, and the use of electronic technology to link community members (Martin, 1995). Although Bracht and Tsouros (1990) include consultation as a formal decision making mechanism, it is important to note that consultation is only one element of participation and may not include joint decision making, responsibilities or mutual benefit (Martin, 1995).

The success of formal decision making mechanisms in facilitating participation varies considerably depending upon the type of structure and the political will behind them.

Factors essential to ensuring the success of community participation include early and continuing clarification of project activities and goals, the development of mutual trust, real decision-making power and a genuine commitment to maximisation of local ownership opportunities (Bracht and Gleason, 1990).

The Australian experience of community representation on management committees, in organisations such as Aboriginal and women's health centres, illustrates how funding constraints often result in community representatives being so involved in the responsibilities of administrative work that they have little opportunity to affect the direction of the organisation in any meaningful way (Wass, 1984). In addition, community representatives often find that they have little decision-making power on the management committee, through weight of numbers, manipulative and exclusionary tactics (Bracht and Tsouros, 1990; Dwyer, 1989).

To overcome some of the difficulties experienced with management committees, advisory committees are often established to focus on strategic planning and policy implementation without the additional responsibility for administrative management, as illustrated in the establishment of district health councils and forums (Wass, 1994). In addition to decision making power, the success of community representatives on advisory committees depends on the legitimacy of those who have been selected to represent the community (Bracht and Tsouros, 1990). To maximise effectiveness, representatives are ideally elected by a community or community group, represent their interests, accountable to the community for decisions made on their behalf and link back with the community they represent

(National Health Strategy, 1993; Wass, 1994).

At the community level mechanisms which enable people to participate more fully in issues of concern include pressure groups, consumer, self-help and voluntary groups and individual mechanisms such as client feedback, evaluation and complaint mechanisms (ACOSS, 1974; Bracht and Tsouros, 1990; Dwyer, 1989; Wass, 1994). Client feedback/evaluation has been evaluated as a minimal form of participation, usually limited to asking clients their opinion on the effectiveness, or acceptability, of service delivery within established programs (Dwyer, 1989). Volunteerism in health organisations, support and self-help groups, have the potential to be an important mechanism to change services to better meet the needs of consumers and assist volunteers in skill development. However, volunteerism can also result in the exploitation of unpaid labour (Dwyer, 1989; Wass, 1994).

While some groups at the community level, such as self-help groups, may have formal links with local professional services, other grass-roots groups direct their own participation processes in informal structures (Bracht and Gleason, 1990). Change efforts are more spontaneous and used by people not represented by formal structures, such as neighbours in resident action groups (Bracht and Gleason, 1990). Despite the many benefits of grass-roots groups which have been documented in the participation literature maintaining the group in the long term is a difficult task. In Prestby and Wandersman's (1985) study of 17 block organisations in the United States, only eight organisations continued to be active within twelve months of formation.

Regardless of the existence of participatory structures a number of barriers to participation exist (ACOSS, 1974; Dwyer, 1989; Martin, 1995). Disadvantaged and minority groups, in particular, experience many barriers including economic constraints, lack of resources and lack of the specialised knowledge necessary to access formal structures and political structures (ACOSS, 1974; Martin, 1995). The questions posed by ACOSS in 1974 regarding how structures evolve, whether it is possible for these structures to maintain participation at a constant level over time, and how to establish structures to ensure non-vocal groups continued access to decision-making continue to be of much relevance in the 1990s.

5. PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIA

5.1 Historical Perspective

The history of early European settlement in Australia can generally be characterised as one of non-participation (ACOSS, 1974). The majority of new arrivals from Britain lacked the appropriate educational background or political experiences necessary to participate in the political activities of the colony (Hughes, 1987). Although a few isolated incidents of collective action can be identified, Australian society under British Colonial rule was not conducive to participation, as illustrated by the degree of force vested in the military to control the population (O'Connor and Parker, 1995). It was not until British Colonialism became less authoritarian in nature that small numbers of individuals were able to successfully voice their concerns regarding the direction the colony was taking (ACOSS, 1974). However, these voices were largely confined to the pastoral industry and from those with their own vested interests (ACOSS, 1974).

The existence of an ideology in the late 19th century and early 20th century advocating the state's promotion of national efficiency and national development was promoted by an elite group of experts (O'Connor and Parker, 1995). Unlike other countries, bureaucratic ascendancy in Australia was established in this colonial period rather than as a result of political centralisation following World War II. The absence of a leisured middle class in colonial Australia, able to participate in public affairs, created a reliance on bureaucrats for decision making and the development of a welfare state (Hughes, 1987; O'Connor and

Parker, 1995).

During the time of Federation in 1901 some redistribution of power to the states occurred (Rydon, 1995). The Commonwealth was obliged, under the Constitution, to give back to the states three-quarters of its revenue for the following ten years and state jealousies, and difficulties established with constitutional amendments, blocked legal extension of federal functions (O'Connor and Parker, 1995). However, despite the increase in power to the states there was little power given to people at the local community level or involvement in priority setting (ACOSS, 1974; Rydon, 1995).

Although a Federal Labor government was elected during World War II, limited participation by the Australian people in government policy and decisions at the national level continued (ACOSS, 1974). Although a number of new national strategies were sought, policies that were subsequently introduced continued to be developed by groups of government advisers, or from those working within the public service, and few attempts were made to involve the wider community in determining the national agenda (ACOSS, 1974).

It was not until the 1960's that isolated incidents of opposition to government policy gathered sufficient momentum to generate greater participation in a range of issues. Debate and protest over involvement in the Vietnam war, student unrest, concern over pollution and demands from the Trade Union movement, all had a role in predisposing the more participatory climate which was characteristic of the early 1970s (ACOSS,

1974). Vocal protest gradually became more accepted in Australian society and was no longer regarded as being the sole domain of students and Trade Unions (ACOSS, 1974; Vinson, 1991). As the image of social action was transformed, public protests increasingly involved people from diverse backgrounds and were accompanied by more sophisticated analyses of problems and proposals for rectifying them (Vinson, 1991).

In 1972, following the change in federal government, a number of new policies were presented to the Australian people. The participation of the community in setting new priorities was encouraged and various commissions, committees and task forces were established to facilitate this process (Acooss, 1974; Milo, 1984). The growth of self-help groups, consumers associations and the women's movement also had a significant role in demanding participation, in both decision-making and the operational apparatus of the states, and many of the processes used to negotiate with officialdom began to be formally recognised and institutionalised (Dwyer, 1989; Vinson, 1991).

The demand for participation also extended to health policy and health services. In the 1970s, growing concern regarding the rising costs of health services was accompanied by demands from consumer groups and disadvantaged communities for more accountable, appropriate services and support for traditional community-based care (Dwyer, 1989). The 1973 Community Health Program, an initiative of the Federal Government, was developed in response to these pressures and emphasised strengthening community action, creating supportive local environments for health and reorienting health services (Dwyer, 1989; Owen and Lennie, 1992). At the international level, the 1977 Declaration of

Alma-Ata also emphasised the role of community participation in the delivery of, and decisions about, health and health care (Dwyer, 1989; Rifkin, 1986). According to the World Health Organisation, in this new model of health service delivery medical professionals would no longer define and dominate the health care system and the participation of the people would ensure that the health services provided would be more appropriate to the circumstances (Rifkin, 1986).

5.2 Participation in Local Government

Local government is the third tier of government in Australia, after the federal and state government and regarded to be the closest in terms of representing grass roots democracy (ACOSS, 1974). However, the history of local government in Australia reveals that for many years structures were in place which successfully prevented residents from participating in local affairs. According to Halligan and Paris (1984), in the early years of local government participation was greatly hampered by the ratepayer ideology which defined the role of local government as being concerned only with people who were property owners and services confined to those that serviced property such as roads, street cleaning, water and sewerage. Other cultural, educational, recreational or welfare services were not included in the mandate of local government, as they were not funded by revenues based on property (Halligan and Paris, 1984).

For a number of years rate on property was the main source of municipal revenue and the eligibility of residents to vote in elections, and stand for office, was determined on the

basis of their relationship to property. In some states residents were unable to vote in local government elections if their property failed to reach a minimum value while other residents could receive multiple votes depending on their property value. Women were not entitled to vote at all (Halligan and Paris, 1984).

It was not until the political changes of the late 1960s and early 1970s that traditional stereotypes of local government were undermined, resulting in experimentation with different modes of participation and open government (Halligan and Paris, 1984). The new federal government which was elected in 1972 allocated a range of specific-service grants to local government in response to recommendations of various inquiries concerning the provision of welfare and community services. As a result, property tax was no longer the only source of municipal revenue and the role of local government was extended to include the provision of a range of welfare and community services (Halligan and Paris, 1984).

As occurred at the federal level with issues such as conscription, residents also began to voice their concerns over local issues and the closed systems of government operating at the local level. The emergence of resident action groups, concerned with a range of issues, such as conservation, anti-pollution and planning, and incidents of conflict between community factions, resulted in the introduction for the first time of new communication channels between the community and council (Halligan and Paris, 1984).

Despite the move towards a more open style of government, and inter-organisational and

inter-governmental cooperation which reduced the insularity of councils, traditional stereotypes of local government have continued to persist (Halligan and Paris, 1984). The phrase "roads, rates and rubbish" used to describe the concerns of local government reflects the limited public image of local government in Australia (Parkin, 1984 p. 19). Local government has continued to be seen to a large extent as relatively unimportant and concerned mainly with matters of administration. There has also been a tendency in Australia to ignore the existence of politics that permeate local councils which may account for the lack of systematic studies of local political organisations, elections and the distribution of power at the local level (Halligan and Paris, 1984).

It should also be noted that despite the community development role promoted by local government a number of the major policies and services which affect urban residents such as education, health, police and housing services, continue to be the responsibility of the state governments. In comparison to other Western democracies, such as the United States, very little effective responsibility for urban governance is given to local government in Australia (Parkin, 1984).

6. RESIDENT ACTIVISM

A review of community participation in voluntary organisations in Australia is limited by the lack of systematic quantitative studies examining the process and effects, of participation and the characteristics of participants. Although there has been considerable research conducted in the United States, with many studies focussing on participation in neighbourhood associations, the results of these studies may not be generalisable to participation in the Australian context. Resident activism in each country has emerged in an environment influenced by the social, political, economic and cultural systems unique to that country. Prior to reviewing the results of studies on community participation in neighbourhood associations in the United States it is important to document the background in which resident activism emerged, and continues to operate, in both countries.

6.1 The Australian Perspective

Neighbourhood associations have been defined as a "*civic organisation oriented toward maintaining or improving the quality of life in a geographically delimited residential area*" (Logan and Rabrenovic, 1990 p. 68). Rather than seeking fundamental changes in the existing political system, neighbourhood activism seeks to ensure that marginal elements are given an increased role in administering the existing system (Goering, 1979).

A review of the literature reveals that, in comparison to the United States, the emergence

of resident action groups in Australia, has not been the subject of detailed study. Although Costello and Dunn (1994) comment that the existence of neighbourhood associations, or resident action groups as they are commonly known, can be traced back to the depression of the 1930s, and the 1940s, detailed information on resident group activity prior to the 1950s in Australia could not be located.

Despite the existence of resident action groups by the 1950s and early 1960s, the fragmentation that occurred in Australian cities as a result of rapid urban change was not conducive to organised resident action. It was not until the time of the Vietnam War, and the introduction of the Area Assistance Plans in 1972 by the Whitlam Government, that resident action began to re-emerge as a force at the local level (Costello and Dunn, 1994). In the 1980s a rapid growth in the number of resident action groups occurred, with 352 groups forming during this period in Sydney alone (Costello and Dunn, 1994).

The increased popularity of resident action groups in Australia in the last couple of decades has been attributed to the inability of the two party system to address the "bread and butter issues" which most residents are concerned about (Smith, cited in Antrum, 1988 p. 21). On many occasions residents have relied on resident activism to put local issues on the council agenda, thus increasing the accountability of the political system (Smith, cited in Antrum, 1987). Although precinct committees are an alternative avenue for participation at the council level, the agendas of the committees are often determined by council and the institutionalisation of resident opinion may blunt the vociferousness of opposition (Cox, cited in Costello and Dunn, 1994).

According to the traditional model of participation in community psychology, participation is demographically skewed along the lines of socioeconomic status. As income, education and occupational status increase the likelihood that one will participate in voluntary organisations also increases (Haeberle, 1987; Costello and Dunn, 1994). It could then be argued that the relatively high number of resident action groups in northern Sydney is indicative of both the high socio-economic status in these suburbs and the accompanying time and organisational skills of residents required to participate in community activities (Costello and Dunn, 1994). However, the results of two recent studies, examining the distribution of locational conflict in Sydney, dispute the validity of this model (Costello and Dunn, 1994; Humphreys and Walmsley, 1991). Both studies have shown substantial changes in the pattern of community activism in Sydney, particularly in the growth of resident action groups in the lower socio-economic areas in Sydney's west and south-west.

According to Costello and Dunn (1994), between 6 and 18 resident action groups have been established in each of the local government areas in western and south-western Sydney since 1988. A combination of rapid population growth, industrial relocation and the presence of environmental hazards, such as waste disposal sites, is thought to be responsible for this increase in the number of resident action groups (Costello and Dunn, 1994). Networking, the existence of umbrella groups and the assistance given to infant groups by umbrella organisations has also increased levels of resident activism (Costello and Dunn, 1994).

6.2 The United States Perspective

The origins of a national movement for neighbourhood action in the United States began in the 1950s and 1960s when a number of urban renewal programs were initiated at the federal level (Goering, 1979). At the same time citizen participation in local decision-making became a national policy goal under the Johnson Administration and "maximum feasible participation" the identified slogan in the "war against poverty" (Franz and Warren, 1987 p. 229).

During the War against Poverty community action projects attempted to establish new institutions to ensure that *"key decisions as to the future of American cities are made by citizens who live there "* (Frieden and Kaplan, 1975 cited in Goering, 1979 p. 507). Although the War against Poverty ended in 1973 with limited success, and with much cynicism, the belief that citizen participation was necessary and effective political administration was now more embedded in American society (Goering, 1979). Vast numbers of working and middle-class urban residents argued that their needs were as important as those of the minority poor and demanded the same rights of accountability, increased control and improved local services. According to these urban residents, previous large-scale programs had failed as they were designed too far away from the people intended to benefit from them (Goering, 1979).

Calls to return control to the local neighbourhood continued to flourish in the post-Watergate years. Cynicism, distrust of government, black activism, antiwar protest and

the concern over urban blight in the 1970s helped to create the climate necessary for neighbourhood lobbying (Goering, 1979; Franz and Warren, 1987). In response to these demands, the Carter Administration initiated a program of neighbourhood self-help grants and by the mid 1970s neighbourhood citizen action had gathered momentum (Franz and Warren, 1987). As in Australia, important shifts in neighbourhood action occurred. Activities were no longer confined to middle-class localities, extending to inner-city neighbourhoods where a range of issues were dealt with and sophisticated strategies were adopted (Miller, Reid and Levitt, 1990).

However, after this period of growth, neighbourhood organisations were adversely effected by measures implemented in the Reagan Administration. Subsidisation of neighbourhood organisations was systematically removed and groups forced to turn to the local government, private organisations and their own fund raising for survival (Franz and Warren, 1987).

6.3 The Role of Resident Action Groups in the Local Neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods, in particular urban neighbourhoods, have undergone significant transformations in recent decades. As a result of changing employment patterns, shifts in public expenditure, widening economic and social disparities and deteriorating physical environments, residents often feel dissatisfied with their local environment, isolated and alienated from decisions affecting their neighbourhoods (Cnaan and Rothman, 1995;

Hunter, 1979; Wandersman and Giamartino, 1987).

Despite these problems and the movement of urban neighbourhoods away from self-contained communities, neighbours and the local neighbourhood continue to have an important role in society (Cnaan and Rothman, 1995). In rural areas, in the absence of formal helping agencies, neighbours are often the primary contacts of residents and relied upon for social and practical support (Heller, 1989). Relatively close spatial location, in both rural and urban areas, enables neighbours to act as important support systems for emotional and material aid and assist in reducing feelings of isolation (Unger and Wandersman, 1985). In addition, as many contemporary issues involving service delivery, traffic, crime, and environmental hazards become most significant to people at the local level, neighbours also share common problems and needs (Wandersman and Giamartino, 1980).

Resident action groups in the urban neighbourhood have been the focus of various studies and acknowledged for developing an important role in providing the necessary links for residents to band together to improve the neighbourhood (Unger and Wandersman, 1985). Using the metaphor of "grass-roots," to refer to proximity to people and distance from elite power groups, resident action groups can be regarded as grass roots organisations and a vehicle for participation which may enable members to take control over some aspects of their lives (Miller, Reid and Levitt, 1990). Tangible benefits are often provided to the community as a result of collective action, including the introduction and maintenance of services in the local area that are more responsive to community needs

(Checkoway, 1985; Haeberle, 1987).

Resident action groups also foster a greater sense of community and community identity (Cnaan and Rothman, 1985; Haeberle, 1987). In a model developed in the United States, the first stage of community identity commences with residents organising to maintain the integrity of their local area (Morris and Hess, cited in Cnaan and Rothman, 1995). Cnaan and Rothman (1995) compare this process of community, or locality development to Durkheim's concept of an organic community, defined by a high level of interdependence among individuals working together to solve problems (Cnaan and Rothman, 1995).

Despite the proposed benefits of resident activism there is considerable debate in the literature regarding the feasibility of groups being able to meet the demands expected of them (Antrum, 1988; Checkoway, 1985; Costello and Dunn, 1994; Fisher, 1984; Goering, 1979; Miller, Reid and Levitt, 1990). A major dilemma limiting success stems from the context in which resident activism develops and which transcends local community borders. Problems occurring in the local area are often the product of regional, national, and sometimes, international social, economic and political systems (Cnaan and Rothman, 1995; Fisher, 1994). As a result, the site of power needed to address these problems often lie beyond the local area (Fisher, 1984; Goering, 1979). Recognition of these factors has been one of the motivating forces in the United States for a unified national movement of neighbourhood associations to lobby for the political rights and needs of neighbourhoods at the federal level and to provide training and

assistance to groups at the local level (Goering, 1979).

The inability of resident action groups to address problems at their root causes contributes to the short life span of many groups, which in turn, encourages policy makers to ignore their demands, believing that the group may not exist in the near future (Goering, 1979). In some groups, differences among members often results in competing agendas and attempts to mobilise the diverse elements in a local area only serves to increase existing diversions (Heller, 1989). Groups which are successful in addressing the major issue around which they are created, often find it difficult in maintaining viable long-term groups once the initial problem has been resolved (Miller, Reid and Levitt, 1990).

Concern has also been expressed that while the current focus on community participation has resulted in increasing support for resident groups by local council, and other government agencies, there is a real danger that cooperation will become co-option and a new technique for "seducing citizen groups" (Thomas, cited in Logan and Rabrenovic, 1990 p.70).

One of the major ideological debates in the literature on resident activism, in Australia and in the United States, is concerned with whether the movement is inherently conservative or radical and empowering in nature. To many, resident activism has been interpreted as being traditionalist, consisting of minority self-interest groups or the "not-in-my-backyard" movement, mobilising to achieve self-serving causes (Checkoway, 1985; Costello and Dunn, 1994). In Costello and Dunn's (1994) review of the literature, a number of studies of land-use disputes are cited which have been used to illustrate the

extent to which resident activism can "*position the rich against the impoverished, and the powerful against the alienated*" (Costello and Dunn, 1994 p. 63). Jakubowicz has also associated urban activism in Australia with middle-class professionals who have "*declared their moral and intellectual hegemony in the debate*" and having the appropriate resources are the only residents "*allowed access to the system*" (cited in Costello and Dunn, 1994 p. 63).

Given the current distribution of resident action groups in lower socio-economic areas in Sydney it is difficult to continue to regard resident activism as a movement which acts purely to protect the status quo. The social and geographic spread of resident activism is more supportive of the view that resident activism can often represent grass-roots opinion, allowing less powerful groups to challenge formal political processes and demand "*equitable service provision*" (Costello and Dunn, 1994 p. 64).

Fisher (1994) provides an interesting insight into the debate when suggesting that the use of traditional political labels for neighbourhood activism may not be appropriate. According to Fisher (1994 p. 13), neighbourhood activism is not inherently "*reactionary, conservative, liberal, or radical*". Although communities can develop neighbourhood organisations which can initially be regarded as conservative, given the right conditions, these organisations can become radical. Alternatively, organisations which are seen to be "radical" in nature often become conservative when success has been achieved (Fisher, 1994). The politics of neighbourhood activism, as with democracy, is not a static process and, as such, cannot be neatly categorised (Fisher, 1994).

7. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND PARTICIPATION

Despite the volume of resources allocated in community organisations and government departments to establish effective structures to facilitate community participation, and the proposed favourable outcomes of the participation process, a review of the literature reveals continued concern that relatively few people chose to participate in these structures when given the opportunity (Bracht and Tsouros, 1990; Carr et al, 1976; Wandersman et 1987; Prestby et al 1987). As Wandersman et al (1981) states, in order to promote participation it is necessary to clarify the characteristics which influence how an individual perceives the community, whether an individual will participate and what type of participation the individual will perform in any given situation. In Wandersman's framework of participation (1981), individual characteristics are defined as antecedents of participation and motivating factors which provide the context for participation. Other antecedents of participation include the environment, ecological and social characteristics of the community (Wandersman, 1981).

Although the earliest studies investigating individual differences and participation have examined the relationship of social factors to participation, it is now thought that this approach is of relatively limited utility as social background factors are difficult to change (Wandersman et al, 1987). Recent studies have used a social psychological approach, investigating an individual's perceptions and attitudes, and a social exchange perspective, investigating the costs and benefits of participation (Carr et al, 1976; Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Wandersman et al, 1987; Prestby et al, 1990).

7.1 Demographic Factors and Participation

The traditional approach used in community psychology to research individual differences and participation examines the demographic characteristics of people who participate including gender, age, marital status, education and occupational status (Cook, 1983; Wandersman and Giamartino, 1980; Wandersman et al 1987). Using this approach a number of correlational studies have reported a relationship between social class and participation; and gender and participation (Cook, 1983; Wandersman and Giamartino, 1980; Wandersman et al 1987). Participants in voluntary organisations are usually middle-aged, married, well-educated and earning moderate to high levels of income. Participants are also more likely to be male than female (Milbrath, cited in Cook, 1983; Rothman, cited in Young and Jamrozik, 1982).

However, studies examining demographic characteristics have often focused on only one or two demographic variables (Wandersman et al, 1987). In studies that have correlated several demographic variables with measures of participation, demographic variables have accounted for little variance, suggesting that demographic variables have limited explanatory and predictive power in comparison to attitudinal, personality and situational variables (Wandersman et al, 1987). In the Wandersman et al (1987) study, which used demographic, social psychological and cost/benefit variables to investigate the characteristics of participants and nonparticipants in neighbourhood associations in the United States and Israel, ethnic status, occupation and education were not related to participation in either country (Wandersman et al, 1987). However, "rootedness" in the

neighbourhood, indicated by living in the area longer, intention to remain living in the area and having children was associated with participation (Wandersman et al, 1987).

Given the difficulty in changing demographic factors it is believed that further research on the demographic factors associated with participation is unwarranted and the emphasis should now be on exploring psychological variables which can be changed and generalisability of results in different contexts (Smith, cited in Wandersman et al, 1987).

7.2 Social Psychological Factors and Participation

In comparison to the numerous studies that have documented demographic correlates of participation, there have been relatively few studies examining the relationship between participation and social psychological factors in the United States, where most of the research in community participation in voluntary organisations has been conducted (Wandersman et al, 1987). A review of the literature did not reveal any Australian studies of social psychological factors associated with participation.

In a study by Wandersman et al (1987) of neighbourhood associations in the United States and Israel cross-cultural similarities were distinct. Of the 16 social psychological variables examined in the study, the significant and nonsignificant results matched on 14 variables (Wandersman et al, 1987). Variables significantly related to participation included involvement in other community activities; personal influence in changing the

neighbourhood; sense of community in the neighbourhood and importance of sense of community; citizen duty; political efficacy; importance of the neighbourhood, self-esteem and perception of problems on the block (Wandersman, et al, 1987). Variables not significantly related to participation included ratings of neighbourhood characteristics, satisfaction with the neighbourhood, ratings of neighbourhoods past, present and future and power of people to solve problems in the neighbourhood (Wandersman et al, 1987).

The association between sense of community, a significant variable in the Wandersman et al (1987) study, and participation has been the subject of much discussion in the community psychology literature (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Unger and Wandersman, 1982; Wandersman et al, 1987). According to Chavis and Wandersman (1990), sense of community also has a catalytic role in mobilising three of the factors relevant to individual participation: perception of the environment, social relations, and an individual's perceived control and empowerment within the community (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990).

Perception of the environment refers to judgments an individual makes concerning the degree to which the environment, or a particular aspect of the environment, is positive or negative (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990). A relationship between perception of environmental problems and individual participation in voluntary organisations has been established in a number of studies (Florin and Wandersman, 1990 and Carr, Dixon and Ogles, 1976). In one study of a neighbourhood self-help organisation in the United States residents who perceived stability, potency and activity as attributes of their neighbours,

and their neighbourhood as a good place to live, were more likely to participate in the neighbourhood self-help group (Carr, Dixon and Ogles, 1976).

Sense of community may also have a catalytic role in mobilising social relations. The more an individual feels a sense of community the more likely an individual will socially interact with residents in the neighbourhood. This, in turn, is related to individual participation (Unger and Wandersman, 1982). Residents who socially interact with their neighbours are more likely to participate in voluntary organisations, particularly those individuals who have friends and close ties in the neighbourhood (Unger and Wandersman, 1982; Hunter, 1974). Participation in voluntary organisations will, in turn, foster the informal relationships which helps to maintain the organisations in the long term (Unger and Wandersman, 1982; Unger and Wandersman, 1985).

However, participation in voluntary organisations will not result from all social interaction. This was illustrated in Granovetter's study where the inability of a low income Italian community to organise against urban renewal was considered to result from the absence of ties connecting informal cliques within the community (cited in Unger and Wandersman, 1985). While members of the community were involved in highly dense forms of informal cliques there were no ties in place between cliques and few opportunities existed for residents to collectively organise (cited in Unger and Wandersman, 1985).

Similarly, in Crenson's study of organisations within six neighbourhoods, collective

action was encouraged by loosely- knit friendship contacts where an individuals friends did not necessarily know one another (cited in Unger and Wandersman, 1985). In contrast, individuals who had close-knit friends within the neighbourhood did not feel there was a need for an organisation to address neighbourhood problems and were more likely to rely on more informal mechanisms for action (cited in Unger and Wandersman, 1985).

The relationship between a sense of community and perceived control and individual empowerment, the third factor of participation that sense of community may effect has not been fully established. It has been suggested that a sense of community may contribute to the sense of influence residents feel they have in solving problems (Unger and Wandersman, 1985). Although this has been supported in one study, where a sense of community was positively associated with taking action to solve an environmental problem, the results of research examining perceived control and participation remain inconsistent (Matton and Rappaport cited in Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Chavis and Wandersman, 1990).

Another concept related to a sense of community, which is also discussed in the participation literature, is community boundedness, a term used to describe local autonomy (Haeberle, 1987). Boundedness is a composite function of size and degree of isolation. Cities of medium size and those located away from major metropolitan areas tend to be the most well-bounded (Verba and Nie cited in Haeberle, 1987).

Boundedness has also been associated with individual participation. Those areas that acquire the characteristics of a tightly bounded community tend to induce greater participation than comparably sized cities and are able to overcome factors such as low socioeconomic status and level of education (Haeberle, 1987). Residents of well-bounded communities are also more likely to view the community positively in comparison to residents of less well-bounded communities (Haeberle, 1987).

Haeberle (1987) compares this finding to Dahl's "goldilock's problem" where the ideal city is one big enough to have significant issues while remaining small enough to encourage a sense of belonging (cited in Haeberle, 1987 p. 182). Haeberle (1987) suggests that the concept of community boundedness can also be applied at the neighbourhood level and that participation will be maximised in neighbourhoods that are autonomous. Autonomous neighbourhoods need to be sufficiently large to raise issues of planning and development while small enough to allow residents to identify with the neighbourhood (Haeberle, 1987).

Community boundedness is also determined by a social component, such as the characteristics of the residents or the mix of property use and property values, and the dynamics of neighbourhood change, which distinguish the neighbourhood from other systems surrounding it (Haeberle, 1987). The neighbourhoods stage of development impacts the resident's perception of the possibility of successful collective action and residential stability which, in turn, will affect individual participation (Haeberle, 1987).

In reviewing the literature on social psychological characteristics it is clear that one of the limitations of research conducted to date results from the definition used to define participation in voluntary organisations. In many studies participation is determined on the basis of membership in the organisation, without ascertaining the actual level of participation (Cook, 1993). As an individual may be a member of the organisation, without participating in any meetings or activities, it is important to categorise the levels of participation and parameters of different types of participation (Cook, 1993).

Cook (1993) examined the relationship between types of participation and individual characteristics in a neighbourhood in North Carolina, USA threatened by a proposed hazardous waste treatment plant. Participation involving only minimal time and resources was a function of emotional attachment to the neighbourhood and neighbourhood ties (Cook, 1993). Intensive forms of participation was a function of the resources of the resident and the financial investment of the resident in the neighbourhood. Cook (1993) concluded that residents with higher property values were more likely to perceive the potential benefits as warranting their expenditure. Oliver (1984) has also examined active versus token contributions to collective action in a study of residents in a Detroit neighbourhood association. Active members were more highly educated and more pessimistic than token members about the prospects of collective action in the neighbourhood (Oliver, 1994). According to Oliver (1984), active members felt they could not rely on the efforts of other residents to address the problem and adopted the attitude of "if you don't, nobody else will" (Oliver, 1984 p. 601).

In this review of studies on individual characteristics and participation it is important to note that many of the social psychological variables examined in the cross sectional studies, such as sense of community, self-esteem and political efficacy, are also likely to be consequences of participation (Cook, 1993). Longitudinal studies examining individual characteristics before, and after, participation in a range of settings are required before variables can be used to predict participation (Cook, 1993).

7.3 Costs and Benefits Associated with Participation

Many of the studies on individual participation in voluntary organisations have concentrated on the characteristics of participants and ignored the motives of participants or the costs and benefits associated with participation (Widmar, cited in Wandersman et al, 1987). The relatively few studies that have been conducted indicate that a relationship exists between the level of participation and the costs and benefits to members resulting from the participation process (Butterfoss et al, 1993).

Wandersman et al (1987) and Prestby et al (1990) have used Clark and Wilson's trimotivational typology of material, solidary and purposive incentives to explore the type, and number, of personal benefits associated with participation in voluntary organisations. In the typology material benefits are defined as tangible rewards that yield monetary value, such as wages and increased property value. Solidary benefits are derived from group interaction and include favourable group identification, socialising and recognition.

Purposive benefits are derived from achieving the goals of the organisation and include improving the community and fulfilling a sense of responsibility (Butterfoss et al, 1993; Wandersman et al, 1987).

Butterfoss et al (1996) have examined the benefits of membership in a health promotion coalition in South Carolina, USA. Members reported fulfilling their duty to the community, making the community a safer place to live, being involved in an important project and gaining the support of other community members as the greatest benefits of membership. Similarly, in a study of participation in neighbourhood associations in the United States and Israel, benefits of participation included a sense of contribution and helpfulness, increased knowledge of the community, providing a useful service to the community, increased sense of responsibility and friendship with other members (Wandersman et al, 1987). However, the factor analysis for benefits supported a bimotivational typology, consisting of solidary and purposive benefits, rather than the trimotivational typology suggested by Clark and Wilson (Wandersman et al, 1987). Prestby et al (1990) also found a bimotivational typology in their study of neighbourhood associations in the United States.

Despite the benefits received as a result of participation, potential members may decline to participate, or withdraw from subsequent participation, if involvement is perceived as too costly (Butterfoss et al, 1993). Prestby et al (1990) have documented a typology of costs similar to Clark and Wilson's incentive model. Material/personal costs include the time and effort involved with participation and financial sacrifices. Solidary costs include

interpersonal conflict, lack of social support and lack of others' participation and interest in the organisation. Purposive and organisational costs include lack of organisational progress and disagreement with organisational goals and activities (Prestby et al, 1990). In the Butterfoss et al (1996) study of a health promotion coalition time conflicts, added responsibility and not feeling that the coalition could solve problems were the greatest costs to members.

To understand the relationship between costs and benefits and participation levels Wandersman et al (1987) and Prestby et al (1990) have applied the principles of social exchange and political economy theories to their studies of participation in neighbourhood organisations. According to these theories a social exchange occurs in organisations where individuals will only participate if they expect to receive some benefits (Wandersman et al, 1987; Prestby et al, 1990). The benefits must be greater than the costs (termed the value proposition) and the benefits must be varied and more valuable than the costs (termed the deprevation-satiation proposition) (Homan, cited in Prestby et al, 1990).

Political economy theory also stipulates that benefits should be selective, obtained only by members who participate, and reward members for individual contributions (Prestby et al, 1990). Unless benefits are selective members may refrain from participation believing that the same benefits can be received regardless of the level of participation (Olson, cited in Prestby et al, 1990). In regard to the number of benefits received, active participants experience both more rewards and more costs, as a result of their greater

investment/contribution, known as Homan's rule of distributive justice (cited in Prestby et al, 1990). However, costs for the most active participants will be less than the benefits received. The ratio of benefits to costs will also be greater than for less active participants (Prestby et al, 1990).

The results of the Prestby et al, (1990) study of neighbourhood associations supported some of the principles of social exchange and political theory. Higher levels of participation in the neighbourhood associations were significantly related to higher benefits and lower costs and lower levels of participation were significantly related to lower benefits and higher costs (Prestby et al, 1990). However, greater participation in the neighbourhood associations was not associated with greater costs (Prestby et al, 1990). The authors suggest this may be attributed to a response bias, a reluctance to report costs seen as inappropriate or critical of the organisation, and the relatively small number of costs assessed (Prestby et al, 1990).

The most active participants in the study by Prestby et al (1990) also reported that benefits were much higher than costs while the least active participants perceived benefits and costs as equal, as in Homan's rule of distributive justice. Level of participation was most distinguished by personal benefits, such as learning new skills, which were dependent upon more active participation in the association (Prestby et al, 1990).

Of significance to the relationship between individual participation and organisational characteristics was the influence of, what Prestby et al (1990) called, the leader's

incentive management efforts on the costs and benefits received by members. According to social exchange and political economy theory, the chief task of the leader in promoting participation is to manage the incentive system of the organisation (Knoke, cited in Prestby et al, 1990). Consistent with social exchange and political economy theories, higher levels of leader incentive management efforts and cost management efforts were significantly related to greater amounts of member benefits and lower amounts of member costs (Prestby et al, 1990).

In influencing the benefits and costs associated with participation effective incentive management efforts may be an important feature of an empowering organisation (Prestby et al, 1990). According to Prestby et al (1990), participation in voluntary organisations is one mechanism by which individuals can obtain the skills, knowledge, self-perceptions and practice necessary for the development of individual empowerment. As the benefits of participation are positively associated with high levels of participation, incentive management efforts which increase the benefits related to participation, and decrease the participatory costs, can facilitate the process of individual empowerment (Prestby et al, 1990).

However, as Rissel (1994) states a psychological state of empowerment generated from a specific issue will not necessarily transfer to all areas of an individuals life or continue to be maintained at a particular level. Furthermore, while participation in a voluntary organisation may facilitate the process of individual empowerment, it may not result in community empowerment (Rissel, 1994). As empowerment has been proclaimed as the

"symbolic and ideological goal" of areas such as community psychology and health promotion (Prestby et al, 1990 p. 118) it is important to acknowledge the differences between psychological empowerment and individual empowerment.

According to Rissel (1990), individual empowerment is:

" a feeling of greater control over their own lives which individuals experience through group membership, and may occur without participation in collective political action" (Rissel, 1990 p. 41).

In contrast, community empowerment is defined as including:

" a raised level of psychological empowerment among its members, a political action component in which members have actively participated, and the achievement of some redistribution of resources in decision making favourable to the community or group in question " (Rissel, 1990 p. 41).

Thus, while an effective incentive management system may facilitate the process of psychological empowerment among members, the group may not succeed in gaining control over resources, a feature of community empowerment. In addition, the degree of empowerment may vary depending on the issue being addressed by the group. A group may be successful in gaining control over resources in one area but have no success in another area (Rissel, 1990).

To summarise, although the work of Presty et al (1990) and Wandersman et al (1987)

suggest that effective incentive management systems may result in increased participation in voluntary organisations by increasing benefits and reducing costs to members, implications for practice are limited by the absence of longitudinal studies. It would be beneficial if emphasis in future research was placed on exploring the costs, rather than the benefits, associated with participation as relatively little research has been done in this area (Wandersman et al, 1987; Prestby et al, 1990). Unfortunately, there have been no comparative studies conducted in Australia on the costs and benefits associated with participation.

8. ORGANISATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND PARTICIPATION

Various studies have established that individual participation, and its effects, are influenced by the characteristics of the organisation (Wandersman, 1981; Butterfoss et al, 1993; Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). Although there have been relatively few systematic and comparative studies on organisational characteristics, research to date strongly indicates that factors related to organisational effectiveness predict satisfaction with the group, influence the amount of participation in the group, and the costs and benefits associated with group membership (Butterfoss et al, 1993; Butterfoss et al, 1996; Prestby et al, 1990). As discussed in the previous chapter, costs and benefits, in turn, predict participation in the group (Butterfoss et al, 1993; Prestby et al, 1990). Factors related to organisational effectiveness include competent leadership, shared decision-making, linkages with other organisations and a cohesive, task-oriented environment (Butterfoss et al, 1996).

The framework of organisational characteristics related to neighbourhood associations in the United States, developed by Prestby and Wandersman (1985), uses a systems-level conceptualisation of characteristics. According to this model, there is no single variable responsible for organisational viability and a number of several interrelated factors are required for the successful maintenance of the organisation (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). Using this model to obtain a measure of overall organisational climate in neighbourhood organisations, the authors found that participants in active neighbourhood associations viewed their organisations as more cohesive, having more order and being

more practical and task oriented than members of inactive organisations (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). Members of active organisations also reported their leaders as having more control and being more supportive than members of inactive organisations (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). Similar results were also obtained in the Butterfoss et al (1996) study of membership in a community health promotion coalition in South Carolina, USA.

The importance of organisational characteristics is also dependent upon the organisations stage of development (Wandersman et al, 1981; Butterfoss et al, 1993). A number of models of group and organisational development have been proposed in the literature, including Tucker's five stage model of group behaviour (cited in Wass, 1993). In this model the effectiveness of any group depends upon the groups process through the stages of forming, storming, norming, performing and mourning (ending). While some groups may progress through all of the stages, other groups may be unable to resolve issues in one of the stages and the group may subsequently disband (Wass, 1994).

Butterfoss et al (1993) have used the organisational literature to develop a model which focuses on the developmental stages for coalitions including formation, implementation, maintenance and the accomplishment of goals or outcomes. The formation stage of the organisation involves the mobilisation of potential members, establishment of leadership roles, creation of the organisational structure and task definition (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). The maintenance stage of the organisation includes processes such as resource acquisition, membership retention, commitment and participation, and goal

attainment (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). As in Tucker's model of group development, different factors are important in enhancing coalition functioning at particular stages (Butterfoss et al, 1993). Although the model developed by Butterfoss et al (1993) is related to coalition development the model's definition of coalition is sufficiently broad to have applicability to a range of voluntary organisations.

In the Butterfoss et al (1993) model, factors affecting the formation of coalitions include the resources exchanged by potential members leading to inter-organisational cooperation, the benefits members obtain by joining, recognition of a mutual need or purpose, failure of existing efforts to address the problem, legislative or extra-organisational mandates, previous history of collaboration, or competition, between coalition members and capacity to maintain linkages (Butterfoss et al, 1993). Of these factors, the articulation of a clear mission or guiding purpose has been identified as the most important element in coalition formation, influencing the belief of potential members that collaboration will produce positive outcomes (Butterfoss et al, 1993).

Factors affecting the implementation and maintenance of coalitions include the degree of formality within the coalition, the characteristics of the leadership and membership, organisational climate, and relationships with external supports (Butterfoss et al, 1993). According to Prestby and Wandersman (1985) these factors affect the organisation's ability to inculcate normative controls in members and the development of member commitment.

Formalisation is used in the literature to refer to the degree to which rules, roles and procedures are defined within the coalition and the routinisation of coalition operations (Butterfoss, 1993). In the study by Chavis et al, of neighbourhood associations in the United States, there was some evidence to suggest that routinised operations are more likely to be sustained. Associations which had survived for longer than 15 months were more likely to be structured and task oriented than those organisations that became inactive (cited in Butterfoss et al, 1993). Prestby and Wandersman (1985) established that active neighbourhood associations were also more likely to have a formal structure of elected offices such as president, secretary and treasurer. In comparison, inactive associations were more likely to have no formal structure of offices and one person serving as the primary leader. However, in the Prestby and Wandersman (1985) study there were no systematic differences in leadership experience or style identified (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985).

The role of leadership is another factor crucial to coalition implementation and maintenance, particularly in small coalitions or groups which rely on the efforts of a few key people (Butterfoss et al, 1993; Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). According to Washnis, the strength and personal qualities of the leader is more important than any other factor in the maintenance of block organisations (cited in Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). The personal qualities of the leader include the leader's visibility, the group's ability to replace the leader, leadership style, the political efficacy of the leader and the formal training the leader has received (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). According to Butterfoss et al (1983), effective leaders are supportive of members needs,

display competent problem-solving, conflict resolution and negotiation skills, have administrative and communication skills and promote participation within the organisation (Butterfoss et al, 1993).

Furthermore, in organisations with sufficient resources to employ staff, the coalition is likely to be more harmonious if staff and coalition members are clear about their roles, staff show appreciation of the voluntary nature of coalitions and have competent interpersonal skills to facilitate the collaborative process (Butterfoss et al, 1993). Coalition staff also have an important training role to ensure members have the skills necessary for participation (Butterfoss et al, 1993). In a study conducted by Balcazar et al, a skills training program conducted with members of an advocacy coalition resulted in substantial improvements in the overall effectiveness of the organisation (cited in Butterfoss, et al 1993).

The processes of communication, decision-making, problem solving and conflict resolution have also been documented as essential for coalition maintenance (Butterfoss et al, 1993). This was illustrated in the study of neighbourhood associations by Chavis et al where active associations used more methods to communicate with participants than inactive organisations (cited in Butterfoss et al, 1993). The benefits of open communication include the building of trust within the group, improved information dissemination and opportunities for members to express their opinion on group activities (Butterfoss et al, 1993).

Associated with open communication is the process of shared decision-making which has been shown to lead to greater understanding and commitment to the group and group issues (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). Facilitating member influence in decision-making, especially in the initial formation and planning stages of coalitions, appears to foster member commitment and satisfaction (Butterfoss et al, 1996). In studies of neighbourhood associations more active members felt that they had a greater influence in decision-making, regarding the association's policies and actions, in comparison to inactive members. Active neighbourhood associations were also more likely to use a democratic decision-making process than inactive associations (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985).

Although problem-solving and conflict resolution have not been the focus of as much attention in the literature, further research in this area is warranted. As Butterfoss et al (1993) argue decision-making frequently involves conflict, negotiation and compromise and the way in which coalitions manage problem-solving and conflict resolution affects the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the coalition. If the process is defined clearly, and managed well, conflict has the potential to identify new ways for the group to pursue goals and facilitate interaction between members (Butterfoss et al, 1993).

The benefits of establishing coalition links with external resources and organisations have also been studied in relation to participation and organisation viability (Butterfoss et al, 1993; Prestby and Wandersman 1985). External resources include government agencies, neighbourhood, religious and community groups which may provide resources such as

meeting facilities, grant funding, individual expertise, equipment and mailing lists (Butterfoss et al, 1993). In the study of neighbourhood associations by Prestby and Wandersman (1985) associations that continued to remain active tended to have stronger links with community organisers and associations. Knoke and Wood also found that successful voluntary organisations formed ties to organisations that were politically and financially strong in the community (cited in Prestby and Wandersman, 1985).

In reviewing the literature on organisational characteristics it is clear that, while a number of variables have been identified as influencing the formation and maintenance of community organisations, the cross sectional nature of the studies have prevented direct causality from being established (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985). In addition, as indicated in the above review, research has focussed on particular types of organisations, such as neighbourhood associations in the United States, and the results are not generalisable to other types of organisations or organisations in other countries. Further studies are needed to determine which of the variables discussed in the literature are the most influential on participation levels and organisational effectiveness as well as the role the organisation's environment has on organisational maintenance. Although five types of environments have been identified in the literature (cultural, political, economic, technical and physical) it is not yet known whether each has a distinct role in influencing organisational maintenance (Prestby and Wandersman, 1985).

9. CONCLUSION

Studies conducted in the United States exploring the characteristics and motivations of participants in voluntary organisations and the costs and benefits associated with participation, have contributed significantly to systematising an understanding of participation in voluntary organisations and unravelling the paradox of why people refrain from participating in a process which is reported to be so beneficial to both the individual and the community.

However, as a result of the methodological limitations of existing studies further research is needed. The majority of the studies reviewed in this investigation were cross-sectional and examined participation in the formation, or early maintenance, phases of the organisation. Longitudinal studies are required to determine if variables predicting participation and organisational effectiveness remain constant over time. By assessing individual and organisational characteristics, before and after participation, longitudinal studies may establish which characteristics predict participation and which characteristics are consequences of participation.

Although the studies conducted in the United States provide some valuable insights into the type of variables which may influence participation in Australia, the findings may not be generalisable to participation in an Australian context, particularly as the studies focus on a few specific voluntary organisations, such as neighbourhood associations. Systematic quantitative studies in Australia are required to explore the process, and

effects, of participation and the characteristics and motivations of participants. This can then be used as a guide for the selection of appropriate interventions in community based programs and to achieve more effective support of grass-roots organisations. Unfortunately, until this occurs, community participation in Australia is likely to continue to remain in the realm of rhetoric.

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