NARRATIVES BEYOND CIVILITY: MORAL PROTEST AND COOPERATION IN ETHICAL COMMUNITIES

BY

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the rhetoric of partnership and collaboration in the Australian community sectors, economic values of competition have superseded social and co-operative values of self-help, empowerment, mutual benefit and solidarity. Reconfiguration of how co-operative practices can be understood in terms of social capital theory and civil society has been of limited success in countering this slide to economic rationalism. Ironically, many community practices, including co-operatives, explicitly emerged from moral protest against prevailing oppressive policies; that is co-operative and community development practices exist to embody an alternative set of values to oppressive features of dominant political and social institutions of the day.

This thesis identifies and analyses the features of co-operative practices which resist economic capture by the dominant ideology of neo-liberalism. It examines how co-operative practices can be analysed as forms of moral protest that offer and embody counterstories to master narratives that shape dominant institutions. Importantly, it is understood that not all forms of moral protest are socially transformative. While fostering social change, co-operatives must also resist ossification of their own principles and practices into homogenised traditions that exclude rather than include others.

To conduct this analysis, interviews were conducted with subjects engaged in co-operative activities. H. L. Nelson’s (2001) narrative approach to ethics was used to identify how co-operatives can be positioned as counterstories to dominant narratives. T. Cooper’s (1997) distinction between moral and ethical communities was then deployed to account for the features of co-operative practice that might lead to exclusion and non-co-operative identities. Finally, A.W. Frank’s (1995) body-self type continuum was applied to co-operative practices to further evaluate the degree to which those who participated in these saw themselves contributing to practices of social transformation or defensive strategies of personal survival.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: THE JOURNEY’S END 2

PART I. TENSIONS

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMES 26

First there is understanding -- an applied ethics framework

Second there is appreciation -- Cooper’s moral and ethical community

Third there is a need for evaluation -- Nelson’s master narrative and counterstory theory

Fourth there is a commitment to action -- Frank’s body-self types continuum

3. CAPTIVATING TALES 60

Co-operatives and the moral of the story

Identification and the narrative positioning of co-operatives

Does history repeat itself?
Chapter
Contemporary changes to co-operative principles and practices .................. 78
Conclusions .............................. 103

PART II. CAPTURE

4. CAPTIVATED AUDIENCES (I) ......................... 107

The Economic Capture of Commun[all] Values

The fashioning of community development’s identity and social justice ethic ............ 109

Embedded Rationalities ....................... 124

The changing nature of what se[a]ms to be community development ................... 135

Starship Enterprise has landed:
You will co-operate! ......................... 137

Conclusions .............................. 149

5. CAPTIVATED AUDIENCES (II) ......................... 152

Social Capital or Social Capture?

Difficulties of identity-constitution in social capital ............................. 154

Social Capital a contemporary bulwark of neo-liberal master narratives ............... 181

Conclusions .............................. 190

PART III. RESISTANCE

6. NARRATIVE COMPOSITION ......................... 195

I tell therefore you are

Self-Defined moments of identity-constitution .......................... 199

Strong Moral Self-Definition .................... 200
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak Moral Self-Definition</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-moral Self-Definition</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. NARRATIVE CONTESTATIONS</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operators’ [resi]stances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loci of Resistance -- taking a stand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contested spaces of neo-liberalism</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition Stories -- ensembles of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>world views</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Models -- assimilation of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opposition</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy Trends -- a case of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epistemic rigging</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART IV. TRANSFORMATIONS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. NARRATIVE EMBODIMENT</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body-selves and Social Transformation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance -- embodied social transformation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or defensive strategies of personal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>survival?</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirroring Body-Self types:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These Tricks with Mirrors You See!</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplined and Dominating Body-Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>types: the irony is that market freedoms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often lead to force and self-regulation</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Communicative Body-Self:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the ability to recognise others requires</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the ability to [re]cognise oppression</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. CONCLUSION: NARRATIVE REPAIR</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR NARRATIVE DESPAIR?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPILOGUE</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCE LIST</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1. Logo incorporating the knot of eternity designed by Chogyam Trungpa (1976).
TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Features of Moral and Ethical Communities</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Contemporary ICA Principles Contrasted with Traditional Mondragon Principles</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Carson’s (2004) Four Categories of Community</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Three Oppositional Forms of Resistance in Counterstories</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Frank’s (1995) Continuum of the Four Ideal Body-Self Types</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Meta-Narrative of Embodiment in Moral and Ethical Communities</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The chair in my home office now bears a permanent indentation from the hours I have sat working and re-working this task! While grateful for having one, this now most uncomfortable chair was given to me by a neighbour in Highgate Hill days, along with a cast iron based bed that’s impossible to move, a few share houses ago. Why, you ask, does one discuss chairs and beds in an acknowledgement section? Well the practicalities of having the right tools to complete a PhD aside, it starts to show how so many different people have contributed to this project in so many distinctive ways…the piece of ply board another neighbour donated to put over the top of an entirely inappropriately sized desk (the size of something out of Alice in Wonderland!) in the early days before I realised I would need at least three desks to contain all the information required for a PhD…my rarely visited offices at QUT Carseldine, from the School of Humanities, to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, to its current manifestation as the School of Humanities and Human Services - where the chairs hardly bear enough of the marks of the pain of PhD sufferings…the original Apple Mac I started working on, which I received from the late Robert Leach who first encouraged me to continue on with further studies; my graciousness for others’ beliefs in me cannot be put into words. The continued vision and support of my partner Anthony, my principal supervisor Dr Trevor Jordan and associate supervisor David Massey, have really seen this part of the task finally come to completion - along with receiving another desk from Bob Cunningham that seemed to fit much more stuff on it a couple of years back! So talking about my desk, chair and bed tells you a lot about my community of people who have cared for, with and about me during this time of my life. There is no way in which this
final work does not bear their stories and the fragments of ongoing learning and support offered to me from these lived-experiences of community life. I have been inspired by so many of the past and present staff at QUT Carseldine including Dr Peter Isaacs who has contributed to this project in different ways. My work continues to be enriched by all of the staff and postgraduate students in the applied ethics discipline at QUT Carseldine; my academic peers who gave me the inspiration to just get it done -- Dr. Clare Archer Lean, Dr. Lara Cain and Dr. Sara Hammer. Gracious thanks to Queensland University of Technology for my Postgraduate Research Award (2000-2003), the Centre for Social Change Research for resources. I cannot believe it was 1996 when I completed my honours thesis under the supervision of Robert Leach whose passion to change the world and encouragement for me to participate in that conversation is really the reason why I am still an academic; because at the end of the day a PhD is enormously hard work for everyone involved. Most of all, I am deeply grateful of the time that co-operative and community development practitioners have given me during this research project, their dialogues are crucial to this work. I could not find the words either to express the enrichment I have experienced in the encounters with the bodies of knowledge produced by Professor Arthur Frank, Professor Terry Cooper and Professor Hilde Lindemann. Warm thanks and wishes also go to Lynette Hand and Jean Tulloch. The invaluable support from Associate Professor Julie Matthews at the final stages of this research and the feedback from the internal review panel of QUT, in particular Dr. Barbara Hanna Co-ordinator of Postgraduate Research, also warrant significant acknowledgement. I extend loving kindness to my family, tellers and listeners…ah, so many stories to tell. To my beloved, *ram ram ram ram*…*may the dance begin.*
PROLOGUE

You think in words; for you, language is an inexhaustible thread you weave as if life were created as you tell it. I think in frozen images of a photograph.

Allende, Isabelle. *The Stories of Eva Luna.*

‘Tell me a story,’ I say to you.
‘What about?’
‘Tell me a story that you have never told anyone before. Make it up for me’.

Allende, Isabelle. *The Stories of Eva Luna.*

The challenge of any research project is to find the combination of originality and timeliness of a topic for investigation. One must draw on many different stories that have already been told, yet produce some knowledge base that’s never been imparted before. This study is timely in its discussion of community, co-operatives, community development, social capital and the rising dominance of neo-liberalism in Australia. It is also original in its approach to the study, situated in the applied ethics discipline and using a narrative method for analysis; what has come to be called ‘narrative ethics’. The study is a collaboration of perspectives from different researchers, my supervisory team, practitioners, and academic discussions -- though I must accept full responsibility for the views that are presented within because these fragments of other stories have now become incorporated into my research narrative presented herein. I have come to appreciate from this analysis how the moral figurations that emerge from stories and our dialogical encounters are part of our ethical voice, which echoes our human desire to be and live an ethical life. Stories have an implicitly active component, they ask us to listen, to tell or to transform certain situations, stories call us to commit to actions. There is an implicit ethical quest to stories. In many respects, this research has become a story that reflects much of my personal life story, while being a somewhat ‘made-up’ story of how I’d like to see community
life in Australia. I have worked in the community sector for ten years under the
arrangements that I discuss, I have participated in some of the movements I refer
to for longer than I remember, and I have struggled throughout these experiences
to find and imagine with others what it means to live in an ethical community that
embodies the ethical life. The study therefore, as all narrative does, contains both
imagined and real elements.

At the heart of this work is the view that the human body too is a picture that tells
us stories ‘language is an exhaustible thread you weave as if life were created as
you tell it’ (Allende 1991, 3). Language is not just verbal, it is non-verbal and has
hidden meanings, symbolic, if we look closely enough this is how the body tells
its stories, ‘in frozen images of a photograph’ (Allende 1991, 3). Communities
are a bigger picture of all of our bodies put together and how we look as one and
many of our different communities is just as reflective of who we take ourselves
to be individually. To think of community as a body of people living and being
together, community as being a body that tells its own stories too and therefore,
community as embodied, is a challenge that this work calls to us to remember.
Ultimately, life is about living and working together in relation with others, and
this is why community is seen as both an embodied phenomenon and central to
the construction of our individual identities.

She went by the name Belisa Crepusculari, she made her living selling
words…‘Are you the woman who sells words?’ he asked. ‘At your
service,’ she stammered, peering into the dark trying to see him better…‘I
want to be President,’ he announced. ‘To do that, I have to talk like a
candidate. Can you sell me the words for a speech?’ the Colonel asked
Belisa Crepusculario. (Allende 1991, 6-7)

I sometimes wish that I could have been sold the words for this ‘speech’ and even
on completion it feels as if the final words have still eluded me. This is in one
part why the knot of eternity is included at the beginning of each part of the study
and I express eternal gratefulness to Diana J. Mukpo, the widow of Chogyam
Trungpa, for her permission to use the knot of eternity in the context of this thesis.
For you reader, I ask you to think about it as an ongoing motif and question being
asked in the research about the paradoxical interrelationship between community
and freedom; it is symbolic of the something that eludes words throughout the
work. It is also a reminder that completion of this study has been much like the
knot of eternity -- endless. In the words of Arthur Frank (2004) the knot of
eternity can also be seen as an indication, that, in the end, ‘stories are unable to be
finalised’ their dialogical nature continues to speak beyond pages -- they become
frozen images of paragraphs or narratives embodied by us waiting for our listeners
to arrive. The knot of eternity, which appeared on the cover Trungpa’s (1976)
book *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation*, is a symbolic
representation of how we spend much of our life endlessly searching for goals to
satisfy our desires. Much time is spent looking for the final moment, the final
answer. Trungpa questioned, however, whether we pursued these goals with true
freedom or just a myth of freedom? What were our intentions and motivations to
these actions he asked.

Not an image on a plate, but one traced by a fine pen, a small perfect
memory with the soft volumes and warm colours of a Renaissance
painting, like an intention captured on grainy paper or cloth. It is a
prophetic moment; it is our entire existence, all we have lived and have yet
to live, all times in one time, without beginning or end…I know I am
myself, but I am also this person observing from the outside…I am there
with you but also here, alone in a different frame of consciousness. (Carle
in Allende 1991, 3-4)
# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAP</td>
<td>Australian Assistance Program</td>
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<td>ACCORD</td>
<td>Australian Centre for Co-operative Research and Development</td>
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<td>ACM</td>
<td>Australian Co-operative Movement</td>
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<td>APC</td>
<td>Australian Productivity Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSL</td>
<td>Brotherhood of Saint Laurence</td>
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<td>CACOM</td>
<td>Centre for Australian Community Organisations Management</td>
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<td>CDEP</td>
<td>Community Development Employment Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVic</td>
<td>Department for Victorian Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAICA</td>
<td>General Assembly of the International Co-operative Alliance</td>
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<td>ICA</td>
<td>International Co-operative Alliance</td>
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<td>IEP</td>
<td>Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCSS</td>
<td>Mondragon Co-operative Social System</td>
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<td>MCC</td>
<td>Mondragon Co-operative Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCEC</td>
<td>Nundah Community Enterprise Co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGC</td>
<td>New Generation Co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>National Competition Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Author’s Note

In this thesis, the terms *moral community* and *ethical community* are often used, as they are by Terry Cooper, to refer to a substantive distinction between two contemporary ways of embodying values. Elsewhere in the thesis, where this substantive distinction is not being addressed, the terms *moral* and *ethical* are used interchangeably.
INTRODUCTION

THE JOURNEY’S END

‘It is both short and stupid enough,’ said I. ‘The river having lost its practical or commercial value – that is, being of no use to make money of – ’ She nodded. ‘I understand what the queer phrase means,’ said she. Go on!

William Morris. *News from Nowhere.*

In 2005 a medium-sized, Queensland-based youth service moved from its traditional model of service as a non-profit incorporated association dependent on government funds to a company limited by guarantee. At the launch of this new company structure, the Chair of the Management Committee suggested that government pressures, competition and limited resources had forced the organisation to adopt this approach. Indeed, ‘failure to be competitive with the provision of services leaves organisations vulnerable to loss of finance and resources’ (United Synergies 2005, 6). Non-profits are increasingly being forced to establish for-profit structures to survive and diversify their service provision.¹

A 32% growth rate of for-profit activity in community and human services from 1996 to 2002 illustrates some of the impact that privatisation of public services and dominance of free-market policies have had on Australian community sectors (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) cited in United Synergies 2005, 6).

Movement to a company by guarantee structure was seen as a method for this community organisation to resist the direct impacts of economic rationalisation,

¹ In its 1999 yearbook on Australia’s non-profit sector, the ABS (1999, 1) referred to non-profit organisations as ‘non-profits,’ rather than not-for-profit. The study will employ the former terminology throughout.
competitive tendering and out-sourcing of government services, all three of which are dominant features of neo-liberal political-economic arrangements. In their own words ‘the outsourcing of government services and competitive tendering has positioned non-profit organisations and their clients in an economic paradigm’ (United Synergies 2005, 6). The difficulty is that the economic paradigm alone cannot account for and respond to all community, social or individual needs. It is surprising, therefore, that many community organisations are transforming their previously non-profit structures to become for-profit companies competing in a community services marketplace.

These dominant economic trends warrant reconsideration in terms of how they signify further loss of communal values and a waning social agenda in community development sectors. How can the ethical dimensions of co-operative engagement and practices be accounted for in light of the prominence of neo-liberal policies and political-economic arrangements? Moreover, what do these ethical dimensions offer to an increasingly economic and competition dominated community development sector? In this context, inequalities and restrictions on the ability of co-operators and community development workers to achieve alternative social visions and to embody co-operative principles have emerged. This is significant because community development used to be seen and understood as a practice that offered an alternative to structural injustices. It is necessary, then, in this neo-liberal climate to work toward the transformation of oppressive structures and negative identity representations that have resulted from neo-liberalism.
This is an ever-present problem, even if only appearing as a kind of utopian fantasy, as expressed by William Morris in *News from Nowhere* in 1890. Morris’s (1890) utopian dream, (he would have commanded it be called a vision), was written as a direct resistance to the seemingly limitless machine of development characteristic of late 19th century industrialisation. Morris desired a return to ‘simplicity, even austerity, where possessions or luxuries were regarded as sources of spiritual corruption’ (Redmond 1970, xxxv). In terms of traditional 19th century utopian writing, Morris can be said to have represented a character that will be called a ‘counter-identity’ in the study.

Morris was a counter-identity because he strayed from and rejected the dominant communist and utopian socialist visions of the time, which were premised on industrialism as the hope of man (sic).² His closing discussion in his book about ‘the river having lost its practical or commercial value -- that is, being of no use to make money of -- ’ was a signal that money, in Morris’s utopia, was no longer used and the environment was valued for its intrinsic worth. Such a view was in direct opposition to the rise of capitalism and materialism fostered by the onset of industrialisation. Morris’s (1890) contention was that industrialism would lead to the machine-like life that Edward Bellamy (1888) had proffered in his dystopian text *Looking Backward*.

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² Redmond (1970, xxxvii) said that Morris had ‘inherited [views] from the Romantic Movement [which] led him to reject some important attitudes common on socialist thinking; for Morris thought of the New Birth [utopia] as an escape not only from class exploitation, but also from a world determined by technology. Most socialists have believed that a golden age [could] only come when the benefits of machine production [were] shared equally among men’. This also contributes to understanding Morris as a counter-identity because like other Romantics, such as Walden, Morris has a respect for the environment that is uncharacteristic of the Industrial period. The dominant narrative of modernisation saw the environment as something to be conquered with endless resources for exploitation.
Redmond (1970, xxxvi) summarised that Bellamy had developed a vision of regulated human life that fell into four parts:

Everyone is compulsorily educated until he is twenty-one (sic), then is forced to work for three years at some job no-one will volunteer for, then he may choose (within limits) some job to work at until he is forty-five, at which age he will be superannuated. There are many rules and everyone must obey them to the letter, for to deny the authority of the system is, as Bellamy puts it, to commit suicide.

Morris (1890) was appalled at this futuristic vision that offered, in fact, ‘a bureaucrat’s paradise, for everyone is regularly graded, and various rewards ensure that every [person] tries to do better than their neighbour’ (Redmond 1970, xxxvi).

*News from Nowhere* was a utopian counter narrative written as an alternative to Bellamy’s futuristic vision of Boston U.S.A in the year 2000.³ The strange reality is that six years on from Bellamy’s predictions about the year 2000, people stay in school and education institutions longer, many people do in fact do jobs that no-one will volunteer for, and superannuation has been enforced by the state to ensure that individuals pay their own way. *Looking Backward* provided the basis of many dystopic texts that followed in 19⁰ and 20⁰ century literature, from E. M. Forster, Aldous Huxley to Franz Kafka’s bleak predictions of conformity and coercion (Redmond 1970). These themes and characteristics from utopian and dystopian texts illustrate different social visions of imagined futures and communities that are eerily repeated themes and characteristics of 21⁰ century

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³ The terms narrative and story have specific meanings in this study, these are explained in chapter 1 as are the features and functions of each term: counter narrative, counterstories and master narratives. These latter terms are explicated in further detail in chapter 6 and 7 of the study as well. At this stage the important point for consideration is how Morris’s vision was counter to the dominant narrative of industrialism.
forms of community life.

That utopias and dystopias were supposed to reflect imagined places -- nowhere but so obviously somewhere -- did not mean that they were not formulated as social commentaries and political texts grounded in socio-political realities. For example, these rule-based, authoritarian communities that Bellamy (1888) wrote of can be understood in the 21st century as moral communities, communities that remain closed, bounded and homogenous (Cooper 1997). Morris’s (1890) counterstory, in contrast, can be seen as a vision of ethical communities, those imagined communities which are based on ethical principles, values and chosen over time (Cooper 1997). This study seeks to source counter narratives like Morris’s to formulate an alternative and ethical counterstory to neo-liberal dominance.

In this study, accounts from participants in small, localised co-operatives are read and analysed as counterstories and counter narratives to economic master narratives of neo-liberalism. Narrative excerpts are selected from interviews conducted with six people who hold membership to either formally registered or informal unregistered co-operatives. Each person is either a member of a housing

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4 The importance of Cooper’s (1997, 10-12, emphasis mine) moral and ethical community distinction lies with the substance of the terms; not the actual terms themselves. It is how the values that are listed under Cooper’s distinction are embodied that is important to this study. In moral communities, norms and values are generated by traditions that are given from the past, chaos is removed by the establishment of law and order, homogeneity is not only encouraged but relied upon, there is religious conviction about absolute right and wrong, community is disaggregated into enclaves and authoritative. The ethical community, in contrast, is built around a lack of encompassing tradition, directed toward democratic governance, dialogically formulated, heterogeneous, multi-logical, and interdependent. Ethical communities are constructed socially, they are analytical, deliberative, reflective and involved. It is important to emphasise that Cooper’s sense of the moral and ethical community were as coterminous; Cooper does not intend for these to be considered an either/or choice, neither does he suggest that there is one moral or one ethical community model.
co-operative, service-based co-operative, a workers’ co-operative or, in two instances, they are community development workers engaged with informal co-operative activities. The community development workers are selected intentionally to contrast how co-operators conceive of co-operative practices themselves and how community workers, who use them predominantly as a development tool, perceive them. Subtle distinctions between how values and co-operative principles are interpreted, enacted and embodied are expected between both the community development worker accounts and the other co-operators, and indeed, between the reflections on the different co-operative types themselves.

The participants were selected via an evaluation of the values and co-operative principles expressed in their various organisational mission statements. Where people expressed explicit commitments to co-operative principles they were approached for participation in the study. Additionally, the participants share a common history of engagement in one local community where moral protest and alternative social visions figure heavily in the community’s identity either by people having lived or worked there at some point, or by them still living and working there. This link with the geographical region was an additional criterion used to select people to interview. This is because the study seeks to evaluate whether people’s participation in co-operative activities contributes to notions of moral or ethical communities; that is, how can a vision of an ethical counterstory to neo-liberalism be formulated (the ethical community) and what role will some co-operative examples play in this? In this respect, it was necessary to find a region where local community members had a history of engaging in co-operative activities.
All six accounts are referred to in the study as ‘co-operator stories,’ and a core criterion for participation is that each of the participants identify with the principles and values of co-operativism in their day to day work practices. The contributors are individually asked the same interview question in the study -- tell me what you do and why you do it? At some points the interviews had additional, open-ended interview questions to flesh out participants’ responses. For example, what do you think of social capital? These additional questions were oriented toward master narrative themes of competition, efficiency and competitive tendering to further appreciate how co-operators were responding to political-economic changes.

The co-operator stories are analysed in the study according to whether they meet the criteria of counterstories or master narratives, according to Nelson’s (2001) major work in this area. The differences between each narrative type provides insights into features of identity-constitution for co-operators; that is, what mattered to the person for them to join the co-operative, which values counted as representative of their self and identity, and how did co-operative principles figure into their practices. Given that a narrative method to analysis generates a large amount of data, six accounts are adequate for considering the unique moral particularities, and life stories that co-operators bring to the discussion. Any more numbers results in, almost, too many voices to be able to hear.

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5 The term ‘co-operator’ is used in co-operative movement literature to refer to someone who is an active or informal member in a co-operative or collective. The term signifies the person’s intentions and commitment to the seven co-operative principles of ‘voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member economic control, autonomy and independency, education, training and information, cooperation between co-operatives, and concern for community (ICA 1995). These are the seven principles adopted in 1995 by the International Co-operative Alliance, the international body that represents over 200 co-operatives in over 70 different countries (Hoyt 1996). The term co-operator is used in this study in the same sense.
In a sense, the co-operator accounts continue to reflect utopian debates between Bellamy’s and Morris’s proposed visions of communities. For this reason they are said to offer important counter-messages to dominant economic narratives of neo-liberalism. Of particular interest is how these co-operator stories have illustrated resistance to these economic narratives that dominate. This is because those who represent counter-identities -- those characters who seek to embody alternative sets of values and principles to dominant institutions and injustices -- have experienced imposed constraints on their moral agency to enact social and structural changes as a result of the neo-liberal push in Australia since the 1980s. Counter-identities find it increasingly difficult to embody an alternative social vision in this dystopic, Bellamy-like future.

A myriad of representations about peoples’ identities can be found in research literature on co-operatives and community development. These representations are often shaped around the anti-systemic characteristics of co-operative activity, or the counter-cultural links of community development. In many studies, co-operators and community development workers have been ‘narratively positioned’ as complainers, rabble rousers, on the fringes and anti-authority types. These characterisations can be seen in literature that draws on what Jasper (1997) called, ‘protestor plots.’ The protestor plot positions contestations as flights of fancy or as anarchic, anti-systemic arguments that will result in chaos if the views are

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6 Narrative positioning refers to the process by which individuals and groups become captured by or embody particular narrative representations. Identities are positioned to either suit or be complicit with these narrative representations. Bamberg (2004, 366) highlighted that ‘being-positioned and positioning oneself are two metaphoric constructs of two very different agent-world relationships: the former with a world-to-agent direct fit, the latter with an agent-to-world direction of fit’. This presents a moot question of whether narratives construct us or we construct them? To avoid this separation, Bamberg (2004, 366) rightly contended that ‘both operate concurrently in a kind of dialectic as subjects engage in narratives-in-interaction and make sense of self and others in their stories’.
accepted. Protest is disregarded by those in power as a complaint, a plight of less-than desirable others who do not always subscribe to dominant norms and so caution ought to be exercised in listening to these peoples’ alternative views. The protestor plot is a concept that is strategically deployed to devalue the alternative social vision that might be on offer from many co-operative and community development practices.

Another plot that is drawn upon is the ‘heroic saviour plot,’ where, in spite of adversities and constraints on resources and individuals’ capacity to enact change, there are those community workers who continue to win through in the end (Miller 2004). The ‘heroic saviour’ plot is a kind of happily-ever-after story, which gives the impression that community development creates empowered, socially aware and fair communities regardless of the circumstances. Communities are positioned in this latter perspective in a kind-of utopian manner; they are represented as capable of achieving anything with the right worker or facilitator to unlock talents and assets (Berner and Phillips 2002). Neither the protestor plot nor the heroic saviour plot, however, adequately captures the moral purposes that underpin co-operative and community development practices. In this sense, community development and co-operative practices have been little understood for their ethical and transformative dimensions.

Many co-operative and community development practices used to be seen as the kinds of activities that embodied not only an alternative social vision, but also alternative sets of values and principles to the dominant institutions of the day. Paz (1996) summarised this moral dimension of co-operative identity:
Our values and principles are our self-definition, our distinctive contribution to society and the basis for our practical activities. The test of our values and principles is not only in their intrinsic morality, the logic and social justice which they embody, but in our ability to translate them concretely and realistically from social theory into social fact and to make them effective in our daily lives. It is only a courageous social movement which would dare to probe so deeply and so openly into the foundations on which it rests. (quoted in Hoyt 1996, 6)

It will be argued, however, that current neo-liberal policies and economic values have restricted the ability of co-operative social visions to take hold, instead privileging competition, consultancy and enterprise model arrangements (Hooper A. 2001). This will obviously impact on the sorts of communities that emerge and the intrinsic morality that is embodied within co-operative principles and practices will risk being subsumed within economic values. Presently, many communities can be said to be increasingly characteristic of Bellamy’s rule-governed world, than of Morris’s imagined vision of an ethical community. This means that the sorts of relationships that are fostered depend on demands and prescriptive norms, rather than conversationally established, chosen values and principles.

The intended aim and purpose of this research is to examine how it is that in light of this, some current co-operative practices counter the impact of self-governance and corporatisation trends affecting many Western nations and the limitations these trends place on human potential for social transformation. Other theorists, Jacques Boulet (1997; 2003) and Race Mathews (1999), have examined the possibilities of co-operative alternatives, but their work does not acknowledge the role that master narratives play in co-operative identity-constitution and the realisation of a social alternative. Neither do the theorists examine the explicit
ethical dimensions of co-operative practices. The present examination of the social and ethical dimensions of co-operative practice is guided by the following four research objectives.

1. To analyse community development theory and practice, particularly as it relates to notions of ‘development’ and ‘social capital’, noting the relative absence of explicit ethical frameworks.
2. To explore, critique and critically extend Cooper’s (1997) distinction between moral and ethical communities.
3. To interpret and appraise a selection of co-operative accounts using Nelson’s (2001) master narrative and counterstory theory.
4. To outline, from the point of view of applied ethics, possible normative conclusions for some community development, narrative research and co-operative practices.

The research focus centres, then, on the development of an understanding of how some co-operatives practices can both resist dominant economic narratives and be complicit with neo-liberal master narratives. To evaluate these possibilities of resistance or complicity, the study uses Nelson’s (2001) concepts of

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For example, Boulet (2003, 121) recounted the formation of Borderlands co-operative in Melbourne, Australia which ‘grew out of an ever deepening frustration with both the established institutional processes of learning, working and living being imposed on people in (a society like) Australia and the palpable impotence of attempts by individuals and organisations at resisting that imposition...And, as usual in such circumstances, the ‘divide and rule’ strategy (masked as ‘competitive tendering’ for example) employed by those in economic and political power worked its way into the hearts and souls of the diverse movements and the mere struggle for survival by organisations and individuals alike did the rest’. He cites Mathews’s location of the co-operative within the ‘context of early Fabian and social catholic/christian philosophy of ‘distributism’, and re-emerging in Nova Scotia, Canada and in the co-operative movements of Mondragon Spain’ (Boulet 2003, 123). Mathews (1999), he suggested, also attributes the re-birth of the co-operative movement with some newly ‘emerging ‘alternative’ political and economic discourses, notably social entrepreneurialism, social capital, associative and deliberative democracy, civil society and others’. Two key points emerge from Boulet’s (2003) and Mathews’s (1999) work. First, Boulet alludes to the co-operative forming as an act of moral protest, but this does not take primary place in his discussion. Second, the emerging ‘alternatives’ that Mathews cites, are not alternatives in the sense of providing an egalitarian, left-wing orientated social vision, these are alternative versions, themes and ensembles of neo-liberal master narratives which, this study argues, pose a threat to co-operative principles and values.
counterstories and master narratives as criteria when examining the six co-operator stories, as indicated above. In chapter 1 (part I), these conceptual frames and their application to the various parts of the study are outlined in greater detail. Both Nelson’s and Cooper’s concepts are also used to evaluate pre-existing literature on co-operatives and community development in part I and II respectively.

Once the co-operator stories are understood in light of this master narrative and counterstory perspective, further consideration is given to the potential for co-operators to embody either communicative practices of social transformation or various defensive strategies of individual and collective survival. The technical terms offered by Cooper (1997) (moral communities and ethical communities) are used to understand and appreciate embedded values and principles of these variety of community development oriented contexts and to identify the features of co-operative practices that might contribute to either moral or ethical communities.

The embodied nature of being in co-operatives is then further understood in the study by deployment of Frank’s (1995) concept of a continuum of body-self ideal types. Frank’s (1995) concept is used here to extend Nelson’s (2001) practical and analytic work on counterstories. This latter part of the evaluation, part IV, is an attempt to understand and appreciate how oppression is an experience, felt and responded to in an embodied manner. This means that resistance to unjust circumstances, master narratives and structural situations is not automatically socially transformative. The embodied experience of oppression will play an important role in whether social transformation is achieved or defensive strategies
of personal survival ensue.

Additionally, these matters of embodiment assist to flesh out Cooper’s (1997) distinction between the moral and ethical community and to confirm how embodiment, as feminist theorists contend, is central to conceptualising community (Friedman 1993). To understand further the embodied nature of being in the context of co-operative engagement, one can look to what Bauman (1995) termed the forms of togetherness expressed within co-operatives. In the co-operative context, embodiment is not just about being-aside others; but it is also a form of togetherness that is characterised by relations of either being-aside, to being-with to being-for others (Bauman 1995, original emphasis).

To be not only with but for others is a core concept of co-operative practice as we shall come to understand. These forms of togetherness and ethical relations are explicated in the conceptual frames chapter which follows; they are used as an additional set of technical devices within the study to provide a further nuanced account of the relational aspects of co-operative and community development practices. Peoples’ commitment to co-operative practices can be understood as acts of moral recognition, an expressed recognition of their interdependent state of being-in-the-world with others. To understand what contributions these relations make to moral or ethical community formation is to appreciate the finer, relational aspects of communal life.

Neo-liberalism’s arrival from the 1980s onwards across the globe saw the Australian government restructure the community services environment and place
the values of competition, productivity and diversification as central.

Organisations and services now compete for minimal funding for which they must be seen as productive and contributing to certain outputs. Where necessary, to be eligible for funding they must also diversify their service provision to meet requirements (Onyx 2001). The result of these shifts is a fragile community services environment, where the most common story told is about competition against each other, ‘where everyone tries to do better than their neighbour’ for access to minimal resources in spite of the rhetoric of partnership and collaboration (Redmond 1970). These effects are being felt in a number of other industries and sectors also, but this study is particularly focused on the impacts of these economic trends in community development and co-operative sectors.

These two practices are considered in conjunction with each other in this research because community development was developed on the principles of cooperation and has used this model in its practices since its inception in the 1970s. The extent to which community developers can exercise moral agency in the face of neo-liberal dominance (that is, continue to embody an alternative set of values and principles to dominant institutions) will be shown to have been slowly eroded.

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8 See Brecher and Costello (1994, 4) for a rewarding discussion of the negative effects of the global transition to free market economics. Communities, countries and workers are pitted against each other in competition to attract corporate investment. Brecher and Costello suggested that we are experiencing a situation of, ‘downward levelling which is in part an unintended consequence of millions of interconnected decisions made by individuals and business pursuing their private interests’. By downward levelling Brecher and Costello (1994, 5) argued that the poorest and most desperate bear the affects of globalisation and increased corporate agendas, characterized by ‘pervasive feelings of powerlessness in the face of unaccountable global forces’.

9 This perspective is an under examined aspect of community development theorising as well. For example Boulet (2003, 123), after a description of the seven co-operative principles states, ‘as one can readily derive from the above, the co-operative philosophy approaches pretty closely that of community development in its various guises’. It does, however, it is community development that approaches co-operative philosophy and examined from this stand point one can ask what has happened to the embodiment of co-operative principles and philosophy within community development?
over time. In short, there is no room for communal relationships in neo-liberalism outside of economic transactions. So where, given community development’s emphasis on social relationships, co-operative principles and values, does community begin and end now? The flow-on effects of these economic transitions are mostly felt in service provision contexts where clients experience transient services; they might, for example, talk to a different person each time they phone a service, and they may often experience a change of worker every three to six months. The community services environment is seen as unstable, transitory and subject to further economic capture, with increasing signs that non-profits are changing their structures to suit dominant government models of business by transferring to companies limited by guarantee. Additionally, the ability to plan long-term for service provision, community support and development is restricted by short-term funding cycles and contracts.

In an environment dominated by economic thinking, it is difficult to even hear examples that counter the individualistic, atomised accounts of community that have emerged via neo-liberal narratives, let alone hear the sorts of counterstories - like Morris’s (1890) -- that can conduct narrative repair and free demoralised individuals and reclaim moral agency to achieve social change. Some co-operative examples, it is anticipated, can provide these much needed counterstories.

Narrative repair is the term that Nelson used to describe the resistive function that counterstories play. For her counterstories conduct narrative repair -- that is, they set parts of a story right that the master narrative in question has gotten wrong; they repair the damage caused to identities by oppressive master narrative depictions -- this repair enables individual and collective moral agency to be free to express one’s identity according to their own terms. For the counter-identities in this study, narrative repair means repair of diminished and damaged identity representations so that moral agency is freed for individuals and collective bodies to work toward the embodiment, and enactment, of an alternative social vision.
Traditional and dominant explanations of co-operative practices have depicted them in light of their economic contributions (Zeuli 2002), or they have suggested that co-operatives are formed to assist governments to do the work that they ought to be responsible for (Putnam 1997; 2001). Co-operatives have also been used as prototype templates for community development activities; in particular, to counter the effects of unemployment for young people (cf. Bhuyan & Leistritz 2000; Jamorozik & Beck 1981).

Silenced and absent in many of the dominant analyses are the ethical dimensions of protest and resistance inherent in co-operative practice. While a social movement theory analysis of many co-operative examples can certainly include some of these dimensions, the explicit ethical and social dimensions of cooperation need to be understood in greater detail. The diversity of co-operative experience means complex normative questions of identity, values and principles, including moral purpose need to be addressed. The role that co-operative practices can play in disrupting and transforming oppressive structures is yet to be fully understood.

Instead of seeing co-operative membership as an act of moral protest or commitment to an ethical community, dominant studies in sociology (for example social capital analyses) have portrayed them as something that enables the successful democratic functioning of government to happen (Putnam 1995; 1993a; 2001). These studies lump co-operative practices with other forms of civic activity (usually within what is understood in community development circles as the non-profit sector), which homogenises and ignores the distinctive moral
particularities at play in co-operative, and other voluntary and charitable non-profit sector activities (see ABS 1999). They ignore how many co-operative practices, as expressions of self-help, can be understood as representations of moral protest by a group of people dissatisfied with the dominant system who come together to envision their own alternative. These problems (of how many co-operatives have been represented in research) may also be the result of the manner in which protest and social movements have previously been examined. Jasper (1997, 9), for example, highlighted that:

Prior to the civil rights movements moral protest was dismissed as a crowd dynamic, a sort of irrational frenzy that erupts when people are thrown together in large numbers. [Post civil rights movements] newer theoretical approaches see moral protest as the disguised pursuit of material self-interest rather than as an effort to realise a moral vision.

The moral purpose of counter-activities and strategies has been pushed to the sidelines of much research and, in particular, some co-operatives have also been criticised as being actions of self-interest, rather than being socially transformative practices (see Von Mises n.d.).

For Jasper dominant theoretical approaches and analyses of moral protest have to date ignored or conflated the moral dimensions of protest. Mention is made of the ethics of cooperation; however, a normative ethical understanding of co-operative practice is difficult to find (cf. Fairbairn 2003). In the present study, co-operatives are examined as distinctive forms of moral protest that intentionally resist dominant narratives like neo-liberalism and other dominant economic narratives, including the social capital theoretical trend. Co-operatives are seen to represent counterstories to dominant institutional injustices, and to provide a site for people to embody alternative principles that work toward an alternative social vision.
Foremost, this study is based on the claim that it is the notion of an alternative social vision, a conception of a good life or just society that often drives people to resist other oppressive stories or systems and join a co-operative or other type of intentional community. This ethical vision was what drove Morris (1890) to counter Bellamy’s (1888) picture of despair, and it is this ‘moral [and ethical] dimension,’ as Jasper (1997) referred to it, that is absent in research. This dimension is central to understanding ethical communities and how to realise them in practice. Similarly, these are the dimensions that allow for the ideal ethical relations of being-for to build from the relations of being-with.

“Community” has returned from the darkness of Margaret Thatcher’s popularised catchcry that there is no such thing as society only individuals (Cox 1997, 1) to become bandied around by politicians, media reporters, academics and policy makers alike.11 Its blanket application to a broad range of issues has confused how we understand the deeper, ethical aspects of communal life.12 Activities like co-operatives are seen via a new homogenised gaze of community, as if everything can be understood and explained within the lens of social capital theory.

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11 Thatcherism in Britain signified the beginning of a global neo-liberal push. It was said to be an amalgam of economic liberalism, monetarism, anti-corporatism, authoritarianism and populism (Benyon in Kingdom 1992, 2). The Thatcherite agenda entailed ‘nothing less than the death of what she herself termed ‘socialism,’ and what others termed ‘social democracy,’ as the price of national economic revival’ (Kingdom 1992, 2).

12 Carson (2004, 1) detailed that “[Australian Prime Minister] John Howard used the term 11 times in his “Motion for Reconciliation” (1999) speech, illustrating the popularity of the term and how it is applied without explanation to propose some kind of majority consensus.
The relationship between self and community, an important part of our being as humans, is often relegated to the sidelines including the concept of people having and being enabled to live according to their moral purposes. Many of these arguments have historically been understood within a debate that has advocated the benefits of either liberalism or socialism. Much of the contemporary world, however, no longer sees socialism as an alternative, with the collapse of the former Eastern European bloc and the increasing stories of the oppressive nature of other communist nations.

Additionally, the values of liberalism have been fused with the economic vision of neo-liberalism to propose the new social vision for the 21st century. Neo-liberal prominence raises the question of what, if any, are the alternatives? This is particularly so when one considers how dissident voices across a number of sectors traditionally opposed to right-wing ideology, such as trade unions, higher education and left-wing political activist movements, have been silenced and quashed.13

Ultimately the direct impact of these shifts will be on the types of communities that emerge across Australia, because at the heart of neo-liberalism is a problematic view of the self and individual as isolated, atomised and separate

13 Graham and Cameron (2001, 2) described this lack of a strong voice from the left of the political spectrum in their research, ‘[those of us on the left] started out, embarrassingly, with no real desire for “socialism.”’ Yet maybe that’s not so surprising. Over the last hundred years, the word has been drained of utopian content and no longer serves, as it once did, to convene and catalyze the left. This makes it difficult even to speak of “the left” or to use the pronoun “we” with any confidence or commitment. As self-identified leftists at the end of the 20th century, we found ourselves tongue-tied, not knowing who or what we might speak for’.
from others (Friedman 1993). If one takes the ethical community as premised on
dialogical and interdependent being, as Cooper (1997) articulates, then, surely the
neo-liberal view of self and individual cannot possibly allow for ethical
communities to flourish.

In making these early claims, however, this study is not based on an argument that
advocates for the benefits or programs of socialism over liberalism; rather, the
research seeks to imagine what ethical alternatives there might be to the
oppressive features of neo-liberalism for an economically and socially captured
community development sector. Both liberalism and socialism are viewed as
ideologies rooted in a vision of communities as moral (in Cooper’s sense of the
term), and as such both continue to build moral communities.

Yet, the moral community can give rise to an ethical community Morris’s (1890)
vision in response to Bellamy’s (1888) predictions is a case in point. People come
together in contestation to injustices to form their own notions of ethical
communities. Co-operatives, too, are seen as examples of such contestation that
have formed from within moral communities. Yet, it is still necessary to have
vigilant appreciation of those features of co-operative practice that might foster
non-co-operation and exclusion, and risk falling back into moral communities.
Not all co-operative practices, or cooperation and moral protest, result in ethical
outcomes; what is of interest, from a normative point of view, is to source the
possible features that will most likely foster ethical communities. This research
suggests that this is found by having an appreciation of the embodied nature of
being together in co-operative practice, and the embodied experience of resistance and oppression to dominant master narratives.

As Cooper (1997, 11) contended, values and principles lie at the heart of ethical communities; yet, values and principles can also be deployed and used as rules that govern encounters and become characteristic of episodic, fragmented encounters. This means that there needs to be a cautionary evaluation of which values and principles enable ongoing conversations to emerge, and what practices are needed to ensure that these principles do not take on an authoritative status.

The topic of co-operatives is viewed as important because it is possible that there are certain moral particularities which are unique to their practices that assist to develop a better understanding of how ethical communities can flourish. Why non-profits make the transition to company limited by guarantee structures instead of intentionally resisting the impact of economic trends by taking the co-operative path is an interesting point for examination. This may well be linked to questions of power and how much moral agency co-operative practices are perceived to yield in the neo-liberal climate.

Some forms of co-operative practice do seem to indicate a pathway where repair of diminished counter-identities and freeing of their moral agency to enact social change can occur. The narrative analysis of the six co-operator stories which follows increases understanding of co-operative contexts and the contemporary challenges that co-operators face. From this analysis it is also possible to examine whether and how alternative principles, social visions and an underlying sense of
moral purpose continue to be embodied in some contemporary co-operative and community development practices in spite of the dominance of neo-liberal ideas and practices.

Non-profit organisational shifts to company structures and corporate-business arrangements are suggestions that the likely responses are going to reflect defensive strategies of personal survival, rather than practices which are aimed at social transformation. In this respect, many people and organisations can be said to have experienced a loss of moral purpose in their actions and practices; a sense of the possibility of developing the ideal ethical relation of being-for has been diminished by the rising dominance of values of competition, efficiency, productivity and diversity.

While most co-operative practices have traditionally featured an intrinsic morality aimed toward social transformation, current dominant neo-liberal narratives that have professed their economic benefits over social contributions have made it difficult for groups and individuals to hear and understand who co-operators are, thereby muting their moral identity. In this challenging context, where rigid commitment by a faithful few to long-held principles might be one form of defence, co-operatives have also had to deal with the internal risk of the ossification of their principles and practices into homogenised traditions that exclude rather than include others. These features of co-operative practices are important, and indeed they are central, to understanding the contributions of co-operatives to the formation of moral communities and ethical communities.
PART I TENSIONS
CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMES

A good story begins with something out of balance, some tension to be resolved or explained…A good story teller does more than connect the facts.

David Boje. *How to Tell a Story.*

Tensions

As a ‘good story’ this study seeks to tell more than just the facts; it starts with something out of balance (current co-operative practices and our knowledge of them) and seeks where possible to resolve, or at least explain, the tensions arising from this imbalance: what they are, where they come from and how they might pan out. Four primary tensions emerge as we begin to tell the story: first, there is the tension of how one accounts for the social in an economically dominated society; second, is the difficulty of hearing and understanding the ethical dimensions of social practices such as co-operatives in light of this dominance; third, there are the tensions between master and dominant narrative identity representations, and contestations of these by individuals and groups, and finally, how the ethical community can be imagined is itself a challenge in a neo-liberal environment. At the level of practice another tension must be accounted for: co-operators and community development practitioners who embody an alternative social vision and commit to co-operative principles face constraints on individual and collective agency in this economically-dominated story, whereby their ability to enact social change is restricted.
Engaged social research, as one form of ‘good story’, ought to resolve as well as explain; that is, it should seek to offer a critical and evaluative account so that social contexts and forms of togetherness move from Bauman’s (1995) characteristics of being-aside to being-with, so that the ethical relation of being-for might arise. **Being-for** co-operative principles, in Bauman’s (1995) sense of the term, is not about having a commitment to a rule-governed encounter; rather, it is an embodied phenomenon and an ideal state of being in and of community. **Being-for** is an important aspect of an embodied conception of community because it is an ethical relation that depends upon people affirming the dialogical nature of being and taking into account the human faces of others.

Bauman (1995, 49-50) described the distinction between being-aside and being-with encounters where people are:

Cast aside each other; [where] their co-presence has the modality of being-aside. Obviously from a birds-eye view the presence of others, even in an aside-presence, matters -- the field of action is not empty, the resources it contains must be shared…from the inside of their togetherness, [however], most other person-like entities are seen as, mostly, just being ‘on the side’. It is from this largely indiscriminate and poorly mapped backcloth that certain entities are picked up by shifting attention and made into persons. From being-aside the selected others move into a modality of being-with…being-with is still a type of mis-meeting of incomplete beings, of deficient selves [where] no more of the self tends to be deployed in the encounter than the topic-at-hand demands; and no more of the other is highlighted than the topic-at-hand permits.

For Bauman, the episodic encounters of being-aside -- encounters that occur as if there is no past history and no future -- shift to being-with where togetherness starts to enter the equation. In being-aside, ‘encounters tend to be inconsequential in the sense of not leaving a lasting legacy of mutual rights and/or obligations in their wake’ (Bauman 1995, 50, original emphasis). When an Other begins to take
on the features of being a person, they move into the modality of *being-with*.\(^{14}\)

The ideal form of togetherness in ethical encounters, then, is one of *being-for*:

A leap from isolation to unity; yet not towards a fusion that mystics’
dream of shedding the burden of identity, but to an alloy whose precious
qualities depend fully on the preservation of its ingredients’ alterity and
identity. *Being-for* is the act of transcendence of *being-with*. (Bauman
1995, 51, original emphasis)

Bauman proposed that this leap and transcendence cannot be determined or
probable in any way, it is coincidental. He (1995, 52) explained:

None of the known forms of togetherness privileges the being-for; but
none wards off its happening either. There is no causal connection, not
even an ‘elective affinity’, between the state of being-for and any
particular social setting -- and if a positive or negative correlation between
the two were found, one may well consider it coincidental.

Bauman’s notion of *being-for* is a state of being-in-the-world in relation,
relationships and togetherness with others. It draws on a Levinasian conception
that we must always seek to see the face of the other, as our permanent state of
*being*, but we need to also accept that some parts of the other will always remain
unknown and indeed, unknowable. It is for this reason that Bauman has the idea
that *being-for* has no causal connections or elective affinities, because it is simply
a manner and matter of, what the study refers to as, *beingness* itself. In another
way, however, *being-for* can be described as a moment where commitment
becomes an embodied experience for each other, rather than being with each other
in rule-governed encounters. Our very state of *being* can be oriented toward
*being-for* and this study proposes that co-operatives do offer, contrary to

\(^{14}\) Other is used with a capital here as Bauman (1995) has used it in his work. It does not specify a
particular theoretical usage of the term on my part although I am aware that a body of discussion
on alterity exists in phenomenological discussions and theories (c.f. Yeo 1992). In the study, the
term other is used in a more general sense to refer to others who are not us, or more concisely, the
ethical relation between self and other. The sorts of relationships and forms of togetherness that
are advocated for in the study are meant for application to everyone whom we encounter, not only
in relations with a particularly defined group of others.
Bauman’s (1995) contention, a space of elective affinities for this beingness to occur. Because those being-with encounters are said to provide the opportunity for the act of transcendence to being-for, co-operatives can be considered as those spaces that provide passages to foster ideal ethical relations; such relations will figure significantly in any conception of ethical communities. Bauman’s concept of “forms of togetherness” is used, then, to appreciate the relational context of some co-operative sites.

Rather than the act of transcendence between being-with and being-for staying as an ephemeral, intangible concept, this study seeks to source practical applications of beingness from co-operators’ accounts that can foster ethical counterstories to neo-liberalism. Being-for can also be understood as a moral moment where someone experiences moral recognition of others, this is recognition of an other’s vulnerability and beingness, as it is, complete with its alterity. The core difference between the recognition given in being-with encounters to being-for encounters is that those relations of being-with are selected encounters. This selection means that, unlike in the ethical relation of being-for, some people risk exclusion from selection. The embodied experience of cooperation, then, is seen to possibly shed light on these passages from being-with to being-for in community contexts.

In the attempted resolution of some of these tensions in theory and practice, the hope is that co-operators’ individual and collective agency might be freed to work toward an alternative social vision to dominant neo-liberal socio-political and economic arrangements. This was Nelson’s primary proposition for what
counterstories do; they conduct narrative repair of diminished identities, and hence, free moral agency. In this respect, as Bauman (1995, 49) advocated, this is not a matter of:

[P]lott[ing the successive models on a descending line, ascending or descending, leading to ‘more’ of togetherness, to a more ‘intimate’ togetherness, or a ‘better’ togetherness, however the last quality could be measured…the forms of togetherness so far discussed share certain remarkable characteristics, perhaps decisive for their moral consequences.

Co-operatives provide a base from which to consider how dominant economic narratives and master narratives shape our encounters and forms of togetherness. The particular focus, then, is on the moral consequences such forms of togetherness have on our social relationships and community contexts. These consequences will ultimately be the decisive factors on whether some co-operative practices can free restricted agency to seek an alternative social vision and embody the ethical relation of *being-for*. This ethical relation of *being-for* is what keeps one’s gaze always directed toward the promise of Cooper’s *ethical community*.

Whether these forms of togetherness in co-operatives produce open communities based on conversations, principles and values formulated in negotiations with others, or they remain homogenous, closed, authoritarian and rule-governed encounters, will have different moral consequences (Cooper 1997). In examining such aspects of co-operative engagement, however, the research does not seek to fence in community and establish a defined model of the *ethical community*. The study begins from Bauman’s (1995, 41) above premise that *being-for* cannot be pre-determined or foretold. To develop this, it draws on Butler’s (1995) contentions regarding the term ‘universality,’ its application and problematic
epistemological biases. Butler’s (1995, 40-1) contention was that developing a totalising notion of ‘universality’ could only be achieved at the cost of producing new and further exclusions. The term universality would have to be left permanently open, permanently contested, permanently contingent, in order not to foreclose in advance future claims for inclusion.

Similarly, this study proposes that the term ‘community’ remain permanently open and contingent lest future claims for inclusion be foreclosed.

Consideration of ethical communities and co-operative engagements cannot be finalised into a model for implementation and resolution of social ills in a top-down interventionist manner. Being-for, as Bauman contended, is not a predetermined, probable state of relations; however, it is certainly possible to seek to understand and appreciate co-operative principles and practices that embody a sense of being-for. In this respect, these examples can be appraised in terms of their contributions to ethical community formation and, further, to critically evaluate their potential to form and become moral communities. Community -- as a term -- whether closed or open, moral or ethical, is rendered contingently and permanently open in this study.
First, there is understanding: an applied ethics framework

As a study in applied ethics, this research is based upon and moves through the four dimensions of the applied ethics framework advocated by Isaacs and Massey (1994): hermeneutical (developing understanding); appreciative (developing further appreciation of the situation); appraisive (evaluation of the ethical situation and contextual features); and, transformative (consideration of questions of transformation that arise). Isaacs and Massey (1994, 1) proposed that applied ethics is ‘social in its nature and points to practical outcome[s]’ that are elucidated by consideration of the interrelated hermeneutical, appreciative, appraisive and transformative dimensions of a situation. When faced with the need to attend to the ethical form of life (as the intrinsic morality of many co-operative examples commands one to do), it was Isaacs and Massey’s contention that three hermeneutical aspects be considered:

1) Mapping participants’ existing frameworks and noting the assumptions and limitations therein.

2) Mapping and analysing the contours of those factors and dynamics which shape the ethical situation.

3) Identifying the dynamics of interaction between the participants as expressions of both personal and structural orientations. (Isaacs & Massey 1994, 3)

Consideration of these aspects could illustrate two additional matters:

1) The ways in which relationships between participants in this situation are embedded in roles of power and vulnerability.

2) The ways in which the specific situation being addressed is itself embedded in social, political, cultural, technological, or environmental contexts… [to] reveal that overt features of a situation mask deeper covert constraints. (Isaacs and Massey 1994, 3)
This study begins, then, by seeking to identify and understand the embedded nature of ethical issues for co-operators and community development practitioners, particularly in terms of their desire to transform unjust social structures. This effort to understand is the starting point that provides the possibility to appreciate ‘who others are – their identity’ (Isaacs and Massey 1994, 4). In this respect, the appreciation of who counter-identities are assists in developing an acknowledgement of their commitments, beliefs, values and principles of practice; that is, in understanding different and unique identities. It is possible to appreciate the embedded constraints and relationships that counter-identities find themselves within in their attempt to embody an alternative social vision.

Identity is taken in the study therefore, to refer to the combined matters of values, commitments, beliefs, narratives, stories and roles by which individuals and groups make claims to identify themselves as different from others. Between these sometimes competing and conflicting positions, people come to a particular sort of self-representation; this is, an identity, a representation of how they wish others to see them. This matter of identification means that some might argue that people make the choice between many identities or ways of representation which become self-defining of them (Nelson 2001). In this way, there can be no one static fixed conception of self, the nature of identification, as Hollway (2004, 1) contended is such that:

The ‘ific’ part of the [root of the word] seem[s] to supply something active, performative and dynamic…it incorporate[s] a historical dynamic, so [identification] [is] no longer static…it incorporate[s] a connotation of practical agency, or actively doing something…making of, or tending to the making of, or inducing. ‘-ification’ means, ‘bringing into a specified state, causing or producing’.
In the same manner that individuals cause and produce their identities, others also make identifications of them via their own sets of values, commitments, beliefs and narratives, so that identity becomes a relational experience, a constant flux between self-understanding and other-representations drawn from a variety of sources. Identity, it is important to emphasise, therefore, is an inherently political and ethical dynamic.

Isaacs and Massey (1994, 5) have suggested that identity is also a dialogical process ‘it emerges out of, and [is] shaped by, our creative engagement with others, engagements which often involve the telling of stories to one another’. In this way, identity is shaped not only as a dialogical process, but also as a narrative, story-based one. Our dialogical nature of being in creative engagement with others is also emphasised by Bauman’s (1995) forms of togetherness and Levinas’s (1969) proposition that it is through the subjugation of the self to other that we come to know who we are. This is the formation of an ethical relation -- a relationship of togetherness. The study seeks to understand these relationships in the context of co-operatives and the possibilities for ethical communities.

Many co-operative contexts, then, provide the space within which ethical relations emerge, whereby co-operators identify with and commit to particular sets of values and principles. Bauman, as argued above, reminded that in the episodic encounter of being-aside the relationship is not a totally empty one as resources must still be shared and what people do with these will impact on others. The important consideration is when from this ‘on-the-side encounter’ people are picked up and made into persons; ‘into partners of an encounter’. What requires
further examination is how partnerships might be exclusively oriented -- like those which are characteristic of moral community encounters for example, where norms are imposed on others in authoritarian relationships and enclaves of separateness -- or they might be characteristic of ethical community encounters where norms, values and principles are chosen mutually, in conversation with others.

For co-operators, other members of a co-operative are always partners in an encounter by the intended commitments people make to be in co-operative forms of togetherness. Co-operative relations can be said, then, to begin in encounters that are based on being-with relations characterised by mutual dependencies and the possibility of the emergence of being-for relations. Co-operative relations can, however, also be exclusively oriented, non-co-operative and become episodic, fragmentary encounters. Understanding these forms of togetherness can tell us a great deal about those practices that are socially transformative and those that are defensive strategies of personal survival.

In light of this need to address the dialogical aspect of identity for counter-identities, the present research adopted a narrative method in its approach to and analysis of the six co-operator accounts of their respective experiences of co-operative practices. As individuals share stories of their co-operative experiences their counter-identities emerge and are further shaped by these dialogical exchanges. To appraise where and how the co-operators resisted economic capture and sought to implement ethically motivated alternatives, the appraisal draws specifically on the ethically-attuned understanding of narrative developed
by Hilde Lindemann Nelson (2001, 70). Nelson wrote:

Narratives figure prominently in moral life: they cultivate our moral emotions and refine our moral perceptions; they make intelligible what we do and who we are; they teach us our responsibilities; they motivate and guide, and justify our actions; through them we redefine ourselves.

These narratives, as Isaacs and Massey (1994) illustrated, shape and tell identities. Individuals embody stories and are embodied by narratives, as communities embody and are embodied by many narratives and stories. Herein is the distinction between narrative and story that the study draws upon. Ricoeur (1986), for example, proposed that:

The self only comes into being in the process of the life story being told: the subject is never given at the beginning of a narrative…a self is born in stories. (quoted in Frank 1995, 61-2)

While narratives might not prescribe particular types of subjects, there are most certainly identifications on offer for people to choose or reject. The sort of self or subject that one becomes is the one that we tell ourselves into, or we become those parts of different narratives with which we identify; our self-definition.

Importantly, though, others tell us into being as well so self-definition is a dialogical experience formed in relation with others. The expression of these identifications is what is known in narrative research as ‘self-stories’, self-stories take on a different structure to larger narratives because they are unique to the individuals and the circumstances within which they are created. Selves are born in these stories, both self and other told, and where the narratives that are drawn upon are unethical and damaging, some kind of counter to these dominant narratives -- also a story of its own -- needs to be developed. Individuals and
groups either embody or refute the identities that might be offered by different narratives.

Thus, the research uses the terms *narrative* and *story* with an implicit and subtle distinction similarly proposed in Nelson’s theoretical work on master narratives and counterstories (to which the discussion will return shortly). For the present purposes, narrative, whether political, economic, cultural or social in its nature, is taken to be a meta-web of plots, characters and identity-constitutive features that hold together and produce our social world. These web-like qualities imply that narratives are interwoven and connected at different points. In this way, narrative can be understood as a structural and social phenomenon of meaning making. Stories too have a meaning making function, however, they are as outlined above, interconnected with the uniqueness of an individual’s identity which makes them different to narratives designed to offer broader notions of identity representations drawing often on stereotypical assumptions and understandings.

As Danto (1985 cited in Montello 1997, 186) proposed, narratives comprise, ‘a metaphysics of everyday life,’ perhaps a source by which one can identify or otherwise make meaning of their world. Our lives, as Brooks (1992) said:

> [a]re ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories that we tell and hear told, those we dream or imagine or would like to tell, all of which are reworked into the story of our own lives. (Brooks cited in Montello 1997, 186)

Seeing narratives as a meta-web of our social world means grasping how narratives shape who we are, how they influence how others might see us, and how narratives can also configure our institutional and social relations. It is also
possible to suggest that narratives offer certain identifications of people, which
selves either bring into being or contest. It is the interaction between individuals
and this meta-web of narratives, which produces the individual and collective
stories actually told. Narrative means, in this research, supra structures of social
meanings (how the world is told and explained) from which self and other stories
emerge. In this way, the study maintains the distinction between those narratives
in the meta-web of our social world, in particular master and dominant economic
narratives, and those stories told by individuals and collective groups in relation to
these, particularly counterstories.

The research uses the six interviews to further appreciate the moral life of co-
operators, to make intelligible what some co-operators have chosen to do and who
they are. To understand this diversity of experience part I and part II represent the
hermeneutical dimension of the applied ethics framework combined with the
appreciative. These two parts seek to explore and understand the embedded
nature of participants’ roles and to appreciate the particular identities at play. This
is achieved first, by examining the theoretical and practical meta-webs of
narratives that have been written and told in the co-operative and community
development context. These identifications have been made or provided by others
about co-operator and community development practitioners, that is, how these
counter-identities have been understood.

Part I illustrates how these meta-webs of narratives have positioned co-operators
in relation to dominant economic narratives, while part II takes this further to
demonstrate how some economic and other master narratives have captured these
identities, so that their agency, their ability to enact social change, is restricted.

According to Nelson’s (2001) line of argument, the economic capture of co-operators’ and community development counter-identities, by oppressive features of neo-liberal and other master narratives, constitutes the diminishment of their identity representation and places restrictions on their moral agency to achieve social change.

Part III is directed toward evaluating the six co-operator accounts for their potential to tell counterstories that conduct narrative repair and free moral agency. The specific intent of narrative analysis in part III is to bring counterstories, as Nelson termed them, to the surface; that is, to hear and appreciate stories that might contest neo-liberal narratives and to seek to understand how some of these co-operator stories might build what Cooper (1997) termed ethical communities, as distinct from another forms of communitarian response which he termed moral communities. This third dimension (appraisal) seeks to illuminate three tasks:

1) To restore and invigorate ethical frameworks that will enable us to see situations from an ethical perspective more clearly, more completely and more expertly. 15

2) To broaden the conversation about ethical matters.

3) To promote the appraisal of our relationships, practices, institutions and communities according to ethical criteria rather than, for instance, pragmatic, technocratic or economic criteria. (Isaacs and Massey 1994, 7)

In particular, part III attempts to broaden the communitarian conversation to include the voices of co-operators, this comprises the dimension of appraisal.

15 Here at point (1) ‘expertly’ is taken to mean more adeptly and thoroughly, rather than implying that certain knowledge bases, tools or techniques are necessary as the expert models of technocratic, pragmatic and economic criteria often suggest.
Following the lead of the Isaacs and Massey (1994) applied ethics framework, the research explores the transformative possibilities that flow on from these appraisals, the frameworks of values, detected in the stories told by interviewees. So, the research aims to explore what it is that narratives and stories can do in the context of social transformation; in particular, what do the co-operator stories do to free moral agency to embody and enact social change? This is the focus of part IV.

Understanding and having an appreciation of those with whom we are together, also means that there is a need to consider not only, ‘where the other stands in relation to the good, but where we stand in relation to the other’ (Isaacs and Massey 1994, 5). While it is not always possible that everyone will agree with each others’ stances, the appreciation of these stances is what allows for ethical conversations to emerge. This sets the scene to consider whether co-operators embody a commitment to socially transformative practices or defensive strategies of personal survival in part IV. Those oriented toward personal survival might ultimately remain examples of moral communities that have seen their principles and values ossify in the face of economic dominance.

Although groups that hold power and those that are excluded from power can both be included in an ethical conversation, it is necessary to appraise resistance for, what is called in this study, [resi]stances -- those oppositional stances that co-operators adopt -- to establish whether counterstories actually work toward social transformation. What part IV seeks to acknowledge and illuminate is that sometimes co-operators’ oppositional stances are not always ethical (indeed this
argument can be applied to many acts of resistance and protest, not only cooperation). This is a transformative question that is addressed in this part by way of application of Frank’s (1995) body-self type continuum to the embodiment responses of co-operators to their lived-experiences of oppression. If one’s response to the embodied experience of oppression uses force and regimentation, for example, those counterstories will require critical evaluation in terms of whether they can be said to be ethically transformative.

Overall, three conceptual theoretical frameworks are employed across the 4 parts to provide normative and technical understanding and, in particular, strategies of ethical appraisal.

1) Cooper’s (1997) distinction between moral and ethical communities is employed to detect and understand embedded constraints on co-operator and community development counter-identities and to develop and extend appreciation of these identities.

2) Nelson’s (2001) master narrative and counterstory theory is used to further appreciate and appraise the co-operator stories, in particular, to establish which of the co-operator stories offer counterstories to neo-liberal economic narratives.

3) In part IV, Frank’s (1995) body-self type continuum is applied to examine the embodied nature of oppression and resistance in co-operative practice. The actual experiences of co-operators are evaluated, to assess what the various degrees of resistance to dominant narratives articulated in their stories mean in terms of their everyday relations. This illuminates whether and how participants saw themselves as contributing to various defensive strategies of personal survival or social transformation.

Co-operators do not wish simply to believe in co-operative ideals, they want to be in co-operative relationships with others. This is an important distinction because it illustrates whether co-operators’ forms of togetherness assist or restrict their abilities to embody being-aside, being-with or being-for relationships that free moral agency for social transformation or otherwise. These forms of togetherness, and the relations which are embodied, are decisive for their moral consequences in terms of whether ethical or moral communities evolve.
If these first three parts tackle Isaacs and Massey’s three dimensions of understanding, appreciation, and appraisal then part IV, by way of application of Frank’s continuum to the stories, addresses the transformative dimension. Part IV asks what it is that co-operatives contribute to the development of ethical communities and how it is that certain ethical ideals might be achieved or pursued via the co-operative model. To arrive at an explanation of this transformative dimension (part IV), some further explanation is presented here of the following two parts to the study – the appreciative (Part II) and the appraisive (Part III) -- and their functions in the analysis.

Second, there is appreciation: Cooper’s moral and ethical community

In the appreciative dimension it is important that the researcher, almost certainly a member of a dominant group with the potential to exclude other individuals and groups, can see who others are. One’s ability to see and morally recognise the faces of others is aided by examining the constraints and embedded factors of any given situation and an acknowledgement of one’s own standpoint (Isaacs & Massey 1994; Frank 2001). Knowing one’s standpoint as a researcher is about understanding that interpretive frames, perceptions and prior understandings, influence individual experiences. This means that the study acknowledges certain standpoints of this researcher who sees some forms of co-operative engagement as a form of togetherness and practice that embodies the possibility of ethical communities. While taking this stand, however, there is acceptance that sometimes co-operatives can exclude and become non-co-operative, resulting in rigidity and exclusiveness of their principles and moral communities.
In part I and II, Cooper’s distinction between the moral and ethical community provides a technical foundation from which to appreciate some of the embedded factors, tensions and constraints that affect co-operators and community development practitioners. Table 1 provides a summarised overview of the normative differences between moral and ethical communities (Cooper 1997, 10-11). Cooper suggested the substance of this distinction is what is important rather than the actual terms themselves; moral and ethical communities exist concurrently. To draw on the earlier quote of Butler (1995) the term community - moral or ethical - is permanently in contestation.

**TABLE 1**

**FEATURES OF MORAL AND ETHICAL COMMUNITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Moral Community</th>
<th>The Ethical Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tradition is received from the past</td>
<td>Values and principles are chosen rather than given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition is given not chosen</td>
<td>Based on a lack of encompassing tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaos is removed by the establishment of law and order</td>
<td>Fosters democratic governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition of uniform moral codes</td>
<td>Dialogical and based on conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relies upon and encourages homogeneity</td>
<td>Multi-logical, interdependent and heterogenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaggregation &amp; separation of groups into distinctive moral enclaves</td>
<td>Community in constructed socially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Righteous conviction about absolute truth of what is right and wrong</td>
<td>Analytical &amp; deliberative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devolved, closed and bounded</td>
<td>Reflective, involved and open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Values and ethical principles lie at the heart of community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cooper’s distinction provides a technical base from which to appreciate how co-operative and community development stories have been subsumed within economic narratives that privilege competition, efficiency and productivity. This allows consideration of the sorts of communities these different narratives put on offer and where co-operators might stand in relation to these contexts. Those communities that seek to impose standards and codes in authoritarian ways, for example, may become moral communities; those that are open to dialogue and negotiated principles, on the other hand may be in the process of building ethical communities. Importantly, Cooper’s distinction also makes it possible to understand those instances where moral protest and cooperation do not always result in ethical communities. For example, where someone draws on force to reject a negative representation or to reject authority the result is more force and authority not ethical community.

This is why the study makes the claim that counterstories also require evaluation to ensure they are ethical and oriented toward social transformation. As explained by Isaacs and Massey (1994), sometimes the telling of stories:

[Is] not so much [a] report about our lives, but that narratives are centrally implicated in the constitution of our identity. Such narratives may be enabling and confirming or disabling and disconfirming, and thus may serve either to enhance or destroy one’s identity.

A counterstory is Nelson’s (2001) proposed tactic that can be used to dislodge negative representations caused by particular types of narratives in the meta-web. She termed those narratives that oppress and represent identities in negative ways master narratives. As indicated above, this study is concerned with what different narratives do in the context of people’s identity formation, and their ability to
embody alternative social visions and enact social change. Some of these narratives, as Isaacs and Massey (1994) suggested, confirm or enable; others, as Nelson (2001) argued, via master narratives, serve to destroy or damage identities.

For Nelson where master narratives destroy identity, counterstories can conduct the necessary narrative repair to free moral agency. In a sense, part I and II provide an overview of the different sorts of narratives that have characterised community development and co-operative practices, particularly highlighting the oppressive master narrative and economic narratives that serve to constrain individual and collective agency.

Part I and II provide an overview of some of the master narratives that it is later claimed that co-operators’ resist. Just as some people make identifications of others with master and dominant narratives, others contest such representations. So part III evaluates where the co-operators’ stories stand in relation to master and dominant narratives of neo-liberalism. This part evaluates whether the accounts can be considered counterstories that facilitate not only narrative repair of diminished identities, but additionally, whether co-operatives contribute to the emergence of ethical communities, or moral communities.
Third, there are evaluations: master narratives and counterstories

Isaacs and Massey (1994, 6) proposed that:

In communities that are dominated by individualistic, realistic and instrumental values, ethical standards and ideals are often obscured, neglected or rejected.

To this end, part I sets the scene of the identifications made by others about counter-identities like co-operators and community development practitioners. Part II investigates the capture of community development within an economic narrative that has resulted in the infiltration of instrumental, individualistic and techno-bureaucratic values thus obscuring the ethical vision of the practice. While part III argues for a re-invigoration of ethical frameworks in community development via the elucidation of counterstories. These counterstories are said to emerge from the resistance offered by co-operators who seek to embody an ethically motivated alternative and a commitment to co-operative principles.

Nelson’s (2001) master narrative and counterstory theory is used to discern the counterstory possibilities in the six accounts. The co-operator stories and their stances in relation to the dominant narratives are evaluated, and an appraisal of, ‘relationships, practices and institutions according to ethical criteria rather than focussing on technocratic, pragmatic or economic criteria’ is completed (Isaacs and Massey 1994, 7). In the meta-web of life’s narratives, master narratives are those that infiltrate cultural stores in subtle, covert and sometimes overt ways. They shape institutions and allow people to create terms, conditions and boundaries which deem others as acceptable or otherwise to enter. Nelson (2001) explained that master narratives can be ensembles, themes and patterns that come
together to oppress identities in different ways. For Nelson, identity and agency are interrelated concepts because identification with a narrative itself requires some level of individual or collective agency to comply with or resist a representation. Master narratives are oppressive in the way that they can lodge in an individual’s consciousness to construct one’s self-understanding, or they create disregard for other identities so that those people do not receive access to the same opportunities and resources. Nelson called these processes ‘infiltrated consciousness’ and ‘deprivation of opportunity’ respectively. According to Nelson, the oppressive features of master narratives create a diminished identity whereby agency is restricted and constrained by any one master narrative at different times.

In light of this, Nelson proposed that people tell counterstories to free their constricted and restricted agency, but importantly this does not mean that without a counterstory people are powerless and lack agency. As Bamberg (2004) has argued, master narratives are so culturally entrenched that in some instances it is difficult to even identify them in action, and because of this they also provide normative patterns of behaviour and guidance for people in terms of how to act. Bamberg’s view was that at times people deploy master narratives, but they do not necessarily intend to oppress others by doing so; it is because these narratives make up our cultural stores that they are so predominantly used.

Nelson’s position on master narrative, however, is slightly more detailed to Bamberg’s. She believed that some deploy master narratives intentionally to construct and represent identities in ‘doxastic’ ways. Master narratives of
patriarchy and race, for example, contain certain identity expectations of how women and other people (usually from non-dominant groups) ought to behave; expectations that are often developed according to negative stereotypical depictions.

For Nelson (2001, 106; 152) it is the way in which master narratives cause:

\[ \text{doxastic damage – the damage of distorting and poisoning people’s self-conceptions and their beliefs about who other people are that is problematic…some unfairly depict particular social groups as lacking in virtue or as existing to merely serve others’ ends.} \]

In Bourdieu’s (2001) terms this can be understood as the ‘paradox of doxa’; that is, ‘the most intolerable conditions of existence [that] can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural’ (quoted in Christie 2005, 240). Nelson concluded that such master narratives, when taken up by individuals or groups, shape identities and moral agency in oppressive ways; these types of master narratives in particular require contestation. For Nelson (2001, 158) a master narrative:

\[ \text{does not designate any single narrative with a specific plot and a fixed cast of characters, master narratives change over time according to altered political economies or social contingencies.} \]

This study concentrates specifically on what is argued to be one example of a contemporary oppressive master narrative, neo-liberalism. A case is made across the 4 parts of the thesis as to why this narrative, and its accompanying set of political-economic arrangements, is seen as oppressive particularly for counter-identities. With these oppressive features of master narratives in full view, part III proposes that some of the co-operator stories resist intolerable conditions generated under neo-liberalism and that some are, in fact, clear examples of Nelson’s (2001) counterstories. Counterstories are individual and collective
stories that:

Root out master narratives in the tissues of stories that constitute an oppressive identity and replace them with stories that depict the person as morally worthy, [these stories] supply the necessary means of resistance. Here, resistance amounts to repair: the damaged identity is made whole. (Nelson 2001, 150)

Additionally, counterstories come into being through encounters with master narratives, and there is not one set prescriptive example of counterstories. Because master narratives differ so, too, do the stories that resist them. A counterstory seeks to resist representations that cause oppressive conditions and to repair the damage this has caused to one’s identity; hence, counterstories conduct narrative repair and free constricted moral agency that results from the oppressive master narrative representation (Nelson 2001). Importantly, however, not all counterstories can do this without being oppressive either; so, it is essential that there are ethical criteria available by which to evaluate counterstories themselves. Replacement of oppression with oppression is not transformation; it is survival. This is why a further distinction is made in this study between a counterstory and
While there are a number of features to a counterstory that have been outlined by Nelson (2001), the aspect of resistance that can facilitate the function of narrative repair, which in turn frees moral agency, is what distinguishes a counterstory from a counter narrative. Counter narratives are just that, counter to a narrative, but they often continue to reflect aspects of the dominant story that are still problematic and sometimes oppressive. A good example of a counter narrative is the Opposition in the Australian parliament; they oppose the dominant group in power and seek to replace it, but not repair it. Counter narratives leave parts of oppressive neo-liberal master narratives intact, while other aspects are contested and replaced. Therefore, counter narratives cannot be said to do the work of narrative repair; nor, with their reflections of master narratives, can they be said to free moral agency.

16 Nelson called stories that were not counterstories and not master narratives -- alternative stories. Because co-operatives are the central topic of this study and discussed often within the alternative lifestyle context, alternative stories seemed a potentially problematic and confusing term to employ in the research. Additionally, Nelson’s (2001, 153) explanation of an alternative story is that is different to a master narrative. Her proposal was that ‘once a master narrative has been tailored to fit an individual, they are no longer master narratives’. In this study, I propose that the tailoring of a master narrative to fit oneself is not an alternative story so much as an assimilation of the identity representation offered by master narratives. The sorts of alternative stories that do this study terms counter narratives. Counter narratives oppose some part of a master narrative but leave other parts intact. This is in line with Bamberg’s (2004, 357, original emphasis) following explanation of a counter narrative, which uses Munsch’s (1980) story of The Paper Bag Princess. Bamberg said Munsch’s counter narrative leaves ‘intact the sequences of events of the traditional heroic story line in which the protagonist saves his object of desire, but switches the characters (the princess is the heroine and the prince the one ‘being saved’) and changes the ending (the heroine skips off into the sunset alone and the story ends with the words: ‘They did not get married afterall’). According to Davies and Harre (1990 in Bamberg 2004) this improvisation turns the traditional master narrative around and opens up a feminist reading, however, it should still be noted that a story of male hegemony (for instance) does not automatically transform into a counterstory. The simple replacement of male with female characters has not conducted narrative repair that frees agency; some act of social or political transformation is required for stories to count as counterstories.
For Nelson (2001, 71) a counterstory needs to have ‘strong explanatory force, correlation to action and heft’. These aspects are achieved by the moral self-definition that a teller exhibits and the different types of resistance presented in counterstories. In part III, these further two characteristics of counterstories are explained so that co-operator stories can be evaluated for their opposition to master narratives and, more importantly, for their potential to conduct narrative repair and free co-operators’ moral agency to embody and work toward an alternative social vision. Part IV takes up the counterstories on offer to evaluate their potential for narrative repair and hence, social transformation, or their evidence of defensive strategies of personal survival.

Finally, there is a commitment to action: Frank’s body-self continuum

As Isaacs and Massey argue, the actions of understanding, appreciation and appraisal necessarily induce transformative questions. For Isaacs and Massey (1994, 6; 10) transformation involves a commitment to action and, in their view, such a commitment to action must necessarily be about those who are strangers within and without, those who are vulnerable, oppressed, confused or suffering. Master narratives, it is argued, have caused counter-identities of co-operators and community developers to be oppressed and their voices suppressed. They no longer have access to the same resources as those dominant groups that comply with dominant economic norms and narratives. Their ability to embody an alternative vision and maintain their commitments to co-operative principles is restricted in this environment.
Where there are power imbalances an applied ethics framework demands reconsideration of how one can be or respond ethically. These are questions of transformation and change, and change that arises from the appraisal of co-operator stories might be constructive, working toward relationship building, or deconstructive, to remove individual and oppressive systemic hegemonic relationships (Isaacs and Massey 1994). In part IV, co-operators’ resistance is evaluated for any echoes of Frank’s embodiment problems of force, regimentation and consumption because, as it was suggested above, not all counterstories result in the formation of ethical communities. Likewise, narratives (master or counter) serve to shape the sort of body-self type we might become, either via the representations contained in the narratives or the resistance to them.

If a counterstory is one of force, then, the sort of self that is telling the story might well reflect Frank’s notion of the dominating body-self type. Where regimentation is at play, the body-self type might be characteristic of the disciplined body-self type. If the account has echoes of consumption, a mirroring body-self type may be present. Just because there is something counter at play does not mean that it is ethical, similarly to how principles and values alone cannot create ethical communities, and counter narratives do not transform master narratives. These body-self types are important to the development of an ethical evaluation of counterstories and to move toward the body-self ideal of the communicative body-self type, for whom recognition (of self and other in a dialogical relationship) is central.
In view of this, it is necessary to consider how forms of togetherness in co-operative examples might be embodiments of Bauman’s (1995) notions of being-aside and being-with, rather than embodiments of being-for. The notion of being-aside does not foster, as being-with does, the possibility for the ethical relation of being-for to emerge. People simply do not have the care for each other in being-aside relations for this to occur. Unfortunately, it is the case that as much as most co-operative relations begin in being-with forms of togetherness, sometimes co-operatives can be negative experiences that contribute to moral community formation, and so how these types of negative practices from within the co-operative movement itself can be resisted will also need to be considered. The research anticipates that the sort of body-self characteristics that dominate in collective endeavours will shape these issues.

For instance, a person telling a counterstory might replace an oppressive part of a master narrative, but they might then try to impose their view of things onto others in those dominant groups because of the fear, frustration or missed opportunities they have experienced. The person is still telling a counterstory -- they are participating in telling a story that repairs their narrative and identity representation (narrative repair), which in turn frees their moral agency -- but in this telling they re-create the imposing authority that is often characteristic of moral communities. This type of counterstory can thus be said to be unethical and will not lead to the ultimate desire or creation of ethical communities.

In this way, it is possible to suggest some correlations between the embodiment problems offered by Frank and the substantial differences between moral and
ethical communities suggested by Cooper. This serves to consider questions of community, as feminist theorists propose is necessary, from an embodied perspective (Friedman 1993). Additionally, oppression and resistance -- at times treated in Nelson’s work as abstract entities acting on us -- can be understood from the view of embodiment and how this interfaces with the formation of communities.

The capacity to resist and yet continue to see another’s human face and be open to their desires is a challenge in the face of oppressive practices and representations. This is why it is argued that embodiment is a necessary consideration in studies of narrative and community, and it is why part IV serves to extend Nelson’s practical and analytic findings on counterstories. Part IV considers ethical possibilities by way of Frank’s (1995) ideal of the communicative body-self who is accepting of contingencies, yet is also dialogical, and other-regarding. What Frank’s body-self type continuum allows one to consider is a deeper and more nuanced appreciation of whether socially transformative practices are on offer from co-operators, or whether they have merely formulated defensive and offensive strategies of personal survival. Indeed, these are questions of whether counterstories facilitate narrative repair or narrative despair in the end.
A Story Composition in Four Parts

Part I. Tensions

Enter Co-operators. A collective of individuals committed to the seven guiding principles of cooperation. They are interested in intentional practices that resist prevalent oppressive policies and dominant institutions. This movement has a long history and does not just begin as a response to the Industrial Revolution of the late 19th century. Many examples proliferated in the 20th century, and co-operators made contributions to post-World War II European nation-building efforts. Co-operatives were a popular organisational structure during the 1960s, with many people seeking alternative organisations, institutions and ways of working drawing on co-operative principles. The co-operative tradition provided a sense of history and models for community development to also draw upon in the 1970s. Pause…

Part II. Capture

Enter Community Development. A group of individuals, also interested in social change and an alternative social vision, who drew heavily on co-operative principles to inform their practices and identity formation. Community development emerged from the countercultural movements of the 1960s, and in the 1970s began its foray and identity-formation as a counter-discipline. Community development arrived in the 1980s with complex definitional issues, professionalism starting to impact on the field and corporate trends influencing
organisational forms and practices and an overarching dominant economic narrative began the capture of co-operative principles and alternative sets of values. Pause…

An Episodic Encounter. In the new neo-liberal context, it is difficult to consider how social or personal transformation can occur when the agency of those who care for the vulnerable, the oppressed, confused and suffering, is restricted and constrained by dominant economic stories. Economic encounters foster Bauman’s (1995) fragmentary relations of being-aside. These encounters are characterised by self-enclosed, even self-sustained entities, the most important aspect of ‘episodic nature of the encounter is the lack of consequences’ (Bauman 1995, 50). Indeed, encounters tend to be, in Bauman’s (1995) words, intentionally inconsequential. Pause…

Enter Social Capital. A complex character advocating the improvement of civic relations and policy engagement with the social, social capital advocates for the relations of being-with others. Unfortunately, it is a character that wittingly or unwittingly masks neo-liberal master narrative possibilities of social capture. Its deployment by economists contributed to further capture of the alternative sets of social values and co-operative principles at the heart of community development in the 1990s. Master narratives can be identified within social capital’s epistemological base, and it has gained further currency as a community development theory, policy and strategy for change. Within a narrative that emphasises efficiency, competition and productivity, it is difficult to hear counter-identity stories. Pause…
Flashforward. Sometimes within the episodic encounters of civil society, social capital is said to generate relationships which foster norms of trust, reciprocity and cooperation for mutual benefit. In these contexts of togetherness, ‘selected others tend to move into a modality of being-with’ (Bauman 1995, 50).

Bauman (1995, 50) said:

The objects of attention; now the mutual dependencies that precede the interaction, arise during the interaction and/or are negotiated and modified in the course of the encounter, come into field of view, are given topical relevance, turn into objects of thought and decision.

These are, however, mis-meetings fostered by being-with encounters. Bauman (1995, 51) asks, ‘What is it that fosters the forms of togetherness that can prove hospitable and conducive to other encounters than being-with kinds?’ The important and decisive factors of social capital will rest with the moral consequences. Pause…

Part III. Resistance

Flashback to co-operators. There are some individuals and groups who continue to embody alternative sets of values and principles to dominant institutions and oppressive policies, while other larger scale co-operative organisations have fallen prey to corporate dominance and profit-guiding motives. Those who continue to embody these principles and commitments may represent the needed passage from being-with to being-for encounters. Counter-identities are important characters for social transformation, and the suppression of their voice by neo-liberal dominance means that vulnerable others, to whom their attention is often directed, will suffer also. Pause...
Enter moral and ethical communities. Will the mis-meetings fostered by neo-liberalism dominate encounters in communities and see all efforts that have been made to work toward ethical communities subsumed in economic values? While there is contestation, co-operatives too risk ossification and falling prey to homogenised enclave-like community formation characteristic of the moral community. Attention must be directed toward the formation of ethical relations in co-operatives and how they contribute to the formation or otherwise of ethical communities. It is certain that moral communities will not provide the narrative repair to diminished identities that ethical communities can. Flashback…

Part IV. Transformations

Re-enter Co-operators. Conditions of togetherness need to be fostered that give rise to the encounters of being-for. Co-operatives, to this end, offer the relation of being-with from which being-for can evolve. To provide an opening passage toward being-for means acknowledging that oppression is a felt and embodied experience, which gives rise to resistance in a human encounter between faces. As Vetlesen suggested:

The look meeting look, the face facing a face, amounts to a relation that is shot through with a moment of commitment. But this commitment is unlike others; it is not the product of the subject’s intentionality; it is not wanted, it simply imposes itself as a property pertaining to the very structure of this dyad of proximity. (quoted in Bauman 1995, 53)

Finale: the embodied, social experience of community means that there is a need to move beyond surface narratives of civility if truly ethical communities are to occur. Co-operators embody intentionality with their commitments to co-operative principles and forms of togetherness. Yet, whether co-operators’
commitments shoot through to be imposed simply as the ‘property pertaining to
the very structure of this dyad of proximity’ is yet to be explored. Counterstories
will need to play a dominant role in the resistance of master narratives of neo-
liberalism to achieve this and, in fact, those counter-representations and self-
understandings will need to replace master narratives at some point to be
successful.

This illustrates the transformative capacity of narratives, what they can do and the
role they might play in the passages from being-aside, to being-with to being-for
along with co-operative practices. To consider these questions it is important to
understand that the human experience is an embodied story of many narratives in
circulation, but the complex interaction between narrative and identity means that
those narratives which we embody begin to shape our dyadic relations with others.

‘Well,’ said Frank, ‘have you ever wondered why people are fascinated
with stories? And I don’t mean experimental narrative or stream of
consciousness or the sort of dreamy art-house movie that wins an award at
some obscure European film festival. I mean “once upon a time” stuff:
traditional, mainstream, linear narrative.’

‘No,’ I said…why are people fascinated by stories?’

‘I actually think you know,’ said Frank. ‘Deep down.’

Canfor-Dumas, Edward. The Buddha, Geoff and Me.
CHAPTER 2

CAPTIVATING TALES: CO-OPERATIVES AND

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

The ‘near chaos of life’ (Cooper 1997) encapsulates the contingencies of life’s experiences and the inescapable reality that community is a highly contested, shifting concept, one that is often easier to explain by its absence than by its existence. The desire to control this near chaos of life elicits different responses from different community circles, and in this study co-operative engagement is seen as one, but not the only, such communal response to these issues. The purpose of this chapter is to develop an ethical understanding of the way that co-operative engagement has been narratively positioned in wider political literature, either intentionally or otherwise, as existing for the purpose of serving economic ends alone. It will demonstrate how dominant economic perspectives from both the left and right of politics have either ignored or overlooked the ethical dimensions of co-operative practices, leading in turn to a limited understanding of co-operative identities. Many co-operatives provided sites for people to come together to resist the prevailing policies of dominant social and political institutions. As such, co-operatives have been, and continue to be, examples of moral protest, whereby people seek to create an alternative social vision and lived reality in opposition to the mainstream. In this respect, co-operatives provided counter narratives, stories that exist in opposition to prevailing oppression and injustices of dominant political and social systems.
Identification and the narrative positioning of co-operatives

Trying to explain the diversity of housing, worker, consumer, producer, and service-based co-operatives is a challenge in itself, let alone attempting to explain the intricate internal workings, values and distinctive identities within different co-operatives. When the topic of co-operatives arises, many people either share a dominant perception that they are an alternative organisational model for businesses and other community activities, usually associated with the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s, or do not have any idea what co-operatives are about. Sometimes, stereotypical images of anarchic trouble-makers are aroused, or co-operative views and principles are dismissed as utopian flights of fancy of those on the margins, the fringe dwellers with anti-systemic intentions.

Historically, co-operatives have provided a counter-identity for people who seek to live, work or do other life-related activities in a different and, in many cases, oppositional manner. What becomes evident from a preliminary examination of political and even fictional literature is that a lot of stories have in fact been told about co-operatives. This might be because they have played such a principal role, socially and politically, during key periods in history, most notably during the onset of industrialisation in the late 19th century, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and as a response to broader social oppression and injustices (Gibson-Graham 2003; Morrison 1991; Bookchin 1994).

Additionally, producer and agricultural co-operators also participated and contributed to European nation-state rebuilding and economic reconstruction post
WWII (Spaull & Kay 1947). The co-operative alternative is a prolific theme in science fiction narratives. For example, Le Guin’s (1974) main character Shevek in *The Dispossessed* tells stories about the anarchic, ideal co-operative system of Anarres, the breakaway to the authoritarian planet of Urras. Striking a core issue that continues to plague communitarian theorists today, another Anarres character, Tirin, asks:

> All the material on Urras available to students is the same. Disgusting, immoral, excremental. But look. If it was that bad when the Settlers left, how has it kept going for a hundred and fifty years? If they were so sick, why aren’t they dead? Why haven’t their propertarian societies collapsed? What are we so afraid of? (Le Guin 1974, 43)

The question is a variation on the same theme that for centuries has asked, if self-interest and competition are such negative characteristics, why have they continued to prevail as the foundations on which our current social vision is based? Although it is not possible at this point to formulate a thorough response to this question, perhaps it is because success in different epochs has been measured in many ways. For example, because dominant narratives tell us that self-interest and competition are good, we believe this and our actions are shaped around this viewpoint in order to feel that we have succeeded. As simplistic as this reason might seem, humans often desire to belong and be considered a part of something even if that something is supposed to be comprised of atoms of separate, autonomous and isolated individuals; we all still want to feel a part of this.

Ironically, the above point demonstrates how classical liberal economic systems, from which the prevalent neo-liberal system draws its ideals about individuals and community, actually require the community it seeks freedom from. Similarly,
freedom of speech and freedom of expression, considered by liberals as a central
tenet of individual freedom, still demand someone to speak to or from, and
someone to express to (Cronin 2003). Cronin (2003, 1) understands this
interconnection and paradox between freedom and community as follows:

Unless one lives within a community where individuals are physically and
emotionally free to hold and express their own independent or even
iconoclastic views, there is really no point to freedom of speech. We need
a sense of community as a basic prerequisite for freedom of speech. Yet
we can no more legislate community than we can legislate trust.
Community doesn’t just come about. It has to be nurtured, encouraged and
honoured.

Both classical and neo-liberal economic systems have a view of humans as self-
interested, autonomous, separate and independent from others (Porter 1991), but
they still rely on everyone co-operating with this view for the very success of the
system. Community is, ironically, still required in the free-market neo-liberal
account.

The problem with dominant narratives, as it was indicated above, is that morally
degrading representations of different identities embedded in those narratives
become a part of our ‘cultural stores’ (Nelson 2001). These representations take
on characteristics that explain our worldviews and actions as so normal that
nothing ‘morally objectionable appears to be happening’ (Nelson 2001, 164).
Self-interest and competition seem to be a normal part of our life; competitive
identities are expected by the system to maintain its power structures, and many
resign themselves to accepting the current order of things.

The co-operative alternative, however, has always maintained a steadfast
commitment to the distribution of burdens, including labour and finances, fairly
and equitably amongst members. Co-operation between other co-operatives and co-operation with each other are the core principles underpinning co-operative practices. Other co-operative principles ensure fair pay for work, participation in decision-making and most importantly work toward social transformation via education, training and awareness raising (ICA 1995). Sustaining the seven co-operative principles has also been the notion that some co-operatives exist for the purpose of working toward an alternative social vision. Some co-operators are not resigned to the current order of things and they seek to embody an alternative.

Co-operators desire something that is beyond the profit generation and status that other standard organisations and political-economic systems might be said to be built upon. So, the question must necessarily be asked as to why co-operatives are currently open to co-option by dominant economic stories like neo-liberalism? How is it that their moral purpose is subsumed by dominant economic narratives and their visions of an alternative system relegated to the margins? This is a question faced not only by co-operatives, but also by the community development sector in Australia.

Some of the reasons for this apparent co-option in some quarters can be attributed to the narrative depictions and narrative positioning of co-operatives in different textual contexts: from within the co-operative movement itself, from so-called left theorists, including Marx, and also from those on the right of the political spectrum. Those on the right depict co-operatives as formulated on self-interest and in competition to secure the right prices for consumers (Von Mises 2006).
Left theorists unintentionally offer another set of master narratives that also capture co-operatives so much within the dominant economic system that their moral purpose and ethical visions are lost (Gibson-Graham 2005). Beyond these ideological readings, there are some other perspectives offering counter narratives and counterstories to both of these dominant views. Their view is similar to Morris’s (1890) utopian vision of a society that does not use nature for instrumental purposes and profit. All these historical and contemporary narrative depictions have served to play an identity-constitutive role in co-operative movements. The core issue is that those representations of co-operative identities, which are generated from current dominant and master narratives, capture the co-operative spirit as economically-driven.

Examining how these dominant and master narrative depictions have positioned co-operatives can be an important analytical step towards grasping in more detail what it is that counterstories are resisting. Again, the purpose of analysing this literature is to consider what shapes co-operative forms of togetherness towards a moral engagement; that is, how they offer a passage from being-with to being-for relations. Clearly, where co-operatives share in commitments to their principles, their relations are not characteristic of the being-aside, episodic encounters that Bauman (1995) described. People have moved into each others’ purview and matter because these others work together and embody an alternative social vision.

By understanding these moral features of co-operatives--the other-directed meanings, practices and identities -- it is possible to appreciate how they might
variously embody Cooper’s (1997) concept of the *ethical community*. Indeed, there is also potential to appreciate that sometimes co-operatives can exclude and be non-co-operative; this is, their constellation of meanings, practices and identities would constitute not ethical communities, but *moral communities* in Cooper’s (1997) sense of the term. This study does not propose to resolve ongoing political and philosophical tensions between liberal and socialist alternatives, but it does suggest that our analytical focus ought to be on identifying and investigating the meaning, practices and identities that create and sustain ethical communities.

In some ways, then, co-operatives offer an alternative ideal to both liberal and socialist visions because their underpinning co-operative spirit and moral purpose can provide a third way that does not rest on these particular political and ideological differences. This was what led Catholic and other religious leaders to see them as a middle way.

> [Co-operatives were seen as a middle way] in the thirty year period predating the conclusion of the second World War [where] many proponents of social reform felt trapped between two extremes of social and political reorganisation: fascism and communism.¹⁷ (Lawless 2003, 2)

To avoid the potential for co-operative principles to ossify, it would help if we could identify those features of co-operative practices that might exclude. Indeed, these examples of exclusion can be understood as features of *being-with* relationships.

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¹⁷ This is said with acknowledgement that many religions offer up a range of master narratives too, some of these are oppressive and others are not. Implicit within the catholic leaders’ views on co-operatives was also a notion that people needed to join these kinds of alternative work organisations so that they did not foster dependency on the state.
Some examples of how being-with relations can be present but never quite allow for the ideal of being-for to emerge in co-operatives, include the fact that many co-operatives and collective endeavours struggle to find a balance between the tensions of spontaneity and order, between strong collective demands and routine organisation, and individual freedom of expression. There are also challenges with group dynamics in terms of conformity and control; challenges in terms of consensus decision-making, where some people still manage to dominate even though everyone has an equal voice and vote on matters; and there is also the issue of balancing individual desires and the collective needs of a group (Case & Taylor 1979, 127).

As Case & Talyor (1979) rightly contended, however, it is not only small-scale co-operative or communal activities that face these uncertainties, challenges and questions, our social system of relations is plagued by such matters too. The difference at this broader social level is that decision-making and other factors that are unique to co-operative engagement are taken away by the power of the state. Certainly, democracy in Australia is not based on a consensus decision-making model either, and the issues of conformity, organisational control, individual and collective expression are all communal questions that will require consideration.

A common theme that re-surfaces in co-operative literature is how co-operators were discontented with mainstream society, and so they sought a separate alternative on the margins. Just as utopians imagined a better life or ideal elsewhere, co-operatives developed anti-systemic stances because autonomy from
the State was seen as an important feature to be able to maintain and embody co-operative principles. Moora Moora Co-operative Community members recounted:

We dislike the over-centralised nature of our society, our non participation in the decisions that most personally affect us. We resent being manipulated to ‘keep up with the Joneses’, and the competitive violent and materialistic values that permeate the wider society. (The Community in Smith & Crossley 1975, 185)

These are the reasons why some people come to co-operative participation. This continues to point to an alternative social vision playing a key role in co-operative activity. Co-operators’ desire for an alternative social vision, and the moral purpose this seems to have provided to their activities, forms the foundations of another important theme in co-operatives--freedom.

Co-operatives have been said to provide alternative living and work arrangements that can provide ‘independence and freedom from big city control’ (Wigham in Smith & Crossley 1975, 32). Freedom figures heavily in the earlier accounts of the classic Mondragon Co-operative Social System (MCSS) and in the Spanish Liberation Movement. Both of these movements were lived social realities that grew in response to Franco’s oppressive fascist regime in the 1930s. Bookchin (1994, 4) argued, however, that the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939):

[w]as in fact a sweeping social revolution by millions of workers and peasants who were concerned not to rescue treacherous republican regimes but to reconstruct Spanish society along revolutionary lines.

He proposed that the opposition to both the republican and fascist models from peasants and workers was the direct result of seeds laid by the anarchist movement in the 19th century in Spain. The purpose of the revolt, according to Bookchin (1994), was to create an alternative social vision and system to both the
dominant ideals of fascism and liberal democracy. Spain, according to Bookchin (1994, 41) represented at that time one of the most, ‘mythic dreams of freedom [that] seemed to suddenly become real for millions of Spanish workers, peasants, and intellectuals.’ But, in terms of history, the Spanish Civil War is poorly understood for its revolutionary aspects, the search for an alternative social vision and the embodiment of co-operative principles within it. Bookchin (1994) has argued that communists and liberals alike did not adequately account for these features of the Spanish Civil War.

This thesis is not primarily focused upon the Spanish Civil War, or on its counter examples Mondragon or the Spanish Liberation Movement, however, the stories that emerged from these historical social experiences are important to how co-operative engagement and co-operative identities are understood today. Indeed, it is most certainly the case that the ‘protestor plot’ that Jasper (1997) suggested dominates in depictions of protest and social movements is directly shaped and influenced by the pictures of violence and chaos that were presented about anarchists during the Spanish Civil War and of course in other revolutionary activities. Coming forward thirty years or so from Spain to the widespread countercultural movement of the 1960s one sees, again, that two common themes prevail. The first is that telling stories continued to be a significant feature in the identity construction of individuals and groups and, second, movements were relentless in their search for freedoms. What ought to be understood is that the sort of stories that have been told about resistance movements, including co-operatives, have contributed to broader social groups’ contemporary understandings of these activities. The contention is that these contemporary
understandings have continued to miss the significant ethical features of such activities, the moral purpose and the embodiment of alternative values and principles.

Case and Taylor (1979) argued that the concern for a better way of life and a better way to work began to drop off of many parts of the social change agenda in the 1970s. They argued that ‘the seventies are celebrated or deplored as the era of apathy and collective narcissism’, except for the continued remnants of some co-operatives and communal examples (Case & Taylor 1979, 4). In this respect, Case and Taylor (1979, 4) argued that ‘chroniclers of the present ignore what remains and flourishes’ of the alternative vision embodied in those social change movements.

Contemporary community development theory and practice in Australia, however, most certainly draws on the alternative social visions, countercultural movements of the 1960s, and sets of values and principles from the co-operative movement in its identity-formation. Certainly, Putnam’s (1993a; 2001) idea of social capital asked significant questions about the value of social activities like co-operatives for communities and civil society. That the latter was problematic and used as a bulwark of neo-liberalism is a matter to be returned to in chapter 4. Suffice to

18 Sharp (1980, 5) proposed that all existing political doctrines and programs have to date fallen ‘short of implementing our avowed principles…therefore we must not presume the full validity and adequacy of traditional conservative, liberal, radical, Marxist, anarchist of pacifist, or any other doctrine or comprehensive program. However, we of course need to understand these past approaches, without becoming entrapped in their assumptions and their internal “logic”’. Sharp (1980, 5) emphasised the need to understand the ‘positive lessons and the fallacies’ as well as paying particular attention to ‘those approaches which have aimed to achieve significant social change’. In the context of this study, I take this to also mean that these previous doctrines and comprehensive programs need to be valued and reconsidered for their oppressive master narrative elements. I do not claim in any way that co-operatives have perfected the ideal social vision or are exempt from holding their own master narratives.
suggest here that both community development theorising and social capital theorising have underplayed the importance of moral purpose presented by co-operative engagement.

By the 1980s, Sharp’s (1980) account of rethinking politics confirmed this loss, or subsumed, alternative social vision. He argued, ‘we have, to a large degree, lost the confidence, and even the hope, that we can solve our most serious domestic and international problems’ (Sharp 1980, 1). Neither the 1990s or movement into the 21st century have seen these positions changed. Absences and silencing of resistance in the technocratic, bureaucratic age of neo-liberalism continue to ignore the moral purpose and social vision embodied in alternative practices like co-operatives. Part of the loss of this alternative social vision might well be said to be the result of the disintegration of communism in the former Eastern European blocs in the 1990s; nevertheless, silencing is one trick deployed by master narratives to retain or regain power. So the issue of where these alternative social visions have gone or indeed, if they have disappeared, arises not only because chroniclers have failed to understand particular aspects and ethical dimensions of movements, but also because the holders and tellers of master narratives have sought to assimilate opposition to maintain their dominion.
Does history repeat itself?

For where in the wide world could Robert Owen discover a body of associates…who had inherited or acquired characters fit for the difficulties of associated life and self-government? Those who were attracted to co-operativism were the unemployed, workers already degraded by starvation or idleness or, restless discontented spirits [who were] incapable of the most elementary duties of citizenship.


Fabian socialist, Beatrice Potter’s (1891) seminal text on the potential of the co-operative movement to ‘help’ the working classes in Great Britain, made odd inferences about co-operativism that have allowed for even members of the left-side of politics to view them with suspicion. The notion that only those who were unemployed were attracted to co-operativism missed the reality that co-operatives have historically provided an alternative structure as well as means of employment for some people.

The question is not so much whether these ‘discontented spirits’ were incapable of fulfilling their duties of citizenship, but rather how employment was used as a measurement of being a ‘good citizen’ and fulfilling societal obligations. Clearly, these ‘degraded, idle and restless’ spirits might also have been attracted to the co-operative alternative because not only could it meet their immediate material

19 I say this acknowledging, as Nolan (1988) did, that Potter’s own political theory itself was largely subsumed within a master narrative that directed attention to her husband’s work, Sidney Webb. The attitude toward women writers like Potter is expressed in her autobiography where she remembers a conversation she had with Cambridge professor, Alfred Marshall in which he tries to dishearten her from writing *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain.* He said to her that, “A book by you on the Co-operative Movement I may get my wife to read to me in the evening to while away the time, but I shan't pay any attention to it” (Bettis 2006, 1). Nolan (1988, 7) proposed that ‘Beatrice Webb’s’ theory was a unique combination of Marxism and Millian utilitarianism, of collectivism and individualism’ that was little understood.
needs, but it might also provide them with a moral purpose beyond that which was on offer.

As argued above, free-market capitalists have long written off co-operative efforts as mere reflections of the socialist ideal, or as capitalist business models in the guise of left-wing values (Von Mises n.d). The ‘long standing antagonism between working class politics and worker co-operativism’ cited by Gibson-Graham (2003), within the left, has also contributed to limited critiques of the co-operative model as a real economic and social alternative. Gibson-Graham (2003, 6-7) argued that:

> Politico-ethical discussion has focused on questions of economic control, ownership and organisation of industry and the benefits of co-operativism or state socialism, [however…], early denunciation of worker co-operativism by both the trade union and the revolutionary socialist movements has had a dampening effect on ethical debates concerning the economics of experimentation within leftist communities most engaged in a critique of capitalism.

This is an interesting situation for the co-operative movement to find itself within, and the disagreements between working class co-operativism and working class politics continue to reflect some of the divisions regarding co-operatives and their role in left movements today. With two of the most likely allies for co-operativism, Potter (1891) and Marx (1958), renouncing the co-operative ideal, where could the co-operative movement turn to actualise their ideals and values into an alternative social system? This rejection of the co-operative ideal reinforced dominant narratives that creating a co-operative social system was a fanciful and unrealistic ideal. This vision of the radical left would not be possible to realise and, as Potter (1891) reinforced, could only be an activity of those idle unemployed.
Potter’s (1891) statement draws on the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century master narrative of the deserving and undeserving poor. Those deserving assistance were the sick, elderly and infirm and anybody else who could work was considered undeserving (Hick 1998). This is a master narrative that has re-surfaced in recent times in discussions of the unemployed in Australia, which reinforces Nelson’s (2001) claims of how master narratives morph and are repeated themes and ensembles.

The left’s political division on co-operatives can be explained by the position of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century trade union movement pitted against utopian socialist ideals of Robert Owen (1771 – 1858) (Gibson-Graham 2003). In the former, writers like Marx (1958) believed that ‘capitalist dominance foregrounded in almost every instance…to be toppled it would require superhuman efforts of a centralised state or revolutionary movement’ (cited in Gibson-Graham 2003, 10). In the latter, the transition from capitalism to socialism was inevitable, ‘unless [the co-operative ideal] were subject to an iron-bound tyranny, such a community would necessitate the development of an administrative system’ (Potter 1891 quoted in Gibson-Graham 2003, 11). These socialist alternatives, dependent on industrialisation and the exploitation of nature, were what Morris (1890) despised, leading him to present his counter narrative alternative, \textit{News From Nowhere}. Potter (1891) wrote:

\begin{quote}
Robert Owen’s co-operative ideal…was an ideal which required for its realization a science which had not arisen, a character which had not been formed, economic and legal conditions existing nowhere in the purely aristocratic societies of Europe (quoted in Gibson-Graham 2003, 10).
\end{quote}

For Potter (1891) the irony of this would be that the system to control and conduct co-operative efforts would have to emerge from the very system it sought to
overthrow. The most likely result would be an authoritarian and bureaucratic style of governance antithetical to co-operative principles. Additionally, it appears that because the co-operative model did not fit dominant normative visions of socialist institutions and political structures they were not considered to be morally worthy. Indeed, Potter (1891) was not really concerned with ironic tensions in co-operative practices so much as with what Michels (1911) later termed the Iron Rule of Oligarchy.

The iron rule of oligarchy was said to result when, ‘all organisations (at or beyond 3,000-5,000 member range) inevitably move[d] toward control by a few’ (Michels quoted in Cheney 2002, 7). Weber (1968) picked up on this to forecast that:

> Once firmly established, bureaucracy renders revolutions (i.e. a fundamental change in the structure of authority) impossible, and replaces it with changes in who controls the bureaucratic apparatus. (cited in Rothschild-Whitt in Case & Taylor 1979, 215, original emphasis)

The concern was that co-operatives showed potential to develop into large-scale institutions that not only monopolised the economy, but were controlled by the power of a few at the top. Later, Potter and her husband Sidney Webb (1921, 465) criticised that oligarchy and oligopolies would emerge via the establishment of producer co-operatives. They argued, for example:

> If the agricultural union took possession of the land and the miners union the mines there was a danger of sectarian interests becoming transcendent. Without adequate governance of the interdependencies of economy, each trade, which was ‘but a fragment of the community’ would deteriorate into a Joint Stock Union, no different from a Joint Stock Company, in competition with each other to raise prices and increase profits. (Webbs quoted in Gibson-Graham 2003, 12)

Some of the reasons why some co-operatives become susceptible to iron laws of oligarchy have been said to relate to: accommodating goals to suit surrounding
communities; the impossibility of goals and so organisations shift to diffuse goals to lesser ones that can be reached; rigidity of procedural rules and regulations; and those who have more power and privilege maintaining and growing an organisation beyond the size it needs to be (Rothschild-Whitt in Case & Taylor 1979, 216).

Some of these issues are relevant to contemporary co-operative endeavours like Mondragon Co-operative Corporation (MCC) where goals have shifted to reflect the wider community of the global market place. This has in turn had an impact on the values and principles of co-operatives within MCC as it continues to grow into an international corporation. Moreover, the ability to incorporate principles into one’s being is restricted by the dominant economic story of competition which fosters relations of being-aside and being-with, rather than an ethical relation of being-for.

Nevertheless, as Burgmann (1993, 1) argued:

An ‘iron law of protest’ operates as surely as any ‘iron law of oligarchy’: just as elite theorists insist that large organisations will be inevitably controlled by a tiny minority, so it can be claimed that people will inevitably challenge this conservative power.

While the Webbs’ (1921) concerns do raise an important point that is relevant to some contemporary co-operative examples, they fail to account for people’s desire to resist power and control for the few because they hold a moral purpose.

Instead, Potter’s (1891) earlier account and her later co-authored account with Webb (1921) represent co-operators as unemployed idlers, who in a sense have brought their situation upon themselves due to some failing in their moral
character. Potter’s (1891) and the Webbs’s (1921) accounts assume that economics is the sole reason for participation in co-operative activity, as do Marxist (1958) analyses of co-operative systems. Gibson-Graham (2003, 14) proposed that, in fact, in most leftist or labour political accounts:

An historical antagonism between left labour politics and worker co-operatives continues to have resonance in the present as does the still prominent views that the co-operative sector is insignificant and unthreatening to the dominant economic order, that co-operatives are unable to build sustainable interdependencies, that they are economically flawed and not really distinguishable from capitalism, that co-operators are prone to the individualistic self-interest of the co-operative, that co-operatives are short lived as well as politically conservative, disinterested in solidarity with the more political struggles of the left.

It is possible to see from the above examples how dominant leftist stories have, for their part, narratively positioned co-operatives as those activities that exist on the margins. Additionally, these views have contributed to the economic gaze that dominates in co-operative studies. This general economic dominance notwithstanding, Barraket’s (2001a) study of a contemporary food co-operative in inner Sydney counters the economic trend.

She contended that ‘there was a strong and consistent emphasis placed by members on the importance of the social over the economic functions of the co-operative’ (Barraket 2001a, 113). Furthermore, the co-operative organisation was constructed as

    [a]n expression of socialist politics; a site of spiritual engagement; an exercise in consumer power; a model of healthy living; and a space for the articulation of identity politics. (Barraket 2001a, 114)

None of these contentions from co-operators ignores that economics has a role to play, it is indeed a feature of co-operative practice, but certainly economic outcomes are not the sole ends sought in their practice and membership. What
distinguishes co-operatives from dominant capitalist organisations, or simply being self-interested for that matter, is indeed something about their moral purpose and intrinsic morality embodied in co-operative principles.

This commitment to something above and beyond economy allows for co-operative communities to provide space for relations of being-for; they can be examples of ethical communities not captured by dominant economic narratives. As discussed below, however, without maintenance of those substantial commitments, co-operators risk being captives of dominant tales and narratives that negatively depict and morally disregard their practice. Co-operators’ moral purposes are under threat from both historical and contemporary socio-political and economic tensions that seek to push co-operatives into a dominant neo-liberal story. These tensions and threats can be seen in the changing nature of co-operative principles.

Contemporary changes to co-operative principles and practices

Associates must learn to feel association, not as the mere gathering together of a number of men (sic) for common profit, in one room or other place of work, but as the development of an organic fellowship, of an invisible, yet most real body, with a unity and wholeness of its own, and whose every member shall work in his appointed sphere, under one guidance, for the good of all.


All co-operatives develop their own unique set of values specific to their own aims and purposes, usually dependent on the nature of the co-operative’s activity. These values are both inscribed onto and incorporated within the co-operative by the commitments co-operators make to these co-operative principles: ‘open
membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; co-operation among co-operatives and concern for the community’ (ICA in Passey 2004, 2). Different values may be actualised across either housing, worker, consumer, agricultural/producer or service style co-operatives, but an almost unique aspect of the co-operative model is that these different co-operatives, with their differing purposes, all share and make a commitment to the seven principles to guide their practices.

Although there are some common values that can be identified in co-operatives, there is not necessarily one definition of self-help, empowerment or solidarity that is drawn upon universally by all co-operatives; even though principles like solidarity are shaped by socialist meanings and self-help by anarchist understandings that the State was the source of tyranny so self-help was the alternative. The obvious differentiation between co-operative models is the extent to which individual members commit to, incorporate and, hence, embody co-operative principles in practices. This embodiment and commitment contributes to the collective co-operative identity and indeed the forms of togetherness that emerge within the co-operative.

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20 The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) was formed at a meeting of co-operators from all over the world in 1895. Spaull & Kay (1947, 181) said that by 1939, co-operative societies from some 39 countries belonged to it. Prior to WWII the ICA had arranged international co-operative schools and held co-operative conferences. Spaull and Kay (1947) also detailed how the co-operative movement contributed to the efforts of nation re-building after WWII in the provision of food stores and ‘freedom funds’ working closely with the United Nations efforts at post-war reconstruction. The ICA has made three formal statements on co-operative principles, in 1937, 1966 and 1995 (Hoyt 1996).
Principles and values might be considered as the basis of ethical communities, as Cooper (1997) proposed; however, an evaluation of whether these are the sorts of principles and values that are likely to foster ethical communities or not is still required. The mere adoption of a set of principles is not enough to ensure that a co-operative or any community is ethical; co-operatives, as it shall be demonstrated, sometimes exclude and form enclaves in ways that are antithetical to their principles. It is surely the manner in which principles are embodied, how we see others and how they see us, that figure in the formation of co-operative relations.

As Ludlow’s (n.d.) statement asserts, co-operators need to ‘feel association [as an almost] real body’ who work together for the ‘good of all’. To feel association as an almost real body means an acceptance that values are sustained because people express commitments to them that are embodied in practices and relationships, not because rules and principles exist to prescribe which set of values have more weighting than another. In particular, if master narratives foreground principles and shape how they are understood and put into action then non-co-operative relations might result instead. Values and principles need be incorporated into one’s being rather than be used in the:

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21 This is not dissimilar to what MacIntyre (1981) claimed about virtues, he said that, ‘Honesty, justice and courage are virtues in all practices. But to prove that a practice is actually morally valuable, [one] must also show that the practices contribute to a good life for those who pursue it and that their lives and practices fit into their societies in beneficial ways’ (quoted in Jasper 1997, 338). The difficulty with MacIntyre’s (1981) claim is who decides the benefits and who defines the good life?

22 In addition to the question of how values can be sustained, members in a non-profit Sydney food co-operative studied by Barraket (2001a, 114) proposed that, ‘A critical aspect of the co-operative [was] not simply [being] an organisational reflection of their values, but also a site for enaction of those values’. So the fact that co-operative models provide space and place to enact alternative social visions and embody co-operative principles in practice is just as important and relevant in how those values are reflected.
spectre of law-like ethics they have been designed to shake off…
the passage from the convention-ruled to the moral condition is not marked by
the sudden numbness of the once voluble demand, nor by dropping the
conditions which once circumscribed responsibility, but by the appearance
(or reappearance) of what the ethical legislation declares off-limits in the
world of morality: namely of the emotional relationship with the Other.
(Bauman 1995, 61; 62)

These issues are complicated by the fact that co-operative identities have been
largely considered in dominant narratives for their economic contributions alone,
which has rendered silent the social and ethical importance of some co-operative
engagement and practices (see Zeuli 2002; Jamorozik & Beck 1981). There are
not many stories available that tell people about co-operators’ emotional
relationships with each other and how co-operative forms of togetherness are
shaped.

Essentially, in dominant economic narratives, co-operatives are seen to function
along business lines; their primary purpose is to return profits to co-operative
members who are predominantly called shareholders, and decisions are made by a
Board of Directors on these members’ behalf (Norco 2006). Even though there is
a co-operative structure, the co-operative is still run according to for-profit
motivations and under an ostensibly corporate structure. This kind of co-
operative model cannot be said to provide any kind of passage from being-with to
being-for ethical relations because the corporate candidate is known for its
rejection of ‘feeling association as an almost real body’ (Ludlow n.d.); the
relationships with Others in the corporate structure remain at a distance and based
on rule-governed encounters. This is a form of togetherness that fosters
relationships of fear and the fear is not of the Other, the unknown and foreign
elements brought forth in human encounters, but it is the fear of the laws that bind
The gate of fellow-feeling that Bauman (1995) advocated cannot be entered by the fragmentary and momentary encounters of the corporate model which fosters relations of being-aside; it requires commitment to be with others in a co-operative context.

This commitment to others and the ethical relations that co-operatives can offer are said to be limited because so many producer and agricultural co-operatives are run as businesses, whereby the co-operative structure is used to gain competitive and market advantage in terms of pricing and supply (Von Mises n.d.). Indeed, the history of the co-operative movement seems to be a narrative that has been dominated by the role of producer/agricultural and consumer co-operatives as an

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23 For example, Genetics Australia (GA), the provider of artificial and reproductive technologies for the dairy industry, is registered and organised as a co-operative society. A review of the GA website, however, provides no information on co-operative principles or motivations. The only sign of the organisation adhering to a co-operative structure, from the website review, is the shareholders’ information page that states, ‘as a co-operative, GA exists to help farmers to maximise their farm productivity and profitability. We achieve this by producing high-quality genetics, proven under Australian conditions and made available at reasonable cost’ (GA 2005, 1). A similar review of the manufacturing co-operative, the Q.B.B Butter Producers’ Co-operative Federation Ltd, indicated no reference whatsoever to co-operative principles, practices and structures. Norco, however, a NSW dairy products manufacturer over 100yrs old, lists on its ‘corporate profile page’ that the co-operative is responsible for ‘preserving the co-operative principles’. Although economic language is infused in this profile page with a note on efficiency and freedom, ‘we add value not cost’ and ‘focus on financial returns today gives us freedom in the future’ (Norco 2005a, 1). It would be interesting to establish how much Norco’s co-operative structure and practices have changed over its history but a detailed examination is beyond the scope of this current study. The organisation does make reference to the direct impact of deregulation in two areas though, ‘at the farmer end, farmers have had substantial reductions in income. There has been a loss of supply to markets with larger corporations like Woolworth’s negotiating a new contract for their Homebrand milk, the Dairy Farmer Co-operative gained the market share at our farmers’ expense. Norco also had to find new markets and now it is short of milk supplies and is trying to source or encourage new farmers to supply Norco. Secondly, the most important factor for Norco is that when regulation was removed, the company could become more flexible and commercially focussed. This will mean that Norco will make approximately $2.5 million in the 2000/2001 financial year, a substantial improvement compared to previous years’ (Norco 2005 (b), 1). Sunrice, the international identity and brand of Ricegrowers Ltd, has a number of subsidiary organisations including CopRice, both companies are listed on the Co-operative Development Services Ltd web page for Victoria. CDS (2005, 1), a registered not-for-profit co-operative, provides consultancy services to people ‘to assist them to meet their business needs using the co-operative business structure’. These examples all illustrate how co-operative principles are being subsumed within an economic discourse that encourages profit, competition and self-help instead of government assistance and support.

Increasingly, the shift to free-trade policies and deregulated markets has meant that large co-operative societies, for example those in dairy industries, have come to be set up in competition against each other (see Norco 2005a). These are the sorts of being-with encounters that Bauman (1995) is critical of. This increased competition can only mean that the co-operative principle of inter-cooperation is waning in these co-operative contexts. Forms of togetherness become characterised by episodic encounters.

Similar issues now face the Mondragon Co-operative Corporation (MCC) where global expansion has seen the co-operative body establish manufacturing plants in free-trade zones (FTZs). Given the pre-existing ethical issues associated with FTZs, Mondragon’s decision to expand in these areas contravenes a number of co-operative principles and the spirit of its co-operative identity. The contemporary issue that faces the co-operative sector is why it is that these essentially corporate bodies choose or retain co-operative structures? This is particularly so when the corporate model seeks not to [em]body any association of feeling, but rather

24 Free Trade Zones (FTZs) are usually situated in poorer developing countries. They are called FTZs because corporations are free from regulations and laws of the country within which they trade. With this freedom from regulation also comes a freedom to exploit workers via low wages, restrictions on their entitlements to join unions, have adequate working conditions, comply with fair work hours in a day and provide people with appropriate work breaks.

25 Additional contraventions to co-operative principles were noted by Huet (2000, 1) who cited ‘centralization of decision-making and widespread hiring of non-member workers, often in joint-ventures with capitalist firms’ as two recent examples. Huet (2000, 1) also noted that Mondragon’s management have defended these changes as necessary to ‘survive intensified competition in the unifying European and global markets’.
spoken demands of competition, efficiency and productivity are its focus.

It seems a paradox, then, that there should be so much interest in the co-operative model being used to gain competitive advantages, globally expand or provide that edge that generates more profit. The paradox is not lost given that Owen’s 19th century original co-operative ideal was about resisting the very injustices produced by industrial capitalism (Flassati 1981). Certainly, the intrinsic morality of co-operative principles suggested a certain form of togetherness that offered a counterstory to dominant narratives.

Mondragon’s beginnings were also a direct response to similar injustices, yet complicated further by the local socio-political and cultural issues of Basque as a separatist community to Franco’s Spain (Morrison 1991). The new mode of global capitalism should continue to be a site of resistance for co-operators, but as ironic as it is, the co-operative model continues to appeal to the entrepreneurial spirit of neo-liberal and classical liberal economics in a strange way. Bauman (1997) touched on these issues when he used the analogy of the consumer co-operative to discuss culture. He said:

I wish to make it clear from the start that speaking of the consumer co-operative I do not refer to the present day Co-op, the thoroughly bureaucratised and strictly hierarchical organisation much like business institutions, only (to its own detriment) more so. I go back to the ideal model akin to the one which inspired the spiritual fathers of the Society of Equitable Pioneers when they opened their first shop at Toad Lane in Rochdale. (Bauman 1997, 134, original emphasis)

Bauman’s (1997) comment illustrates how dominant groups have come to see co-operatives merely as business alternatives. He argued that it needed to be recalled that the ‘overpowering and soulless regimentation of factory life’ gave co-
operators dispossessed roles as producers that ‘the Pioneers wished to repossess in their role as consumers’ (Bauman 1997, 134). The formation of the Rochdale consumer co-operatives was an act of moral protest and a remedy to these injustices.  

Co-operative principles and values have not, however, saved co-operative identity from the possibilities of economic capture with some of these principles now being fashioned to suit the dominant neo-liberal agenda. True, as Bauman (1997) contended, many contemporary co-operatives do reflect a bureaucratic and hierarchical organisation, but there are also those, as Burgmann (1993) proposed, that continue to be an iron law of protest. Consideration of how the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) (2005) now expresses some co-operative principles illustrates these emerging tensions between corporate, competitive values and traditional co-operatives’ principles and visions.

Arguably, the way in which some neo-liberal values have infiltrated the ICA principles signals the beginnings of economic capture of some co-operatives. This is evident when one compares the ICA’s (1995; 2005) expression of co-operative principles against the original MCSS (1991) principles, which were

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26 The effects and influence of the Rochdale Pioneers stretched abroad to Australia. CACOM noted that, ‘Many assume that the Rochdale consumer co-operative movement in Australia had collapsed by the 1960s, but there are still examples of thriving Rochdale co-ops in rural centres. For example, Junee District Co-operative Society. Established in 1923, this co-op has continually served its community and now has 1400 members and $7.9 million in turnover. Over the years it has survived tough competition from local retailers, and from its close proximity to the large regional shopping centre of Wagga Wagga’. The reasons that the Junee District Co-operative has remained successful have been attributed to the long standing relationship the co-operative maintained with the local community; similarly, Morrison (1991) claimed that the success of Mondragon was its relationship and central focus of community. The Junee District Co-operative signals that there is continued interest in co-operative resistance and additional interest by researchers at CACOM to examine whether, ‘there is potential to re-establish movement in the 21st Century,’ also illustrates the ongoing interest in co-operatives as strategies of resistance and protest (CACOM 2005, 1).
drawn from the original Rochdale Pioneers. Table 2 provides an overview of the ICA (1995) principles from the ‘Statement of Co-operative Identity,’ with the MCSS principles in the second column.

**TABLE 2**

**CONTEMPORARY ICA PRINCIPLES CONTRASTED WITH TRADITIONAL MONDRAGON PRINCIPLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICA SEVEN INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLES</th>
<th>MORRISON’S SUMMARY OF MONDRAGON’S PRINCIPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Voluntary and open membership</td>
<td>1. Open admission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Democratic Member Control</td>
<td>2. Democratic Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Autonomy and Independence</td>
<td>4. Instrumental Character of Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Education, training and information</td>
<td>5. Self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Co-operation amongst Co-operatives</td>
<td>6. Pay Solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Concern for community</td>
<td>7. Social Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Group Cooperation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. Universal Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The universal co-operative principles provided by the General Assembly of the International Cooperative Alliance (GAICA) as part of a “Statement on Co-operative Identity” (ICA, 2004) can be argued to have shifted to reflect dominant neo-liberal market values. Hoyt (1996, 1) proposed that the 1980s signified a time where co-operators came together to reconsider the second statement made by the ICA on co-operative principles from 1966. In her view, these reconsiderations were the result of changes in the global economy and international political alignments (Hoyt 1996, 1). The principles guide, however,
the forms of togetherness on offer or idealised in contemporary co-operative examples.

As the international peak body for co-operatives, the ICA (2004, 1) represents over 800 million people across the globe all of whom are members of various types of co-operatives in over 89 different countries. According to the ICA’s (2006) website member listings, there are no Australian co-operative bodies listed as members, yet the now de-funded Australian Co-operative Centre for Research and Development (ACCORD) seemed to indicate strong ties and reference to ICA material throughout its time. ACCORD is now hosted by CACOM seeing a renewed effort to continue information, research and raising awareness of co-operative activities in Australia and abroad.

This absence of Australian listings could possibly be linked to two issues which are beyond the current scope of this study, but are important to consider nonetheless. First, lack of member listings could indicate that the philosophy of the ICA (2005) is not shared or endorsed by participants in the broader Australian Co-operative Movement (ACM), particularly in the context of small scale grassroots co-operative bodies who believe that institutionalisation might reflect capture within the dominant structures which are the very cause of oppression (Barraket 2001a).
Alternatively, a second reason might be that there is not a strong peak voice for
the ACM and so the ICA is not utilised by Australian co-operatives. A worrying feature of the ICA (2006) is its reflection of neo-liberal values and the
dominant enterprise discourse in the co-operative movement; feelings of
association are limited in an autonomous and independent driven body. The ICA
(2006, 1) suggests that its role is to provide the co-operative movement with a
global, peak body that ‘promotes and defends’ the co-operative identity. This is
all well and good; however, the ICA continued:

To ensure that, co-operative enterprise is a recognised form of enterprise
that is able to compete in the marketplace…it helps individuals,
government authorities and regional and international institutions
understand the co-operative model of enterprise. ICA is the voice of the co-
operative movement…it provides political support as well as technical
expertise to enable co-operatives to compete on a level playing field…ICA promotes capacity building and financial support. (ICA 2006, 1-2,
emphasis mine)

What sort of story does this tell about the co-operative movement and which co-
operative identity is being defended? For the novice, unfamiliar with co-operative
practices and principles, the statement suggests that co-operatives are focussed on
enterprise activities and ensuring that a competitive place in the market is
maintained.

It confirms Bauman’s (1997) earlier criticisms that co-operatives have become
bureaucratic and hierarchical organisations whose purpose is to seek profits

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27 Barraket (2001a, 117) claimed that ‘the lesson from strong co-operative movements around the
world is that networking, information transfer and resource sharing through second tier or ‘peak
level’ co-operatives are effective means of ensuring the survival of both the movement as a whole
and the organisations within that movement’. What can be problematic, however, is if the peak
body’s ideology or purpose is more reflective of a dominant economic narrative, as it is claimed
that the peak body of the ICA is, that peak body cannot be said to represent the aims, values and
purposes of some co-operatives.
maximisation. The forms of togetherness that are on offer remain characteristic of
being-aside and being-with relationships. This is particularly evident in the
definition provided by the ICA (1996) of co-operatives. The Statement of Identity
defines co-operatives as, ‘autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily
to meet their economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-
owned and democratically controlled enterprise’ (quoted in Hoyt 1996, 2). The
ICA’s (1996) Statement is imbued with neo-liberal notions of enterprise and
classical liberal economic foundations of the free-market; in particular, it espouses
a view of individuals who operate within these modes as autonomous competitors.
These changing forms of identification, also demonstrated by the move away from
the term ‘associations of individuals’ to, ‘associations of persons,’ deployed
intentionally to comply with legal definitions of ‘person, which includes
companies as well as individuals’ (Hoyt 1996, 2). This illustrates further how the
global market is shaping individual and collective co-operative identities. The
forms of togetherness that this new definition and those changed principles shape
will be questionable.

This infiltration of corporate style principles is a reflection of the resiliency that
master narratives have once lodged in individual and group consciousness.
Nothing morally objectionable appears to be happening; however, as Bauman
(1995, 49) proposed these forms of togetherness (*characteristic of being-aside*)
are ‘decisive for their moral consequences’. There will either be economic and
social capture of the co-operative model as an alternative, or there will be
resistance to these representations and capture.
This resistance was signified by Barraket’s (2001a, 115) study of a Sydney-based food co-operative where it was revealed that ‘members viewed the transformative capacity of the co-operative as being embedded in its very resistance to institutionalisation’. The ICA’s (2006) almost institutional focus, then, seems to be one that ought to be resisted by many co-operatives who seek to embody a commitment to traditional co-operative principles and an alternative social vision. Fairbairn (2003, 5, original emphasis) argued that ‘the key to a co-operative is the relationships that it cultivates and embodies’. The importance of co-operatives to Fairbairn (2003) is that they do provide for both social and economic needs, whereas the ICA (1996) statement presents the central purpose of co-operatives as meeting purely economic or social and cultural needs (in Hoyt 1996, 2). Bauman’s (1995) emotional relationship with others has resonance with these statements.

Economic perspectives alone cannot account for or understand the cultivation, incorporation and, hence, embodied nature of an ethical relation in many co-operatives. Neither do many narratives account for the reality that some co-operatives continue to resist bureaucratisation trends and maintain a moral purpose and social vision that is in opposition to dominant economic stories. That there can be one voice, “the voice” for the co-operative movement is also another concern in the ICA’s (1996) statement. This notion, that the co-operative movement can be considered as a homogenous group, ignores the complex nature of each individual co-operative’s socio-cultural, political and ethical basis.
If even this ICA (1996) phrase alone was changed to, “the ICA represents the many voices of the co-operative movement”, it would perhaps be more fitting of the diversity and complexities of the international co-operative movement. In terms of how co-operative principles themselves have been shifted to reflect the dominant economic narrative, principles one and two of the ICA (1996) Statement remain the same as those listed for MCSS (1991). Co-operatives are open to all who agree ‘with the basic principles without regard to ethnic background, religion, political beliefs, or gender. They remain voluntary and democratically controlled.’ In the case of worker co-operatives all workers are members (Morrison 1991, 11).

It is difficult, however, to establish what the intent is behind the second principle of consensus decision-making in the ICA (1996) Statement. Do co-operators retain the one-member-one-vote model, or where co-operatives have taken on the corporate model has there been a return to those who hold more shares have more voting power? This question will become increasingly pertinent to the co-operative movement now that new ‘persons’ in the guise of companies can claim co-operative identities.

Greenberg (1986) concluded from his extensive research on U.S. worker-owned firms [that] ‘individual alienation and estrangement from the body social can persist even in an organisation where economic ownership is truly shared’ (cited in Cheney 2002, 3). Thus, Cheney (1995) argued that Marxist accounts of co-operatives could not adequately discuss the social logic and dynamics of a co-

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28 The second principle can be found in Table 2 listed on page 86.
operative organisation because there was too narrow a view based merely on the ownership of the means of production. Again, the Marxist narrative could not account for the emotional relationships in co-operative forms of togetherness. Open membership and democratic control in co-operatives touch on the core issue of embodied values, principles and practices in co-operative examples. Ownership alone, as Greenberg (1986) suggested, cannot provide for moral purpose and the extent to which co-operators are enabled, encouraged and able to participate as well as own the mean of production influences the success of the co-operative.

Principle three of the ICA (1996) Statement also signifies a shift away from ‘the instrumental and subordinate nature of capital and the sovereignty of labour’ to a universal view of ‘member economic participation’ (ICA 1996, 1-2). In the MCSS, however, labour used to be seen as the ‘essential[ly] transformative factor of society and, so, wage labour was renounced and full power was given to the owner-workers’ (Morrison 1991, 11). This is no longer reflected in the explanation of the ICA’s (1996) principle, ‘member economic participation’ indicates a move away from the Marxist-like ownership of the means of production to participation, which allows for control of capital but it does not explicitly state that capital is subordinate to labour.

Financial and human capital in MCSS was viewed as a necessary factor in ‘business development and savings’ so co-operative members had to make a ‘substantial, affordable and equal investment into the co-operative’ (Morrison 1991, 11). Capital in MCSS was the ‘basic accumulation of labour’ (Morrison
1991, 11), whereas the current intent of the ICA (1996) principle reflects the ‘members’ control of the capital of their co-op’ (NI 2004, 13). Hoyt (1996, 2) highlighted how co-operative values are the norms that determine ‘co-operators’ way of thinking and acting’. This suggestion leads one to wonder if those norms reflect dominant economic narratives, then, do co-operators’ thinking and acting risk being determined by neo-liberal competitive and enterprise logic?

The emphasis on the relationship between labour and capital seems to have all but disappeared in the ICA’s (2006) account, although to give the ICA (1996) Statement credit it does state that ‘human personality is one of the main features distinguishing a co-operative from firms controlled primarily in the interests of capital’ (Hoyt 1996, 3). The key issue here is human personality, and personality comes with faces that each member must be able to see, including those faces outside of the membership bounds of the co-operative itself. The personalities within co-operatives shape the forms of togetherness.

Of most concern is the change to ICA (1996) principle four from self-management to autonomy and independence. Autonomy and self-help principles must be acknowledged as foundational concepts of co-operatives and this is a core feature of co-operative identities. Worker establishment of co-operatives has always been about ownership and management of the means of production, gaining autonomy from the clutches of the capitalist classes and government. As ICA (1996) discussions have indicated, however, some co-operatives become locked into the clutches of governments becoming ‘closely controlled functionaries, inefficient, bureaucratic and poorly managed’ (Hoyt 1996, 5). The
more co-operatives come to reflect dominant economic values and corporate enterprise models, the less autonomy and independence they have from capitalist classes and government.

The co-operative model has always been concerned with giving members autonomy from the state other financial interests, and the ability to act and be in control of decisions. The ICA’s (1996) use of autonomy, however, in conjunction with its clear ideological view that co-operatives can be competitors in a ‘level-playing field of the market’ as another type of enterprise is worrying. The statement includes the claim that ‘co-operatives be free of intervention from governments or other sources so that the members are able to control their own destiny’ (Hoyt 1996, 5).

While this might have been said to reflect an anarchic position of freedom from state tyranny, this is really neo-liberal, free-market ideology at play. This is particularly so when this is considered in conjunction with the emphasis on the level-playing field and economic language embedded within the ICA’s (1996) Statement. This ICA Statement seems more fitting of the kind of autonomy that underpins classical economic liberalism than one that supports early self-
management concepts. The use of ‘free of government intervention’ is certainly different to saying free from government interferences, power and control in an anarchist or libertarian sense. Likewise, having control over one’s destiny and the ability to exercise free-will, which in the co-operative context means having ‘the will and capability to improve one’s destiny; or the freedom to join and leave the co-operative at will’ all reflect notions of liberal individualism and its conception of freedom (Hoyt 1996, 2). Co-operative autonomy is about acting separately from the interests of state and other oppressive societal institutions, but in no way is this done in isolation from our social relationships.

There are, as Bauman (1995) discussed, emotional relationships with others. Co-operative autonomy evolves through the organic process of consensus decision-making. Plaskow noted:

The individual is not an isolated unit who attains humanity through independence from others or who must contract for social relations. Rather, to be a person is to find oneself from the beginning in community - - or, as is often the case in the modern world, in multiple communities. To develop as a person is to acquire a sense of self in relation to others and to critically appropriate a series of communal heritages. (Plaskow 1990 quoted in Morrison 1991, 29)

The social and relational nature of co-operative engagement simply cannot be ignored and indeed, as Plaskow’s statement highlights, a series of communal relationships with others.

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29 Liberal individualism is situated within two schools of liberal thought. Classical liberal thinkers such as Hayek, Nozick and Friedman argued that ‘freedom of the individual mean[t] the removal of any obstacles or barriers to the free expression of reason or industry’ (Arneil 1999, 126). Classical liberals thereby argued for freedom from the state and freedom of trade. Welfare liberals such as Keynes and Rawls argued that the state must concern itself “not only with freedom but the well-being of all its citizens, particularly those who are worse off” (Arneil 1999, 126). Both schools of thought are premised on the view that individuals are rational and reasonable creatures. Arneil (1999, 132) argues, however, that feminists have ‘questioned th[is] notion of an abstract, reasonable individual, free from any historical or geographical context’. Autonomy has been directly related to this view of the individual as a rational creature with the ability to reason and make decisions in an autonomous and isolated way -- free from State and other individual interests. This is somewhat contrary to the intentions and purposes of co-operative engagement whereby decisions are made as a collective body in relation with others.
heritages emerge and shape these relationships. These relationships are formed within Butler’s (1995) notion of the term community as permanently contingent, in contestation and open.

The use of the terms autonomy and independence in the ICA have changed the meaning of self-management and reflect further neo-liberal capture of co-operative principles. The fifth principle of co-operative identity rests on education, training and information for members and the wider community about the benefits of co-operatives and cooperation (Halladay in CPC 2002, 5). While the ICA still refers to this principle, those underpinning values of competition, enterprise and being on a level playing field are questionable in terms of what sort of education and training is being referred to.

Additionally, one must question the forms of togetherness in co-operatives that these new arrangements will shape. Certainly, it would seem that the ICA’s (1996) principle does not reflect a moral purpose to embody an alternative social vision in the same way that MCSS might have before it also corporatised in 1992. The traditional focus of the fifth co-operative principle was always about the transformative socio-cultural, political and economic capacities of co-operatives. The fact that co-operatives were seen to have social as well as economic purpose distinguished them from other standard community and business activities (Fairbairn 2003).

Currently, huge agri-food co-operatives rank among Canada’s top 500 businesses, which have seen some of these models become ‘indistinguishable from
conventional business’ (New Internationalist 2004, 368). Sharing the communal heritages of co-operation used to be the intention behind the principles of education, training and provision of information. This was combined with a goal shared by the broader co-operative movement that sought to transform and resist unjust social structures: feelings of association that worked toward a common good for all.

In the respect of togetherness, interrelatedness and connection via care for each other, co-operative identity also shares some feminist ideals which could prove of use with respect to resisting dominant economic stories. But, ironically, historically women in co-operatives have not always been treated as equally as men (cf. Berger & Clamp 1983). This reminds us again that there are some features of co-operatives that can exclude and foster moral, closed communities, which means that principles, values and moral purposes will become ever more important in the formation of co-operative identities. This is also reflective of principle six of the ICA (1996) and MCSS (1991) co-operative values of solidarity with other co-operatives, inter-cooperation, and the universal nature of cooperation.

Solidarity is under threat with the increased emphasis on forms of togetherness characterised by values of competition, efficiency and diversification. As Hoyt (1996, 6) rightly contended:

Values and principles give voice to the enduring soul of the co-operative movement. The ICA sees the[se] as inherently practical principles,

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30 See Gilligan’s ethic of care work for an example of this. Arneil (1999, 137) proposed that Gilligan’s thesis was that ‘women’s moral decision-making tend[ed] to centre on questions of care, rather than abstract theories of rights and responsibilities.’
fashioned as much by generations of experience as by philosophical thought.

If those values and principles come to be antithetical to the original moral purposes of co-operatives, the intrinsic morality embedded in co-operative principles risks reduction to a mere reflection of dominant economic narratives. The ability for co-operators to embody a social alternative to dominant neo-liberal views and to exercise substantive commitments to co-operative principles will come under threat.

The seventh co-operative principle ‘concern for the community’ was only introduced in the 1995 changes by the ICA. The introduction of this principle by the ICA is interesting to note because in other co-operative examples, such as Mondragon, there was always an implicit concern for community by virtue of being a member of a co-operative (see Morrison 1991). Morrison (1991) suggested that Mondragon could not be considered outside of its concern for community, for example, and while the community is not what made the MCSS model so unique in his view, the co-operators always directed their attention toward it.

The ICA (2006) has claimed that the inclusion of this seventh principle reflects the desired alternative social vision that co-operatives strive for. Those principles, however, that reflect dominant liberal values like autonomy and independence, individual free-will and the myth of the level-playing field will undoubtedly come to compromise this alternative possibility. The overarching economic narrative will become problematic in terms of the forms of togetherness that are fostered.
Fairbairn (2003, 1) noted that the adoption of this new Statement of Co-operative Identity by the ICA:

[W]as one sign of new times: this list opened up new flexibility in structural features such as treatment of capital and surpluses, while adding new considerations such as concern for community. The ICA’s statement was not meant to end discussion of co-operative principles and practices, but rather to be a new beginning for examination of approaches in more specific settings and types of co-operatives.

Yet, overall, the ICA’s (1996) Statement does seem to reinforce that economic contributions of co-operative enterprises are the dominant stories to be told. These changes and transformations have impacted on co-operatives like Mondragon where the ‘salient concern’ of competitiveness in MCC since the 1990s is one example of the increased role that economic values are taking over co-operative principles. Cheney commented on the role of competition in contemporary societies:

In our [Western] societ[ies] we treat competition simultaneously as something that is natural and as something that needs to be nurtured or promoted. (Cheney 1997, 5)

What happens in this process of competition, however, is that ‘an organisation becomes a part of the market’, which means that its assimilation makes it more difficult for the organisation to develop or present any resistance to competitive values (Cheney 1997).

Other tensions faced by co-operators include the case of consumer co-operatives. Bauman (1997, 137) for example, went so far to suggest that, because they can only exist in relation to the market, ‘only in the market environment can the model of a consumer co-operative be conceived.’ This links consumer co-operatives to an intrinsically economically motivated morality, which in Bauman’s (1997)
view, means that consumer co-operatives in the market society cannot embody an alternative. But again, this viewpoint ignores the moral purpose and social vision that might underpin such co-operative activities which are distinctive rather than homogenous features.

In the free-market, principles and values like solidarity are treated as ‘subordinate to economic competitiveness,’ and because the entrance to this market is judged by an organisation’s competitive prowess, competition becomes an ideal to be emulated by corporate co-operative bodies like Mondragon (Cheney 1997, 5). In this way neo-liberal values serve to restrict, define and confine co-operators’ moral agency to competition over co-operation. The capacity to enact change is therefore measured by one’s ability to compete and alternative principles once embodied by co-operatives risk being fixed within homogenised traditions.

These transitions in contemporary co-operatives are a reflection of how master narratives gain a hold on the collective identities of resistant bodies and assimilate their opposition. Relationships and the worldview within those co-operatives are shaped around the values of efficiency and competition; fragmentary encounters that are characteristic of being-aside come to be the dominant form of togetherness. The core issue is that co-operators’ moral agency to enact and embody an alternative social vision is given over to the market.

The market comes to define who belongs and who does not and, as Gibson-
Graham (2003) argued, decision-making capacities are lost. That the ICA’s Statement of Co-operative Identity is more reflective of the dominant economic discourse is a worrying trend that the co-operative movement must address in due course. So too must interest by government bodies and development agencies in co-operative contributions to local economic development in economically depressed regions, particularly rural areas (Zeuli 2002), be countered. Co-operatives will continue to be treated as instrumental answers to complex economic and social issues by state agencies, development bodies and others in positions of power unless counterstories that re-identify dominant understandings are developed.

Counterstories of resistance to the bureaucratic labyrinth fostered under neoliberal political and economic arrangements are required. Morrison (1991, 63) warned that ‘co-operation as practiced by the State and corporate bureaucracies is a manner of reform from above; it is not motivated by a sudden discovery of humane values, but by the profound crisis of modern industrialism’. One must necessarily be cautious that companies can so easily become co-operatives.

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31 Gibson-Graham (2003, 4) argued that ‘in contrast to previous periods, the economy is no longer seen as a sphere of decision. The resurgence of neo-liberalism in the second half of the 20th Century [has] seen a renewed faith in the hidden (almost mystical) hand of the free market, and the active aspect of management associated with the term ‘economy’ has been subordinated to a notion of systemic self-regulation. Naturalisation of the view that we have no (longer) a role in making and managing the economy by which we live has had limiting effects on economic imaginaries’.

32 Most examples of how co-operatives can contribute to local economic community development are situated in rural and regional areas where farming industries have experienced economic decline as a result of free-market competition. This can be seen in examples from the Mid-West of the United States and Canada. Cooperation via the co-operative model is used as a business approach to be competitive in the global market and to generate local economy (see Cropp 2005; Zeuli 2002).
It seems possible to confirm the claim, then, that many co-operatives have come to be seen more as alternative business models by dominant state, corporate and development institutions, than as embodied examples of collective action aimed at some level of social change. Flassati (1981, 1) supported this view:

[Many co-operatives] are not a compelling model as an alternative to either capitalism or state collectivism because they simply reflect the dominant economic and socio-political institutions of the day.

The appeal of the co-operative model for these dominant institutions is that they can reflect the ideals of individual freedom and entrepreneurialism that lie at the heart of the neo-liberal project. This is particularly so when the socio-ethical dimensions and moral purposes of co-operative engagement are silenced. In addition to leftist divisions on co-operative potential, the solution-driven agenda of neo-liberalism has assisted in the construction of a false view, within some community development sectors, that co-operative enterprise is a successful developmental tool for economically depressed regions and for disadvantaged groups. This susceptibility of co-operatives to economic capture would not be so much of a concern, however, if that economic order was one that was based on ethical and just economies. To return to Bauman (1995, 49): ‘the forms of togetherness discussed so far share certain remarkable characteristics, perhaps decisive for their moral consequences’. If a market society is what characterises the 21st century, then, the moral consequences of this on the human condition ought to be evaluated.
Conclusions

This chapter has illustrated that co-operative engagement is both an individual and collective activity that has appeal to people because it embodies a particular sense of moral purpose, and an alternative set of values and principles to dominant institutions. The forms of togetherness that co-operators are able to foster are important to consider if there is to be a transition toward ethical communities.

Co-operative practices have historically and contemporarily sought to provide an alternative social vision. Yet, how co-operative identities have been shaped by master narratives and dominant economic narratives has resulted in them being seen by others as either the activities of rabble rousing, anarchic trouble makers, or as different organisational models that exist to serve economic ends. This has ignored and silenced the distinctive moral purpose of co-operative activity.

From leftist interpretations, the ethical and moral purpose of co-operatives has been overlooked because of the heavy emphasis on economic structures in accounts presented by Marx (1958) and the Webbs (1921). These dominant narratives have done little to present an alternative social vision than those from the right where co-operatives are said to reflect the expression of self-interest because consumer co-operatives in particular seek to get the best price for members. In development literature co-operatives have been narratively positioned also as providing economic solutions to depressed local regions and small communities. The contemporary co-operative identity has also undergone reconfigurations to suit economic neo-liberal values with particular changes to the principles of self-management to reflect autonomy and independence. These
shifts signal worrying changes to co-operatives as a real social alternative to neo-liberal free-market dominance. The economic dominance faced in co-operative sectors is shared by community development sectors too, whereby co-operative principles and social values are being eroded by economic values and economic rationalist policies of competition, efficiency, deregulation and privatisation.

The result of economic capture for both the co-operative and community sectors means the diminished possibilities of being counter-identities who embody and work toward an alternative social vision. Practices that embody an alternative vision to neo-liberalism are critical lest we become socially bereft of moral purpose and our social relations illustrative of being-aside and being-with, closed off to the possibility of being-for commitments and relationships. Dominant co-operative narratives miss the moral of the story, that co-operative engagement provides a distinctive, unique avenue of moral protest, providing purposive forms of togetherness and moral consequences that have not been adequately accounted for. These moral particularities might be what make some co-operative examples counterstories that can facilitate the narrative repair of diminished counter-identities and, hence, free the economically-captured moral agency of some individuals and collectives. Certainly, many co-operatives have provided a counter narrative to dominant economic and master narratives, but whether they can narratively repair the damage that has been inflicted on counter-identities by the neo-liberal project, and become counterstories is yet to be seen.
PART II CAPTURE
CHAPTER 3

CAPTIVATED AUDIENCES (I): THE ECONOMIC CAPTURE OF COMMUNAL VALUES

Part I has noted that changed global and national political-economic arrangements have forced some co-operatives, including the international peak-body for the co-operative movement -- the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) -- to reshape some of their seven international co-operative principles to meet neo-liberal trends. These reconfigurations are a worrying feature for co-operators in terms of how they will maintain and embody their alternative social vision. This chapter builds on how these economic values of competition, efficiency, productivity and diversification have further eroded principles of solidarity, empowerment, self-management, self-help and cooperation in the context of community development. These changes to co-operative principles are important for community development, as they once figured as central to community practices and community development’s identity.

This part illustrates how neo-liberal economic and social values began to enter many community development areas from the 1980s onwards in Australia. Increased competition and an efficiency agenda have seen economic values come to supersede social and communal values in many community programs. Economic capture is signified by the prevalence of neo-liberal policies in community development and the push to competitive tendering for service provision. This latter process has not only allowed for economic capture, but also as chapter 4 demonstrates, social capture.
Co-operative engagement and community development share a common history in that contemporary theoretical and practical developments for both sectors indicate identifiable links with radical social change theories and alternative movements of the 1960s (Kenny 1992; 1999; Onyx 2001). Certainly, the co-operative movement has a longer, more extensive, history than its counterpart community development. As a late twentieth century phenomenon, community development theorising began from the 1970s in Australia with the intention to construct an identity and practice that could provide an alternative to dominant institutional injustices (Boulet 2003; Dixon 2003; Kenny 1999). Community development drew extensively upon co-operative principles to shape this identity and formulate the strong social justice ethic that underlies its practice.

Many co-operative examples, then, embodied a distinctive social vision and moral purpose that had appeal to community development in the early stages of its formation. In spite of this strong moral purpose and alternative social vision, however, co-operatives too have been susceptible to economic capture as part I demonstrated. Some of the reasons for this susceptibility have been linked to broader socio-economic and political structural changes, namely globalisation and free-market arrangements. Others have been attributed to historical and contemporary master narrative and dominant narrative representations that have missed the moral of the co-operative story. Similarly to the co-operative sector, community development has been vulnerable to such master narrative depictions. Economic capture of these counter-identities, oppositional practices, and the alternative social visions once offered is, thus, a shared experience for co-operators and community development workers.
The fashioning of community development’s identity and social justice ethic

…A society based upon the widely espoused but often ignored principles of human dignity and worth, social justice, political freedom, and world peace…our past and present failures to reach such a society are largely rooted in our assumption that we are already on the right path, or that the path exists and as soon as enough people find and follow it, all will be well.


Since its inception, co-operative principles have formed the basis of community development theories and informed its philosophy of practice. With the introduction of the Australian Assistance Program (AAP) (1973) by the Whitlam Government and changes to Australian immigration laws, community development began to develop as a social and political strategy to enact systemic change (Raysmith & Einfeld 1975; Onyx 1996). Community development represented, like many other co-operative models, an alternative set of values to dominant social and political institutions of the day that could work at a local level to respond to the growing needs of individuals and groups.

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33 The AAP sought to address two common themes, ‘isolation and alienation from the societies in which people lived and the need for better personal services…and, to respond to the need for better community relations programs for migrants and disadvantaged groups’ (Raysmith & Einfeld 1975, 6). This signified a move away from the traditional modes of service delivery away from the charitable, philanthropic and church based organisations providing services toward a rights-based model (Onyx 1996). This was perceived as an attempt to ‘involve the community more directly in the development of services and facilities’ (Raysmith & Einfeld 1975, 5). Therefore community development developed as a ‘philosophy and as a political strategy for empowerment and social change’ (Onyx 1996, 100). This history is important to acknowledge because it demonstrates how community development developed out of both the agenda for nation-state building which emphasised economic development and the movements for social change in the 1960s. It serves to illustrate the different dominant narratives at play in the identity-constitution of community development.

34 Onyx (1996, 100) wrote that ‘community development in Australia, as elsewhere in post-industrial countries, grew out of the rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s: the women’s movement, the inner city ‘green bans’, aboriginal land rights, gay liberation, migrant rights, all set in the context of the anti-Vietnam moratoriums’. This has served to shape perceptions that people who do community development are the same people who are protestors and involved in social movements.
The desire for community development workers to enact social and systemic change and work toward a socially just society has meant that, like co-operators and other activists, community workers have often also been positioned or framed within the protestors plot that Jasper (1997) outlined. Alternatively, other community development theorists have storied some community workers and social groups as heroic saviours, those people who can ultimately win through, fighting the injustices of the system and working toward re-structuring society (c.f. Miller 2004; Dixon et al., 2003; Kelly et al., 1989).35 Both of these depictions serve to demonstrate how effective dominant narratives can be in terms of identity-constitution.

The underlying message imbued within the protestors and heroic saviour view is that community development, like co-operative practice or other forms of protest, is fanciful and naïve. Dominant criticisms directed at community development theorists reinforce this view with suggestions that the field has been under-researched and inadequately defined (Bhattacharyya 2004). It is certainly the case, however, that there has been limited material available on community development that is specific to Australian contexts (Onyx 1996; Kenny 1996; Mowbray 1996).36

35 This storied has been a reflexive process whereby theorists and dominant groups have defined people according to these character types, but individuals have cast themselves in this light too as part of the protestors/activist identity from which community development emerged. For some, the heroic saviour plot is a double edge sword. On the one side, it can be a convenient mask for those working under the expert professional model of community development -- individuals can define their sense of purpose around saving others. One the other side, other dominant groups dismiss the relevant work done by community developers and discredit the need for vulnerable people to have representation and advocacy by others by drawing upon the heroic saviour plot.

36 Mowbray (1996) has observed ‘limited agreement on the fundamental understandings or perspectives on community development’. He proposed that this limited agreement is the reason why there is such little material from Australia on community development. See also Raysmith & Einfeld (1975), Henderson & Thomas (1981) and Kenny (1994) for further discussion of both these issues.
It is within this context that community development theorising and practice
emerged as an attempted structural method and political program to achieve social
change in Australia (Onyx 1996; Kenny 1999). Its relatively short history in
Australia has meant that the field has been heavily informed by a blend of British
and American theoretical positions. From the British perspectives, community
development has taken much more of the social and community services model
which incorporates a broad view of what community development is and does
from education programs to social support groups, including case management
(Popple 1995).

Alternatively, American models concentrate heavily on community development
as a local economic activity, mostly emphasising the economic in the community
economic development title (Bhuyan & Leistritz 2000). There have been ongoing
difficulties and debates in attempts to define the practices and theories of
community development in the U.S.A. Like co-operative practices, community
development was seen to be a responsive practice to local group and individual
needs (Kenny 1999; Ife 2001). It has often, however, been understood according
to its role in the development of local and regional economies in the U.S.A. A
mixture of both of these theoretical perspectives can be found across Australian
community development theories.

To be responsive, community workers desired to facilitate the empowerment of
others, to ensure that resources were allocated effectively and fairly, and to give
control back to local communities in terms of decision-making. Community
development sought to provide services that governments initially could not, and
later would not, provide in a manner in which participants were valued and shared mutual responsibilities (Kenny 1999, 8-9). Community development aspired to create ethical communities.

Philosophically, the links of many community development approaches and models with the co-operative movement and its principles are fairly self-evident. Practically, however, community development came to face different issues pertaining to power and autonomy in particular because the field did not develop actual co-operative structures for many community organisations. Many community models and organisations that emerged in the initial stages, developed from state and federal government funding programs. Without co-operative autonomy from these state interests, the ability to self-manage and embody other important co-operative principles could not live beyond direct service provision contexts.

Community development had the tradition of the co-operative movement to draw upon to understand empowerment, self-help, self-management and solidarity, yet definitions and theories often referred to these principles with little examination or evaluation of how they would be put into practice (Pease 2002). While community development attempted to retain fluid boundaries in line with its identity as a responsive and changing social practice, Bhattacharyya (2004, 2) argued that:

The risk of exclusivity [was] probably real, but if the adherents themselves did not want to define the field, others w[ould] (as they have) and not necessarily to their advantage.
So, the fluidity of definitions of community development practice has meant that different groups, with various political and economic interests have been able to sway community development to meet their own interests.

It has been argued, then, that contemporary problems in community development are the result of the practice being poorly defined. This, according to Bhattacharyya (2004, 2) is also one of the causes for economic capture to be bemoaned.

A surfeit of statements purporting to be definitions have been published, each slightly worded in an idiosyncratic frenzy with no explanation as to why the particular terms were chosen.

So while a social justice ethic can be pointed to, or co-operative principles identified, some still believe that community development theorists do not adequately explain these principles and theories. Bhattacharyya’s (2004) criticisms do, however, seem to overlook the moral purposes that were said to underpin community development and how these did provide some level of explanation for choices of terms and practices.

Bhattacharyya’s (2004) earlier criticisms, about usage of terms, have been taken up by other theorists who question what empowerment, self-help, participation and solidarity mean in the context of community development (Pease 2002; Berner & Phillips 2005). For example, Weissberg (1999, 17) analysed the use of empowerment as a concept in research-based definitions of community development. Weissberg (1999) found that common in many definitions was a notion that:
Those who are empowered can orchestrate their lives and control the world around them. Terms such as autonomy, mastery and dependence are also implied.

The problem for Weissberg (1999, 17) was that empowerment:

[t]acitly assumed that the privileged – unless, perhaps, they suffer debilitating conditions such as mental illness – already possess significant power, and adding more cannot benefit either them personally or society more generally.

Therefore, the way in which some community development theorists have used an empowerment narrative has created boundaries and definitions between those who are empowered and those in need of empowerment. This has been argued to echo other divisions, like; the haves and the have nots, and the developed and underdeveloped nations; all problematic dichotomies that development sectors were said to have moved away from since decolonisation advocates highlighted the negative connotations of terms since the 1960s and 1970s. Empowerment is a problematic term, precisely because of the tacit assumptions of autonomy, mastery and dependence that underpin it, terms which lend themselves to liberal and individualist notions of selfhood (Kingdom 1992). That autonomy, dependence and mastery are terms that easily fit with liberal individualism is only one problem that using the term empowerment in community development poses. The other problem is that these tacit assumptions make for the concept of “empowerment” itself to be assimilated by master narratives to use for their own devices.37

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37 This process and capture of such terms like empowerment, and how they are used by master narratives to achieve their own ends, will resurface as a theme for discussion in parts concerned with the Indigenous Community Development Employment Program (CDEP).
Empowerment that emphasises mastery and autonomy, however, is different to the forms of empowerment that some co-operatives seek to embody. Indeed, under the ideal of liberal individualism, particularly that espoused by the Thatcher regime for example, financial or social dependency on the state or others was something that was shunned, whereas, in contrast, many co-operatives begin from the basis of our interconnection and interdependency with each other (Kingdom 1992). This is because empowerment in the co-operative context means membership and dependency with others in the co-operative, it means an ability to have one’s material, socio-political, cultural and economic needs met from a basis of mutual standing with others.

Additionally, this mutual standing is collaboratively defined rather than proposed or imposed by some government development agencies or via a program removed from the geographical community, it seeks to serve. These commitments to principles and the conversations that collaboratively construct ‘feelings of association as an almost real body’ (Ludlow n.d.) are characteristic of how ethical communities might form. These are the feelings of association, being together with a sense that one’s fate is commonly shared and intricately interconnected, that are the sorts of relationships community development practitioners will need to intentionally foster to resist master narrative and economic capture.

Undoubtedly community development theorists have intended, by their usage of empowerment, to liberate and emancipate others in a being-for (other-directed) manner. As Weissberg (1999, 20) contended, however, portrayal of the term “empowerment” in literature has been as ‘a moral imperative’ that in a sense has
been formulated as a rule-governed encounter and almost a law that must be followed. For example empowerment, in some circumstances, has created boundaries where there are some people who ‘need’ to be empowered and others who do the empowering. How it is that people become empowered, that is, how there can be a measure of empowerment and who decides who needs empowerment are not entirely clear.

The basic problems that community development has faced has been too little discussion of how empowerment occurs and who is doing the empowering and why, except to say that it is a collaborative problem-solving process (Statkus & Mayhew 1992, 10). The distinction between the co-operative counter-identity, then, and that which community development sought to shape, was one that rested with how the co-operative itself enabled the embodiment of principles; a site which part I has noted as increasingly under threat with neo-liberal economic dominance.

Two other factors distinguish co-operative and community development counter-identities. First, the co-operative model retained a notion of autonomy as being separate from the state, particularly in terms of governance and decision-making, and not as beings that were separate from each other. Second, this autonomy allowed many co-operatives to stay at arms length of government and state programs, which might lead to their economic capture. In cases where co-operatives formed in response to injustices or inadequacies of government, for example Mondragon, autonomy provided a crucial identity-constituting role that
enabled co-operators to embody not only the economic purposes of their activities, but the moral.

The tradition of co-operativism that co-operators could draw upon, the space provided by the co-operative to represent one’s identity, values, beliefs and principles, and the intentional resistance to dominant injustices made many co-operatives unique examples worth further consideration in community development. This consideration went astray, however, with the workers’ co-operative model deployed by some Australian state governments as a mechanism to combat unemployment via community development projects (see Jamorozick & Beck 1981). As Jamorozik and Beck found, these top-down perspectives failed to foster any sustainability beyond the funded life of projects, and they certainly did not represent the embodiment of alternative sets of values and principles because they were so entwined with the functioning of the state. The attempts to empower young unemployed people soon shifted to the co-operative endeavour taking on the role of regulating young people. For example, young people had to be compliant and participate in the co-operative activity to receive their unemployment benefits; a recent tactic used by the federal government in the Work for the Dole program as well.

38 The use of co-operative models as community development prototypes to combat unemployment is not a new trend. Jamorozik & Beck (1981) studied the failed attempt of the NSW State Labour Government to form workers co-operatives in the 1970s with unemployed young people. Their study highlighted issues and tensions between: community based responses being government sponsored; the need for profitability and economic objectives needing to be fit to the social objectives; the difficulties with the standing Co-operation Act (1923) (NSW) and possible needs for modifications; a need to extend the education and promotion of the programme so that ‘worker co-operatives [could] be seen by the community as an alternative form, rather than as an unusual aberrant form, of social and economic organisation’ (Jamorozik & Beck 1981, 14). Finally, Jamorozik and Beck (1981) noted that the program contained no vision beyond the end of funding date in 1982 leaving its future uncertain.
Similarly to Weissberg (1999), Pease (2002, 137) argued that the term “empowerment” has both liberatory and regulatory possibilities in community development contexts. Having an awareness of how empowerment reflects both of these possibilities is useful for identifying how some community development and co-operative practices contribute (knowingly or unknowingly) to Cooper’s (1997) moral community and others to his description of ethical communities. The reality of the moral and ethical as concurrent examples serves to illustrate how liberation and regulation are always present possibilities in all relational contexts. Moral communities can give rise to resistance that generates a vision of ethical communities (liberation), while ethical communities (i.e. some co-operatives) can sometimes become rigid and inflexible, adopting the qualities of moral communities (regulation). The embodiment of co-operative principles and values by counter-identities defines whether community development practitioners and co-operators follow the pathway of regulation or liberation.

Government views on empowerment and community development’s role in this tend to reflect a rule-governed command. Authorities seem to believe that empowerment is a necessary condition for the implementation of other new terminologies and programs such as, community capacity building. The crucial question is, however, whether this community capacity building leads to more being-with relations -- with the possibility of the ethical relation of being-for others emerging -- or does it continue to foster a sense that one is being-aside others? Just as empowerment does not automatically foster togetherness and ethical relationships in communities, building community capacity does not assure this either. Indeed community capacity building, like its counterpart
empowerment, also works from the basis that there some capacities need
development in certain communities. These projects are usually situated in areas
that are designated as ‘low socio-economic’ regions implying that some
communities have capacity, and others do not.

Empowerment and community capacity building discourses came to play more of
a role in community development with the 1980s economic and political
transitions in Australia. A professional and specialisation trend accompanied this
that saw some community development workers begin to adopt an expert-
professional role as part of their identity. If problems of ill-definition in the field,
lack of conceptual examination and an explicit ethical framework for community
development did not pose to be enough problems, moves to a professionalism
agenda created additional tensions for community development practices.

Community development theorists have claimed that professionalism implies that
a specialist body of knowledge is required to carry out a particular practice, and of
course, this is antithetical to the practice for some community development
theorists (c.f. Kenny 1992; Ife 2002). From other quarters, there has been the
additional claim that a specialist body cannot exist if there is not even a clear
definition of what community development is (Bhattacharyya 2004). There has
been much debate surrounding the positive and negative aspects of
professionalism in community development.

For example, in 1992 the Australian journal Community Quarterly devoted an
entire issue to the subject. Key Australian community development theorists
(Kenny 1992; Onyx 1992; Ward 1992) discussed the issues and challenges that professionalism posed for the area. Major tensions that were cited as posing problems for community development included: the idea that community developers would need specialist training; they would need to be educated in specific skills and knowledge sets; and, they would need to be members of professional associations. Wilding contended that:

A model of professionalism does not sit well with the activity of community work…the professional model requires commitment to a specified value and ethical position, and practice to be governed by adherence to a code of ethics. [Professionalism] implies the existence of a specialised body of knowledge, with practice restricted to those who have access to that body of knowledge and in the skills required to carry out that practice. (Wilding 1982 cited in Ife 2002, 276)

Ife argued that this view of professionalism was contradictory to the values of community work because it would begin to define boundaries of exclusion and inclusion within a professional body of knowledge. Theorists warned of the tendency in professionalism to take on “expert status” where ‘knowledge and skills are seen as the exclusive property of professionals and they are not then accessible to others’ (Ife 2002, 276). There are similarities here with criticisms levelled at building community capacity and empowerment -- in that, some have access to capacity, skills and knowledge that others do not.

Another problem that the professionalism agenda brought was the need for consumers to access and use the services of professionals. For Ife (2002, 277), this relationship begins unequally because someone knows and someone else does not know. The ‘expert’ role suggested, again, as Pease (2002) and Weissberg (1999) noted, that empowering communities and people required the professional knowing and the community doing. The professional was said to do this in
isolation of the local cultural context, which for Ife meant that ‘skill sharing, empowerment and the community knows best approach to community development could not be compatible’ (2002, 227). If ethical communities are those based on conversations that include the voices and perspectives of others whose stance might be different to our own, then, these notions of professionalism certainly seemed as if they would be incompatible to building ethical communities.

Those who were grassroots and radically-oriented toward social change had problems with the professionalism agenda because they argued that professionals would end up serving the profession (Andrews 1992; Kenny 1992). They argued that professionals would end up believing the ideology of the propaganda and would believe too much in their competencies. This would result in what Andrews (1992) called a danger that professionals would utilise their mythology to develop programs or projects that served their own needs rather than a community’s needs. He cautioned that professionals had ‘a tendency to develop a mystique about their professions’ (Andrews 1992, 36). This mystique -- or ‘making mystery’ -- developed by the use of specialised language and verbalised procedures has previously ‘created a shroud over professional practices’ that requires caution (Kraybill 1982 quoted in Andrews 1992, 36). Professionals could thus develop a culture of secrecy by using expert terminology that excluded others not privy to information, and they would require, then, to manufacture needs to secure a contract to meet these. The issue of professionalism in community development was further complicated, and continues to be complicated today, by the sheer
diversities and range of practices conducted under the banner of community development.

In short, one can argue that Andrews’ (1992) position suggested that the counter-identity of community development would be further susceptible to economic and social capture if it took the pathway of becoming a self-serving profession. If community development was to become self-serving, Pease (2002) argued that this would mean that empowerment, too, risked equation with professional legitimacy and ‘to be empowering in human service work [would be used] to be self-legitimating’ (Pease 2002, 137). Mendes (2002, 157) contended that professionalism is ‘inimical to community development principles such as empowerment and self-determination, structural advocacy and participation’. Clearly for those counter-identities in community development who do not identify with a profession or professional agenda, this debate is largely irrelevant.

The professionalism discussion continues to have currency, however, across the spectrum of grassroots to institutionalised community development. For example, Kenny’s (2002, 285-6) recent research with unpaid community workers has found that there is ‘a strong credentialist creep where those with formal educational qualifications, rather than those grass-roots representatives, are the ones listened to and offered paid work’. Overlooked by government reports and discussion, are the countless hours and activities of unpaid work that people in communities do as community development. Within the profession itself there is a risk that those with professional qualifications take on the status of being the ‘authorities’, while
others who are not professionally qualified simply listen and do. Andrews (1992, 35) predicted that there was a risk of this credentialist creep, cautioning that:

Various parties involved in community work pressed for more adequate training. Then those with more adequate training pressed for a professional association. Then those in the professional association pressed for the support of the system to impose certification requirements on the practice of community work.

Andrews’ (1992) predictions highlight the way in which bureaucracy can creep into such grassroots focused practices as community development, a trend which co-operatives face as well. Further complicating these matters are the different views held by theorists on the actual impact of the professional project in community development practice, combined with the complexities of those political and economic structural shifts that began in the 1980s. Kenny (2002, 286), for example, contended that community development’s commitment to change and self-determination ought to see it ‘embrace new discourses of social entrepreneurship and capacity building. Yet, there is ambivalence in the field about how to respond to such issues’. Scepticism to these discourses is, however, refreshing as new discourses of social entrepreneurship mask a hidden economic agenda that drives and supports recent policy shifts. To accept these discourses uncritically means further risk of economic capture.

Bringing ethical analysis to the foreground of community development is crucial, then, to the development of a counterstory that has the ability to narratively repair damage caused to counter-identities by dominant economic narratives. Ward (1993, v) has suggested ‘by its very nature community development is an implicitly ethical act that is concerned with how we should live’. Like many forms of co-operative practice the ethical focus in community development comes
from asking ‘how we ought to live;’ so, there is a need to have normative theoretical tools available to imagine and create ethical community development.

Mowbray (1993) has criticised community development theorising for the lack of a clear discussion of its transformative capacity in theory. Indeed, ethical analysis in community development has tended to remain implicit, rather than explicit. Mowbray (1993) raised a specific concern about the ‘absence of direct exploration of community workers’ political or ideological dimensions, and the broad sweeping claims made in the area about its transformative nature with little application’. Further to this, Mendes (2002, 161-2) contended that ‘prominent community development literature provides little practical guidance on the ethical dilemmas discussed’ with well-known texts making ‘no references whatsoever to ethical issues’. In spite of a clear agenda and goals of transformation and emancipation in community development, there has been limited explicit ethical analysis of the practice and philosophy of community development (Mowbray 1993). Kenny (2002, 285) highlighted, for example, that ‘sometimes the very commitment to giving voice can be problematic, such as when sentiments of the voices are patriarchal or racist’. Kenny’s comment points to the under evaluated and little analysed embedded values and dominant narratives drawn upon in community development.

**Embedded rationalities**

Similarly to co-operative engagement, it is easy to assume that because social values and co-operative principles lay at the heart of community development
practices that ethical outcomes would result. Mowbray (1993) argued, however, that these implicit assumptions in community development needed explicit articulation. Not only has ill-definition fragmented the sector, but limited ethical appraisal and appreciation has meant that the formation of a solid counter-identity that can resist economic domination has not resulted either.

It is a surprising paradox, then, that given the strong influence of the 1960s counter-cultural movement, which heralded a new social vision, that this did not provide an enclave of resistance to economic dominance. Activist and protestors characters retain, however, their influence in the identity of community development, with many people identifying that their grassroots work is the focus of their activities. Additionally, there are community development theorists who continue to draw on the strong social justice ethic that underpins practices as an identity-constituting feature (Onyx 2001).

While co-operators from the late 19th century and onward could draw on a rationale that proposed separation from dominant political and economic interests, community development faced different tensions by being characterised by diverse activities that crossed a number of boundaries interlinked with the state. This has seen the field be more susceptible to capture, primarily because sources of funding or employment are directly linked to the state, as is worker accountability. To develop a strong counterstory, however, understanding the embedded constraints in community development is necessary so that the practice may liberate itself from the economic clutches of neo-liberalism. One way to develop this understanding is to examine the rationales that underpin community
development’s practice (Kenny 2002); that is, to develop an appreciation of the embedded constraints within community development.

Kenny (2002) identified four different operating rationales -- the charitable, activist, welfare state and market -- as those that have fashioned some of the operating frameworks in community development. According to Kenny (2002, 287) the idea of operating rationales:

> [r]efers to the values, assumptions and principles underpinning organisational forms, everyday activities, practices and social relations. Operating rationales provide organisational logics and are manifested in specific discourses. Operating rationales, organisational forms and everyday practices, processes and social relations come together to constitute an operating framework.

It is pertinent to add here that some of these operating frameworks have been shaped by, or are reflections of master narratives that assist in the circulation of particular discourses, logics and rationales. Other frameworks assist to contest and resist such master narratives. As Kenny (2002) noted, neither one nor another operating rationale can solely characterise community development activities or organisations. The rationales will be concurrent and influenced by different socio-political and economic contingencies. The following table highlights these different operating rationales within community organisations.
Prior to the Australian government’s provision of funding and services in the 1970s, charitable organisations were responsible for community development service delivery, for this reason, some traditions and practices of community development continue to emulate this organisational rationale. This has been further complicated by the privatisation of services which now sees charities, once again, involved in community service provision under competitive tendering arrangements. The charity rationale is a problematic one for community


development, because it has traditionally espoused an individualist focus (i.e. individuals are the cause of problems not conditions or structures) and hence, a rejection of collectivist or structural solutions.

In the charity model it is often the individual who gets fixed and who is the source of problems which is a position that is argued to be antithetical to the very purposes of community development. The charitable rationale is additionally problematic because it draws on fragments of the deserving and undeserving poor narrative, echoed in Potter’s (1891) claims above about those idle-unemployed. The charity model is also characterised by additional notions of morality where people are seen as obliged to help the poor; they have a duty to help and people are victims to be saved. As Bauman (1995, 268) explained via Levinas (1962):

Morality means \textit{being-for} (not merely being-aside or even being-with) the Other. And this being-for is unconditional (that is, if it is \textit{to be moral}, not merely \textit{contractual}) – it does not depend on what the Other is, or does, whether s/he deserves my care and whether s/he repays in kind…one cannot imagine a point of which one could say with any sort of moral right: I have done my share, and here my responsibility ends.

Morality to serve and work with others toward empowerment and emancipation is not a contractual arrangement. It is an arrangement that requires a mutually embodied perspective of \textit{being-for} others. The embedded constraints of the charity model contrast with that intrinsic morality that underpins the co-operative and community development counter-identity. Community development organisations influenced by the charity rationale in their service framework will risk seeing ‘individual attributes’ as things in need of change rather than structural changes (Kenny 2002, 289). This serves to create those ‘intolerable conditions of existence [which] can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural’--
referred to above as Bourdieu’s paradox of the doxa (Bourdieu 2001 quoted in Christie 2005). The type of master narrative that drives the charitable rationale unfortunately creates a false sense that charities mitigate the rigours of the economic system. Green and Cromwell (1984, xv) argued:

Charities pick up the conspicuous victims and dust them off. The business of charities is more salvation that mitigation. By the time charity finds its wards they have [already] fallen through the economic system. (Green and Cromwell quoted in Palmer 2001, 78)

While the charitable organisational rationale does not seemingly fit with community development’s structural change focus, there are programs such as the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) introduced by the Fraser Government in the 1970s (which continues today) that remain congruent with this rationale. Designed to combat unemployment and so-called welfare dependency, CDEP indicated that the government might yet have a commitment to giving voice, self-determination, self-management and equality to Indigenous Australians. Again, to draw on Kenny’s (2002) earlier point, however, problems have emerged with the sentiments of voices echoing problematic and oppressive aspects of rationales. Echoes of racism and patriarchy are embedded in the master narratives that drove CDEP formulation.

If Kenny’s (2002, 287) four operating rationales were used to evaluate the CDEP, it is possible to suggest that the scheme would have easily, in rhetoric, been situated within a welfare state rationale. Kenny (2002, 289) suggested that this welfare rationale rested on two normative principles: first, state intervention was seen as a positive endeavour; and second, such interventions should be based on ‘the principles of social rights, social justice, social equality and redistribution’.
State intervention under the welfare state was meant to emphasise, encourage and complement community development’s social justice ethic.

CDEP, however, was also an example of ‘welfare colonialism’, a term devised by Paine (1977) to describe how programs ‘operate not to actualise the identities and cultures of people, but to colonise them according to the State’s own distinctive norms’ (Paine 1977 quoted in Bernardi 1997, 2). The goal of CDEP was to reduce unemployment ‘replacing the welfare nexus between the Department of Social Security (DSS, now Centrelink) and the Indigenous individual recipient, with a welfare nexus between the individual and the Aboriginal community’ (Bernardi 1997, 1). This scheme, presented under the guise of self-management, self-determination and empowerment, actually operated in a true master narrative fashion, however: the state co-opted the values and principles of community development to serve its own end of continued colonisation of the Indigenous subject. The scheme also reflected how the Australian government began their subtle moves to shift responsibility for individual and communal well-being away from the state and back to individuals and communities.

Bernardi (1997, 1) suggested that ‘CDEP was in fact a product of welfare colonialism that [ought] to colonise the Aboriginal domain with the State’s own distinctive norms and structures’. CDEP, while espousing empowerment of Indigenous Australians also required their compliance for eligibility. The promotion of the state’s norms and values served to further compound a notion of subordinate status for Indigenous people in a most solicitous manner. The phenomenon of welfare colonialism was ‘solicitous rather than exploitative,
liberal rather than oppressive’ (Bernardi 1997, 2-3). It was liberal in that it promoted ideals that were supposedly those of empowerment and self-determination; however, CDEP solicitously ensured that dominant values and narratives of an oppressive state system overrode those of self-determination and empowerment.

The unfortunate reality is that CDEP has become a further example of how the state has captured social and co-operative principles using these to its own advantage. Adding further complexities was how this scheme also employed the term “community development” but its concentration was always on the individual as the problem and not the collective; so, it contained an implicit charitable rationale of helping or saving the Indigenous subject from dependency on government hand-outs. The drive behind CDEP has been to reduce an individual’s economic dependency on the state and, as such, it has contributed to a sceptical view from some Indigenous community members about community development.

Complicating these issues further were ‘masculine subtexts, embedded within welfare [discourse and practice] which subjectified women, denied them access to benefits, maintained their economic and social powerlessness and defined their needs’ (Frazer and Pateman cited in Bernardi 1997, 2). The masculine nature of the welfare state rationale is little examined in Kenny’s (2002) overview, which indicates that there is a need for further research and examination of the role that patriarchal and other master narratives have played in identity-constitution of community development theory and practice. Kenny (2002) noted that with all of
the criticisms that were made of the welfare state rationale it was surprising that community development has not celebrated the demise of the welfare state.

This lack of celebration, however, makes sense and is in some ways a reassurance that alternatives to economic neo-liberalism do exist. Part of this reassurance is the result of the dominant influence that the activist rationale has played in community development. Those who come to community development would often disagree with the unethical, self-interested, self-help driven, privatised initiatives, enterprise and competitive focus that characterise the growing market rationale (Kenny 2002). In contrast, those recurrent themes of solidarity, mutuality, political mobilisation and advocacy, an avoidance of standardising programs, facilitation of structural change, redistribution of resources and a commitment to equality, giving voice and participation continue to appeal to those who work within the activist rationale (Kenny 2002).

The distinguishing feature between the other three dominant rationales and the activist rationale is that the activist rationale emphasises social change and structural transformation. Under the welfare state, intervention and policy changes drove social transformation, while the charitable rationale conducted philanthropic activities related to individual change. In a market-driven organisational framework, change only occurs through the achievement of incentives through market forces, as Kenny (2002) illustrated. One of these incentives has been a greater trend toward self-help. Self-help has become a problematic concept in the current neo-liberal climate, however, because it equates with meanings of self-sufficiency, individual responsibility, and
autonomy. As with empowerment, the term “self-help” fits with all four of Kenny’s (2002) organisational rationales, and so it has become a double-edge sword enforced on communities to resolve the very issues that the system has created yet no longer provides support for.\textsuperscript{40} This is certainly a different notion of self-help than that which drove the establishment of early co-operatives, but it does have an individual emphasis that fits with the charitable rationale. These manifestations of self-help are questionable in terms of fulfilling a social justice ethic.

This brief evaluation of the fashioning of community development’s counter-identity suggests that the erosion of the alternative social visions and sets of values has coincided with the global neo-liberal project beginning in the 1980s but having roots in economic changes from the 1970s. The sector’s disagreements on definitions, the role for professionals and a lack of formation of a strong counter-identity to resist such dominance have also contributed to economic capture. Dixon (2003) et. al., highlighted this process of economic capture in their outline of the history of community practices in Australia. The chart illustrates a shift away from community development as a site of resistance that embodied an alternative social vision and co-operative principles to one characterised by economic arrangements. Following the chart, the second section discusses further economic capture of community development’s counter-identity.

\textsuperscript{40} Bauman (1995, 271) lamented that ‘recent years have been marked by the slow yet relentless dismantling or weakening of agencies which used to institutionalise the commonality of fate. The intended or unintended effect of the process is the recasting of the community (and communal action in general), from the pledge of individual’s security it used to be, into the individual’s burden and bane; an extra load to carry, adding little to one’s personal weal, yet something one cannot, regrettably, easily shake off though one would dearly like to’. Community, for many, is no longer about ‘shared responsibility for and collective insurance against’ but how much it will cost to provide ‘for those who cannot provide for themselves’.
### TABLE 4

**DIXON ET AL., (2003) HISTORY OF COMMUNITY PRACTICES IN AUSTRALIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Themes/Initiatives</th>
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| 1850s–early 20th Century        | COLONIALISM and RADICAL PHILANTHROPY  
                                      - government and charity sponsored services with an emphasis on education for citizenship |
| Early 20th Century–1960s        | THE ENGAGEMENT of CITIZEN INITIATIVE  
                                      - urban renewal  
                                      - education of the poor  
                                      - planned communities  
                                      - delivery of services  
                                      And EXPERIMENTS in COMMUNALISM  
                                      - community self-help and self-determination  
                                      - experiments in co-operative and work organisations |
| 1960s: ‘TIME of FERMENT’        | New Left organising  
                                      - student protests, civil rights and anti-war movements  
                                      - Green Bans movement  
                                      - the state as the enemy |
| 1970s: PEACEFUL PROTEST, PLANNING and PARTICIPATION | participation in planning alongside resident action  
                                      - community management of services and self-help  
                                      - coalition building  
                                      - the critique of community and community control  
                                      - ascendancy of social movements, especially feminist and environment |
| 1980s: CYNICISM, CORPORATISM and INDIVIDUALISM | governance and community services restructuring  
                                      - de-institutionalisation and community care  
                                      - state ambivalence for civil society & emphasis on the economy  
                                      - emergence of politics based on lifestyle as well as shared social identity |
| 1990s and 2000s: CONTRACTING, PARTNERSHIPS and GLOBAL NETWORKS | government, business and community partnerships flourish  
                                      - emphasis on social capital  
                                      - networks, alliances and coalitions appear and disappear at a rapid pace  
                                      - state re-engages with civil society, through place management programs and capacity building |

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41 Dixon et. al. (2003, 6).
The changing nature of what seems to be community development

Dixon’s (2003) outline of the history of community practices in Australia illustrates the significant turn to corporate style arrangements during the 1980s and the contractual arrangements of 1990s onward in community development. The chart also demonstrates how these arrangements emphasised partnership and global networks, and how Kenny’s (2002) notion of a market rationale came to dominate in the sector. While community development did seek a counter-position to dominant social and political institutions, the story that started to be told became permeated by dominant economic values and master narrative fragments.

This has seen previously strong counter-identities diminished with economic values taking on greater importance and restricting the capacity of individuals and groups to achieve change toward the alternative social vision once embodied. Bhattacharyya (2004, 3) proposed that a deeper issue facing community development was that ‘not everything that contributes to community improvement can be claimed as community development’. This by no means denies, however, that community development developed as ‘a philosophy and as a political strategy for empowerment and social change [and] that it was about ‘bottom-up’ processes of change and action’ (Onyx 1996, 100). It does, however, leave us to question where community development’s values are today if efficiency, accountability and performance have become measurements of social outcomes.
Consider the introduction to this study, where the transfer of the small non-profit youth service in Queensland, to a company limited by guarantee provided evidence of how social and communal values are being eroded by corporate structural dominance. Small non-profit organisations are turning to corporate for-profit structures to ensure that they survive within a competitive community services market place (United Synergies 2005). Even the social and ethical dimensions of co-operative identities have been diminished by economic dominance as both the introduction and part I illustrated with emerging tensions between moral purposes and economic commitments in the Mondragon Co-operative Social System’s (MCSS) transfer to Mondragon Co-operative Corporation (MCC).

Thus, we are left to ponder, how the alternative sets of values and principles that some community development and co-operative engagements embodied will survive in this climate? The recent ‘rebrand’ (as the Chairman of newly-formed Open Minds referred to it) of the Queensland Wattle League to a corporation allows for further consideration of these concerns and continued tensions. The impetus behind this transition is to allow for ‘marketing our services more effectively and communicat[ing] to all stakeholders’ (Open Minds 2005, 1). This organisational re-structure reflects the insidious way in which neo-liberal economic narratives have further co-opted some areas of the community sector; not only are services now delivered to ‘consumers,’ but consumers are just one of
many stakeholders in the corporate model. The irony is that community organisations have been forced to adopt the pathway of cooperation to be eligible for consideration for funding. The so-called “choices” offered under neoliberalism can only be seen as ironic tensions that are questionable in terms of how ethical communities can be built.

*Starship enterprise has landed – you will cooperate!*

Our imperfect and often feeble efforts to achieve freedom have frequently been forced into retreat, and our limited accomplishments toward freedom have at times been abolished under diverse attacks.


These corporate approaches, complete with advertising language and a market rationale, reflect the dominant trend of many previously non-profit organisations taking on for-profit structures. There is a shift from the welfare and activist rationales to a blend of charitable and market rationales as the predominant

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42 Frank (2000, 205), in his discussion of the rise of medical consumerism, recounted that the term “consumer” was substituted for “patient” in the 1970s. He posited that the use of the term at that stage was not so much of an issue while governments continued to provide funding for adequate medical care; however, in the current market-driven society, consumer has become problematic as a term. For example, ‘in market-driven societies, “consumers” are purchasers whose right to have a say in what is purchased depends on their relative buying power and their ability to shop elsewhere. The term consumer gives a false notion of emancipation which “threatens to fade into consumerism” (Frank 2000, 205) as people think by taking their business elsewhere they have made a political choice. In effect, this has moved moral agency away from individuals to the acts of consumption and the market; two places where this decision-making did not previously exist (see Gibson-Graham’s discussion of market economics in chapter 2). Brown’s (2001) discussion of the New Age movement also helps to understand this consumerist trend and the expected impact of it on alternative sets of values and principles. According to Brown (2001), the ‘New Age movement has a consumerist quality that has much to teach us about popular visions of social change in an era when capitalism and the project of the self have become so thoroughly intertwined that the act of making consumer choices is increasingly perceived as a logical, and even sacred means of reshaping the social order’ (in Davis 2001, 103). These are the myths surrounding empowerment, emancipation and social change that are being generated by dominant economic narratives.
framework in community service and development organisations. What these transitions also indicate is that if the organisational story being told does not fit with dominant narratives it is unlikely to be heard or affirmed by dominant groups and institutions that hold power.

This selective power over which story is told and how identities are constituted gives neo-liberalism, and in fact all master narratives, a stronghold. It is useful to recall here that master narratives are ‘ensembles of repeated themes’; for example, competition, individualism, efficiency, autonomy, self-sufficiency and self-help are repeated themes in a number of different master narratives including liberalism. Master narratives retain their stronghold because of the fact that they hold these ‘ties to other master narratives’ (Nelson 2001, 158-9). For example, the market rationale advocates for efficiency, independence, autonomy and self-sufficiency. These tie into classical liberal economic stories and interlock with the charity rationale that is an ensemble of similar themes. The notions of independence, autonomy and rationality are also themes of patriarchal master narratives that have been used to justify women’s participation in certain activities. All of these themes and ensembles interlock to create master

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43 For example, Berger and Clamp (1983) produced a small article on the roles of women in MCSS. They discussed how women had been kept in inferior roles within production co-operatives, when permitted to join, based on stereotypical assumptions about their ability to perform and traditional notions from the Catholic Church that their role was ultimately in the home. Berger and Clamp (1983, 6) researched why it was that women were not in the management positions of some co-operatives. They recounted a story from a male manager of one co-operative: ‘it wasn’t considered appropriate work for the girls, the women…the women weren’t considered to handle the work…we didn’t give the girls a chance to try. We didn’t consider them capable of handling the materials. Perhaps that sounds a bit macho, but well…it may be so. We thought the men would be more efficient’. Efficiency is drawn upon as a justification for the exclusion of women from particular roles, but the reasoning is also driven (it ties to another master narrative) by the dominant narratives behind this response; economic productivity and patriarchy. This creates a tension for the embodiment in the co-operatives of co-operative principles, because it is clear from this account that equality of membership is not always practiced due to master narrative conceptions and the influence of the Basque moral community on the co-operative’s formations.
narratives that hold the power to define who belongs and who does not.

Drawing on another ensemble and theme of the neo-liberal model, the newly redefined Open Minds programs now have ‘consultants [who] work with individuals to develop strategies that will assist them to maintain work and improve their mental health’ (Open Minds 2005, 10). The consultant model reflects one contemporary and dominant example of a ‘case management’ approach to community and social work.

Relationships in this context are conditional, based on individuals adhering to certain normative requirements and meeting particular criteria for referral and eligibility. There is a law-like order and emphasis on compliance to be eligible for services in this model. These practices are those that generate the sorts of forms of togetherness of being-aside and being-with. As Kenny (2002, 289) rightly argued, ‘a legacy of the charity discourse exists in the treatment of individuals through casework and case-management approaches’. This has meant, as Goldsworthy (2002, 328) noted that ‘casework positions have had more rigid expectations and constraints placed on how workers practise, such as competitive tendering of services and unit costing’. Furthermore, Goldsworthy (2002, 328) claimed that community development positions had been de-funded by the Australian Federal government during the 1990s, however, funded and renewed positions now reflect ‘a much more conservative notion of community than was envisaged with work in the 1970s and 1980s’. Indeed, as stated earlier, there is a blending of the market and charitable rationales and, perhaps, an emphasis on moral notions of community rather than ethical.
In this interesting yet worrying twist, community work practices and principles have also been blurred and blended into corporate and business models of customer service interactions. In reality, where once community workers or volunteers struggled to obtain funds for program delivery and community projects, it is now the work of an Open Minds marketing department to achieve grant funding (Open Minds 2005, 15). This corporate transition does not suggest that the programs or quality of the delivery of services have changed for Open Minds by any means ‘clients’ are said to be at the heart of the service (Open Minds 2005). It does indicate, however, that non-profits, small community organisations and big-business corporations are pitted against each other in competition for scarce resources.  

Moreover, the transition demonstrates the influence of business and market rationales and, hence, economic values in the community sector. These transitions from non-profit to for-profit structures lead to other questions that lie at the heart of community development’s moral purpose and alternative social vision. In particular, if consumers or clients are the centre of organisations and services, why is it that collective ownership and participatory democracy are no longer primary objectives?

44 Here I am thinking of the OurCommunity on-line service that provides the Easy Grants and monthly Fundraising newsletter for community sector organisations, groups and schools. An essential and important service, OurCommunity provides linkages and resources to organisations of all sizes, yet it seems for-profit big-businesses, government departments and corporate bodies are the organisations that can benefit most from the services. By paying a higher membership these organisations can access the OurCommunity grants department that provides searches and submission writing services for these larger bodies. Thus, projects are developed far from the people they seek to serve, by submission writers following specific formulas and with little input from staff in organisations or clients who are receiving services (http://www.ourcommunity.com.au). Organisations that can pay higher rates will receive better services and, in short, a market advantage.
Those organisations with bigger, corporate structures and departments dedicated solely to obtaining funding will be the ones that survive and succeed in the neo-liberal market place. The dominant forms of togetherness will be, again, episodic encounters of *being-aside* -- others will matter not in an ethical sense of care, but in a competitive sense of what resources they seek to take from others. In short, Michel’s (1911) caution that large organisations lean toward the Iron Rule of Oligarchy is not too far from the realities that the Australian community sectors face. Where will the alternative social values and co-operative principles that once drove funding agendas sit in these models? Will all projects invariably end up homogenous and suited to marketing department templates, where an officer fills in the application form gaps, far removed from the people projects seek to serve?

It seems, then, that a number of structural shifts as well as representative issues have contributed to the economic capture of the alternative set of values that community development embodied. This has come hand in hand with the move for community organisations to position themselves within a sector and industry, and now become companies rather than incorporated associations or collectives. These shifts are attributable to a further two reasons: decreased funding opportunities and the perceived need to be a valid ‘professional sector’. Combined with the community sector trend toward corporate re-structures, involvement of larger corporate bodies and financial institutions in community volunteering and community development projects has also raised tensions. These partnership and collaboration approaches also contain, to use Pease’s (2002) terms, “liberatory” and “regulatory” possibilities.
Partnership possibilities have an element of liberation in the sense that corporations ought to have social responsibilities, and their present involvement in community activities provides new avenues of funding. Corporate partnerships also offer regulatory mechanisms, however. This is because the logic underpinning the corporate model is based on the market rationale and therefore, smaller organisational values can be comprised by certain funding accountability requirements. Indeed, under a market rationale it is not asked whether the corporate funding body is itself ethical.

The involvement of the corporate sector in the funding and delivery of community projects, demonstrates a new trend in community work presented in the guise of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships (IEP) project is one example of the corporate financial sector funding community projects. Westpac Banking Corporation provides financial support to develop Indigenous business hubs for business planning and provides families with an income management scheme to encourage savings and develop financial skills (Westpac 2005). They have also partnered with Centrelink and the Tangentyere Council in the Northern Territory to employ four Indigenous workers to provide cash management advice and ATM facilities to families, which illustrates, again,

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45 CSR is characterised by two views, the narrow and the broad. Those who support the narrow view, such as, classical economist Milton Friedman (1970), suggest that the only responsibility of business is to shareholders and to increase profits. The business of business is business and therefore social responsibility ought to remain the job of the State. Others argue that business creates externalities (unintended consequences and impacts on the environment and other areas) that ought to be factored in to its responsibilities in addition to making profit. Theorists like Levitt, for example, still believe that business is to make profit but that additional stakeholders ought to be included into business considerations; i.e. the environment, consumers, employees and the environment at large. This latter view has become more popular with large business since the corporate collapses of the 1980s and the documented excesses and greed highlighted in corporate practice (Shaw and Barry 2004, 211-13). Businesses and corporations are now turning to Triple Bottom Line (TBL) reporting mechanisms to ensure they meet their responsibilities – business, social and environmental. Part of social responsibility has seen corporations partnering with community organisations to conduct community development projects.
the melange of market/charitable rationales. Westpac Corporation additionally provides a Financial Skills Program to 20 community organisation leaders, a program designed to maximise performance through effective financial management (Westpac 2005).

These programs are all conducted under the pretext of CSR, however, they really indicate further infiltration of economic values and market rationale into the community sector. Services that were once funded from taxation payments and provided by State, Local or Federal government agencies and non-government bodies are now being provided by large financial and multinational corporations like Westpac, National Australia Bank (NAB) and Coca Cola.

The motivations for CSR are said to be driven by the promotion of good corporate citizenship and addressing corporate responsibility to the environmental and social sides of business (their externalities), not just the economic effects. A survey of the types of community programs engaged in by some of the above mentioned corporations, however, indicates heavy emphasis on finance and economics. There is no way that co-operative and social values will not be comprised in this approach. In addition to the transfers of non-profits to for-profit organisational structures and the involvement of corporations in the delivery of social programs in communities, there is also renewed interest in social enterprises.

While there are social and economic benefits that ensue from CSR, a cautionary note must appear for community development projects considering or having already adopted these methods of community engagement. In his study of
community development practices. A Hooper (1998, 15) highlighted how enterprise culture gained currency in the early 1980s as part of Thatcher’s regime in the UK. He (1998, 15) proposed that:

Enterprise culture has emerged as a key cultural and political vehicle enabling the ideas of the right to be translated into policy and practice by the state. [this culture], extended the hegemonic relations of the market into domains that previously operated from perspectives critical of the market.

Where once co-operative models were seen to stand in opposition to the injustices of the broader economic system, they have now been co-opted into solutions within this very system (Jamorozik & Beck 1981).

Newer trends promoting community enterprises as a solution to unemployment reflect further shifts in community work (NCEC 2003). Social enterprises are businesses that have a social purpose to work with and train people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The focus of social enterprises is usually on training and employment, and the enterprise profits are often re-invested back into the business to continue employment and training activities. It all sounds positive; however, it does signify once again the economic capture of alternative values and social visions that historically rested with many co-operative and community development activities.

A Hooper (1998, 2) suggested that enterprise trends warrant caution in the community sector, given that the common understanding of enterprise is as ‘a profit-making, self-seeking, competitive individual or organisation’. For this reason social enterprise and entrepreneurship ought to be examined more closely and treated with caution in community development. This does not suggest,
however, that there are not some co-operative examples of enterprise that might resist economic co-option. The difficulty is that these social and co-operative enterprise models cannot provide the sort of counterstory that community development requires to narratively repair its diminished counter-identity and free its moral agency to achieve an alternative social vision. The case of the Nundah Community Enterprises Co-operative Ltd (NCEC) provides a good example.

Formulated on co-operative principles as a non-trading co-operative without share capital, NCEC provides work opportunities to people with learning disabilities in their local Brisbane community. From lawn mowing jobs to catering, participants have the opportunity to be trained and participate in valuable and meaningful work which from their perspective provides a range of positive social and economic outcomes (Hooper, J. 2003). Notwithstanding these invaluable outcomes, NCEC is also a reflection of how the co-operative model is being blended with enterprise models and, hence, an underpinning market rationale in the neo-liberal climate. This means that NCEC and other co-operative enterprises can now apply for new forms of funding for social and community enterprises.

Most of the criteria for such funds stipulate that activities have to be directed at employment generation and training for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, the Department for Victorian Communities (DVic) explained:

> Community enterprise includes a variety of non-profit initiatives and ventures that combine business principles and practices with social objectives. For the not-for-profit sector, community or social enterprise can be a mechanism for innovation, financial sustainability or a vehicle for local development and employment creation. (DVic 2006)
The emphasis in these new government funding models is employment
generation, rather than maintaining the vision of the co-operative or non-profit’s
moral purposes. Large non-profit organisations, like the Brotherhood of Laurence
(BSL), are funded for community enterprises as well and in spite of all the BSL’s
excellent social and community work, the enterprise trend continues to be
worrying for community development. BSL illustrates, again, the blending
between the market and charitable rationale capable only of *being-with* relations.

Onyx (2001, 3) proposed that

> [a]ctivities for advocacy and community development have become increasingly difficult to fund….Of particular concern is the Sector's loss of
capacity to act, or even speak, independently of the state and corporate
interests.

These losses in independence will ultimately be most felt in how much the moral
purpose and alternative social visions that counter practices offered can be
realised. Moreover, it is likely that these types of enterprise funds will become
the norm over traditional community development funding, and the more that
community development organisations face economic restraints, the more that
they will be forced into social enterprise type models to be eligible for funding.
This enterprise focus is likely to further constrict individual and collective moral
agency to work toward an alternative social vision as fiscal returns and financial
viability come to dominate.

Certainly, social outcomes of employment and training are beneficial, but as
McArdle (1999, 10) argued, ‘organisations previously founded on co-operation,
participation, access and equity are being swept along on the tide of user-pays
delivery models and corporatisation’. There seems to be little that community
organisations can do but co-operate with the negative effects of neo-liberalism. These limited opportunities curtail, however, the vision for community development to develop a counterstory to these dominant narratives, and indeed the possibilities for ethical communities becomes further limited.

The new enterprise focus signifies how powerful master narratives are at work that can capture co-operative principles and counter-identities. In practice, using partnership and collaboration has been another means to shift responsibility and burden back to the individual and the community. Yet, the corporate-social-community collaboration is not without its problems. The new trend of ‘inter-organisational linkages’ (Bradshaw 2000) has also contributed to the merging of organisational values, norms and practices seeing not only a blending of identities but a shift in accountability of organisations to their funding bodies, rather than their moral purposes.

Social entrepreneurship and civic innovation, combined with partnership and collaboration, have now become the fashionable contenders as a response to civic decay (Fowler 2000, 6). The blending of the characteristics of private sector of business with the morality and objective of public benefit cannot ensure the embodiment of co-operative principles (Fowler, 2000). Again, this reinforces how principles and values alone will not ensure that we move out of the moral community and into an ethical community agenda. In addition to these constraints, economic-rationalist policies have resulted in community programs which ‘far from responding to community needs, simply do the government’s bidding’ (McArdle 1999, 10).
Free trade has allowed for ‘global corporations to rival government power with big business dictating public policy’ (McArdle 1999, 3; 13).

Core beliefs, philosophies and principles of community development are gradually undermined, and the rise of social entrepreneurship and civic innovation schemes has seen social and human needs become commodities for sale in communities. Fowler’s (2000) position on social entrepreneurship is that it has changed the nature of delivery of community service. He used an example of a large non-profit organisation in the USA, which supplied meals to the medically infirm through a contract with municipal government as an example. Fowler (2000, 7) argued that the transition of marrying ‘development agendas with market opportunities’ has ultimately resulted in a ‘meal delivery service that has been reinterpreted from a concern for nutrition to a ‘product’ that supports a social good of family responsibility and caring’.

The service concentrates on ‘affluent people who are ready to pay for their elderly family members’ meals’, and it is questionable whether or not it actually provides the social and community service that the organisation professes to (Fowler 2000, 7). These are those meetings again:

> Of incomplete beings, of deficient selves; in such a meeting, highlight is as crucial as concealing, engagement must be complemented by disengagement, deployment of resources must be paired with withdrawal of others. (Bauman 1995, 50)

The move away from previous community development models characterised as radical, on the fringes and anti-systemic has meant further co-option of social values and co-operative principles. Competition for funding has increased
linkages between NGOs and government departments, which has imposed
different accountability requirements by virtue of being government funded
private service providers. The worry is that community and social enterprise
now dominate as the working model for empowering disadvantaged and excluded
groups (O’Neill 1998).

Some theorists have suggested that community development’s emphasis on
change and self-determination should see the sector ‘embrace the new discourse
of social entrepreneurship and capacity building’ (Kenny 2002, 286). But, of
course, these models and changes are still viewed with scepticism by some
community development theorists because they simply do not provide the
rationale and basis to achieve the moral purpose of co-operative and community
development activities. Put simply, the moral consequences of these new forms
of togetherness have larger immoral consequences that will shape the sorts of
communities that emerge in Australia.

Conclusions

As an example of another counter-identity, then, community development seems
to have lost the moral purpose and agency to work toward to the creation of the
alternative social visions it once embodied. Part of this capture, similarly to that
of the co-operative movement, is the result of dominant economic narratives and
master narratives. The other reason for community development’s capture can be
linked to its turn to companies limited by guarantee, rather than looking to co-
operative models from which it drew its identity-constituting features. This is not
to say, however, that forms of co-operative togetherness do not continue to figure within community development practices, but it does suggest that these need to become dominant forms of togetherness developed.

Community development had the opportunity, then, to continue to reflect the ideals and visions for an alternative society, particularly with its foundation on co-operative principles. It too, however, experienced a level of capture within the collectively narcissistic culture of the 1970s and an emergent neo-liberal economic narrative since the 1980s with its emphasis on the individual, the expert-professional project and the market rationale. The current mix between market and charitable rationales that underpin community organisations sees further opportunities for economic capture of co-operative principles and alternative social visions. Social values and co-operative principles will increasingly be merged as many larger non-profits become involved in social and community enterprises to address economic and social disadvantages in local communities.

Combined with this is a growing trend for corporate involvement too in the delivery and funding of community programs. Perhaps the most significant of issues has been the reality that, internally, community development has also lacked explicit ethical analysis. Embedded values of paternalism and welfare colonialism, evidenced in the CDEP schemes, have not been suitably analysed. This has allowed for market and charitable rationales to continue to infiltrate the sector.
It used to be understood that community development was work engaged in by social change agents, but contemporary shifts that are characterised by community-business/corporate partnerships, short-term contractual labour and social enterprise solutions for disadvantaged groups have made this counter-identity questionable. This economic dominance has restricted individual and collective agency to embody co-operative principles and work toward an alternative social vision. Community development groups and practitioners do continue to look for ways to address community issues and needs in an economically dominated society, however. Indeed, in this search for alternatives, community development has also become a captivated audience of the social capital discourse that promised a reinvigoration of civil society and ethical relations. The following chapter demonstrates how the notion of social capital is really a bulwark of neo-liberal master narratives. This has served to further complete the task of social capture of both co-operative principles and the alternative social visions, leading to further imprisonment of the moral agency of counter-identities to participate in socially transformative practices.
Devised to describe changing social trends in American society (Putnam 2000, 18; Carson 2004), the decline of community in the late 20th century and the development of civil society in relation to democratic government in Italy (Putnam 1993a; Putzel 1997), social capital became a prescriptive tool deployed to resolve the ills of social and communal life at the turn of the century. Its entrance into public policy discussions from the 1990s and across Western nations converted this theory from a descriptive analytical social sciences project, to a community development theory and strategy (Putnam 1997; 2001). The concept of social capital has been embraced and touted by large development bodies like the World Bank and United Nations as a development elixir (Carson 2004).

Much of social capital discussions have centred on, but have not been limited to: a lack of agreement on definitions, the problems with measuring social capital, and how social capital is actually fostered in communities (Winter 2000b; Carson 2004; Servon 2002). Stewart-Weeks and Richardson (1998, 9) proposed that the debate has become one of technical definition, ‘What social capital is becomes confused by the normative debate about what social capital does’. These are not dissimilar criticisms to those that have been levelled at community development in both the recent and distant past.
Perhaps this is a result of both areas being concerned with the social aspects of community life; the historical difficulties in defining what community is continue to resurface. Putnam’s (1993a) initial definition saw social capital referring to norms that arise from activities which have traditionally been seen as actions of community development. Social capital has also been said to be interchangeable with the term ‘community connectedness’ (Bullen 2004). Its focus on the warm and fuzzy sides of life have seen many adopt it without critical evaluation, but “social capital” is not a value-free, morally neutral term and neither, in spite of some community development theorists claims, is it an appropriate strategy for community development. This is particularly the case when community development’s need to reclaim its diminished counter-identity and free its moral agency from economic clutches is considered.

The notion that social capital can provide for the effective democratic functioning of society ignores and silences the reality that some of the activities said to foster social capital are actually forms of moral protest. As Stewart-Weeks and Richardson (1998) illustrated, social capital is firmly entrenched in a liberal tradition of politics and economy. This chapter focuses on how these links have allowed social capital to be used as a master narrative bulwark of the neo-liberal project. This has resulted in social capture of important social aspects of co-operative and community development practices by economics.
Difficulties of identity-constitution in social capital

From the early 1990s onward, the focus of community programs became trust, cooperation and ‘the problem of geographic poverty’ (Mowbray 2004, 108). The expressed interest in developing social capital by large-scale development bodies, policy makers and government agencies, however, was an indication that tentacles of development master narratives were starting to wrap themselves around social capital from the outset (Carson 2004). This was evidenced in articles espousing how social capital could foster local economic development in communities (DeFillipis 2001), the World Bank’s development of an entire social capital database with thousands of research papers, and interest in the term by the Australian Productivity Commission (APC) and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Carson 2004, 6).

Putnam (2000, 19) defined social capital as the, ‘connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them’. The norms of trust, reciprocity and cooperation, according to Putnam (1993a; 1998; 1999; 2001), are fostered by people’s participation in voluntary

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46 Winter (2000b, 17) traced the explosion of social capital literature and research in Australia finding that, since 1995 there had been a jump from 18 articles on social capital to 69, culminating in 1003 listings by 1999. Winter’s (2000b) also listed at least ‘seven substantive fields of research in which social capital is being undertaken including, families and youth behaviour problems, schooling and education, community life in physical settings and virtual settings, work and organisations, democracy and governance, general cases of collective action problems, and economic development’.  
47 Put another way this is ‘the features of social organization, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (Putnam 1993, 1). This is the most cohesive definition that appears in current literature on social capital.
associations, credit unions, little athletics groups, choral groups, charitable and social groups, and co-operatives. For Putnam (1998, 1), social capital denoted ‘civic engagement’, which referred to ‘people’s connections with the life of their communities, not only in politics’. From the outset, one problem with Putnam’s (1993a) definition of social capital has been the attempt to explain some rather diverse communal activities under the one banner of social capital. The effect has been a homogenised view of community life that ignores the complex social and ethical dimensions of activities like co-operative practice. Social capital’s focus has come to be on the relationship between institutions and civil society and, ‘public governance and social order’ (Stewart-Weeks and Richardson 1998, 11).

These foci do not, however, account for the moral purposes that underpin some people’s motivations toward collective action. Furthermore, Bauman (1995, 54) has suggested that:

The public sphere – the site of togetherness – was to be ruled by civility (which took intimacy for its dark, unprepossessing, and shameful side). And civility, according to numerous teachers’ texts and teach-yourself handbooks, ‘opposed point by point the movement of heart and body in their intimate passions’. (Aries 1986 quoted in Bauman 1995, 54).

Bauman continued:

Civility was the question of mostly negative, not positive learning: of what one should hide, what one should speak about, what one should be ashamed of. A ‘strictly regulated manner of conduct’, designed to convey in public an identity (or side of it) one wished to present to anonymous others constituting the ‘public sphere’, and thus command ‘enforced separation between intimate affections’ and public intercourse. (Bauman 1995, 54)

The notion that people participate in certain activities to increase the relationship between institutional and civil society functions is not without its problems. Indeed, for example, the separation between the public and private spheres has
ignored, left absent and silenced important private relations and the role of women (Cox 1995). These matters are returned to below.

Of course, some activities such as little athletics and choral groups are not driven by a desire to embody co-operative principles or an alternative social vision, and this is may be why social capital has been said to make up the ‘social fabric’ of civil society. It was Putnam’s (1993a; 1995; 1998) claim that civil society was in decline for two reasons: one being: ‘disconnectedness from family, friends, neighbours and even nationhood’ in the global context; the other being that generational shifts since the Depression to the turn of the 21st century have shown that people who are currently involved in civic activities are the same people who have always been (Putnam 1998, 1). Finding renewed generational interest in communal and civic life is apparently difficult, and it is an issue that co-operators in Mondragon, for example, and those in other intentional communities have faced.

A brief review of the ACP and OECD definitions, explanations and studies on social capital has also revealed how social capital has been re-storied to be norms of trust, reciprocity and cooperation with little to no reference to the actual activities said to generate these norms (ACP 2001; OECD 2004; Winter 2000b). Winter (2000a, 3) noted that Putnam’s definition of social capital followed ‘Coleman’s (and therefore Bourdieu’s) notion of social capital being those networks and norms that facilitate collective action’. The primary definition that the Australian Bureau of Statistics employed was based on the OECD description which saw social capital as, ‘networks, together with shared norms, values and
understandings which facilitate cooperation within or amongst groups’ (ABS, 2002, v). It seems now that discussion has turned to networks rather than particular activities of collective action.

Certainly, Winter’s (2000a, 3) explanation of social capital as Putnam (1993a) presented it was that it was developed:

[t]o explain economic and political development at regional and local levels. This focus upon outcomes for regions and nations distinguishes Putnam’s work empirically from that of Coleman and Bourdieu, but not in terms of the fundamental definition. It is simply that the concept is applied at a broader scale.

The term “social capital” has almost become a method in and of itself said to be able to achieve social and community changes. Recently, however, theorists have begun to shy away from discussing the activities said to create social capital and now the focus is on the renewal of trust, cooperation and reciprocity in communities. Trust, cooperation and reciprocity have become the pre-identified needs of communities, but there are no longer discussions of how to foster these norms or how they emerge in communities. Additionally, there have been conceptual issues raised with the conflation of social capital with the term civil society (De Filippis 2001). Indeed, Latham (2003) claimed that:

I am yet to come across a bureaucracy that is capable of creating networks of trust and support between people…whenever bureaucracies intervene in community life they tend to smother the sparks of social capital and creativity. (Latham 2003 quoted in Mowbray 2004, 109)

It comes as no surprise that Potter’s (1891) sentiments of concern about bureaucratic administrations are echoed in Latham’s (2003) statement, because Latham (2003) was advocating for ‘the benefits of community participation for citizenship once advocated by de Tocqueville and the early Fabians’ (in Mowbray
Latham’s (2003) comment reflected his own advocacy for the rolling-back of the State in matters to do with community and social support. This was reinforced in the above discussions of how self-help has become co-opted by some government agendas to impose responsibility back onto individuals and communities.

The downside has been that social capital as Putnam (1997; 2001) has presented it fits with neo-liberal policies to reduce financial support and privatise service provision (cf. Stewart-Weeks and Richardson 1998). The risks of social capital for co-operatives and community development lay not only with the government’s capture of the term but also with the narratives that underpin it. Indeed, social capital represents not only economic capture of co-operative principles and values, but social capture of these practices also. In particular, it can be used as a problematic identity-constituting tool in some communities.

As the definition of social capital indicated, ‘norms of trust, reciprocity and cooperation for mutual benefit’ are central to the social capital agenda, yet as De Filippis (2001, 783, emphasis mine) rightly contended, ‘social capital, while being constituted by social networks and relationships, is never disconnected from capital’. Moreover, Putnam’s (2005) intention in analysing social capital was initially to generate interest in the social again with policy-makers whose expressed interest was in economic capital. Over time, however, the embedded economic master narratives of classical liberalism and neo-liberalism have come to the surface and capital has come again to be emphasised over the social.
This current popularity of social capital discourse notwithstanding, this study rejects the view that credit unions, voluntary groups, self-help groups and, in particular, co-operatives, are established by people to facilitate the effective functioning of democratic government (Putnam 2000; 1999; 1993a; 1995a; 1995b).\(^48\) Instead, the contention is that these activities can be seen as forms of moral protest whereby service-based or workers’ co-operatives often evolve as a result of ineffective and inadequate government provision of community services. Or a food co-operative, for example, might also be formulated not around a shared commitment to fostering current social and economic relations, but rather a different vision of the good life; in fact, an alternative social vision.

None of these examples of co-operatives is necessarily established for the sole purpose of enabling democracy to function effectively, indeed, they may be said to arise from the shortcomings of current democratic institutions. The rise of social capital is figured within ‘fundamental changes [that overtook] late modern society like globalisation, the state’s fiscal crisis, the advance of neo-liberalism and the decline of civil society’ (Carson 2004, 2). Thus, there are a number of reasons why social capital has appealed to policy-makers, government representatives and even community development workers.

\(^{48}\) Putzel (1997, 43) reminded people that ‘networks and relationships bred by association do not in themselves guarantee political outcomes’. This is, however, an implicit claim in Putnam’s (1997) work with the idea that civic engagement facilitates effective democratic governance.
Bullen and Onyx (1999, 2) argued that, in an economic rationalist world view, ‘social fabric has more status’ when referred to as social capital, and it is a resource like other forms of capital that can be built upon and drawn on later.

Bullen & Onyx (1999) are also trying to reclaim the social by this statement as did Cox (1995) in her Boyer Lectures on the topic of reviving civil society. While Bullen et al (1999) attempt to develop a narrative that reclaims the social, the reality is that there is not enough contestation of the master narrative fragments within their study to achieve an effective counterstory. What results is a reinforcement of dominant economic stories rather than narrative repair, and the moral agency of counter-identities remains captured within a socially-oriented narrative that completes the task of capture on the master narrative’s behalf.

These are the ways in which neo-liberal policy mantras can use social capital as a bulwark.

In addition to this, Onyx (2001, 84) and others (De Fillipis, 2001) now claim that the ‘concept of social capital has largely replaced the discourse of community development, though the underlying principles and intentions remain the same’. Yet, again, there is no agreement on this, with other theorists like Bullen (2004) claiming that social capital is the foundation on which community development is practised. In one case, social capital is said to explain the purpose and process of community development, to build trust, co-operation and reciprocity, in the other social capital must first be present as a foundational block on which to practise community development. The counter-identity of community development and the moral purpose to work toward an alternative social vision is lost and captured within both of these accounts.
Community development theorists have attempted to expand on definitions of social capital to distinguish between bridging and bonding social capital and formal and informal social capital. Onyx (2001, 85) described bonding social capital as being characterised by, ‘dense, multifunctional ties and strong but localised trust’. Bonding allows for a shared ‘identity and commitment to action that is sustained through difficult periods of local action’ (Onyx 2001, 85). Bonding social capital is about the relationships that we can build with like-minded people (Putnam 2005). The concept of bridging social capital refers to the external networks that initiating groups establish in the process of achieving their goals, these networks may or may not be like-minded (Onyx 2001, 85). Westoby (1999) referred to this as bonding and banding in community development work as well. Bonding social capital, also referred to as, ‘informal social ties’ (Putnam, 2000), becomes bridging or formal social capital in the process of interaction between groups and sometimes the state.

In all cases, the presentation of social capital is as activities that involve people working together to achieve shared goals and aims. These are those shared characteristics that Bauman (1995) suggested are decisive for their moral consequences. One moral consequence of social capital discussions has been, however, the development of a perspective that community development needs social capital even to be heard by government bodies and agencies. In this respect, community development must adopt social capital language and identification strategies to be able to compete for restricted funds and resources.
An additional issue is that efforts by the State to re-create activities that are argued to generate social capital have also resulted in further social capture of communities and alternative social activities like co-operatives. Perhaps Latham’s (2003) cynicism regarding the State’s ability to foster social capital norms and values was right in that respect. State agencies tend to seek to define needs for communities so there is little ownership of these needs and often, in the case of social capital, external agencies create a perception that a community is either high or low in social capital (see Bullen 2004).

This above process mirrors Frank’s (1995) work on dominant medical narratives, his argument was that medical charts and the language of officialdom subsume the individual’s story of their unique illness experience. Frank (1995) termed this process ‘narrative surrender,’ where the individual gives over their own story to the official statistics and reports. The individual comes to tell a story that reflects and repeats these dominant terms and ways of understanding illness rather than being able to develop and share their own story.

The official charts developed by governments, the department’s diagnosis and the restoration of community back to better health with a social capital program, are all reflective of the development of a dominant development narrative that often silences the unique experiences of communities. In a way, community development has participated in narrative surrender of its own counter-narrative to social capital. De Filippis (2001, 788) contended that the acceptance of social capital, particularly Putnam’s (1997) version of social capital, in the promotion of economic growth and prosperity was dangerous. The groups that Putnam lumped
together in one broad banner called ‘social capital’ were presented, according to De Fillipps, as those where, ‘participants come together to pursue shared objectives,’ rather than as associations that have, ‘confrontational encounters based on vested interests’ (De Filippis, 2001, 787). What De Filippis’ statement acknowledged is that sometimes participation in so-called civic activities might be part of a defensive strategy of personal survival, and other times, it might be based on the desire to realise an alternative social vision.

This reinforces, not only that some kinds of community engagement are acts of moral protest, but also Butler’s (1995, 41) proposition that the term community, though epistemologically problematic is:

Contingent and contestable, render[ed] permanently open, permanently contested, permanently contingent, in order not to foreclose in advance future claims for inclusion.

Carson (2004, 3-5) has argued that historically, there have been four ways of understanding community which have informed and become foundations for social capital policy formations. These are: community as a natural category; community as an empirical reality; community as differentiating and excluding; and community as dis-embedded and ‘responsibilised’. These are useful definitions to consider with respect to the use of social capital as a neo-liberal bulwark, each one is summarised within Table 5.
### TABLE 5

**CARSON’S (2004) FOUR CATEGORIES OF COMMUNITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community as Natural</td>
<td>Community is assumed as a natural form of social organisation or association for humanity. Community is identified as a place that is ‘out there’ awaiting activation and in the case of social capital, it waits reinvigoration and reactivation. The criticism of this view is that community is in fact constructed; it is not a natural process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community as Empirical Reality</td>
<td>The problem, Carson (2004) articulated, is that the concept of community with its political and historical construction, is Anglo-centric, if not neo-colonial. Traditional community – in the homogenous, shared values and occupying an identifiable geographical space sense – is increasingly inappropriate as a policy focus. The empirical reality is that community is more ‘fragmented, loosely connected, lightly engaged strangers’ (Carson 2004, 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community as Differentiating &amp; Excluding</td>
<td>Community as a concept, then, contains within it a strong element of exclusion and differentiation. This is because in the process of identification one distinguishes themselves from others and, sometimes community becomes contained and defined by keeping those outsiders just that, out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community as Dismembered &amp; Responsibilised</td>
<td>Community is context-specific and many policy developments ignore these contextual realities. The activities of communities are contoured along lines of, ‘Power, class, gender, inequality and the like, once more, therefore being significantly embedded in broader features of culture and social structure…the spatial locus and responsibility for policy implementation is [moving] away from the state, through to the idealised and vanishing idea of community, onto other collectives and citizens’ (Carson 2004, 5). The suggestion is that this diverts attention away from issues of social justice and disadvantage, to the deficiencies of communities and the need to bolster their dis-embedded capacities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Here, Carson’s (2004) most important reflection is how policy is formulated in a disconnected fashion from the communities it seeks to serve. All four of these understandings of communities are reflected in social capital policy and debates, which led Carson (2004, 5) to argue that ‘we must countenance the possibility that we are a part of a broader transformation or master narrative in this respect’. Indeed, as Carson (2004, 3) also articulated, he did not cover radical communitarian discourses on community because:

[He did] not believe that community and social capital oriented policy in Australia is in the main, or even in large part, based on this particular version of the communitarian theme.

It seems possible to propose, then, that there is a need to accept within policy development circles that community is just as much the articulation of competing needs and values and, people’s commitments to these. It is not possible to formulate a standardised definition to reinvigorate community, there must first be, as Isaacs and Massey (1994) indicated, understanding. By accepting difference, resistance and opposition as part of the embodied experience of community life, we can start to appreciate, in an applied ethics sense, ‘where others stand in relation to the good and where we stand in relation to them’ (Isaacs and Massey 1994). Without this understanding and appreciation it is difficult to imagine a conversation opening up that will allow for diverse views, voices and values to be considered.

In its current workings, social capital shapes communities into moral communities where programs are implemented in a top-down fashion, rather than developed in mutual relationships and by those who might be the recipients.
Putnam’s (1997) analysis alludes to embedded and problematic master narratives that, contrary to Onyx’s (2001) position, cannot be said to leave the underlying intentions and principles of community development the same at all. As a first point of contention, the norms of trust, reciprocity and acting for mutual benefit do not necessarily ‘empower’ others as community development has been said to do (Kenny 1999). To draw on Carson’s (2004) above definitions, people can trust and reciprocate between groups while excluding others.

To explain further, De Filippis’ (2001, 796) proposed that:

A perception in American policy circles and white popular culture [has emerged from social capital theorising] that inner-city, non-white neighbourhoods are bereft of values, norms, morals, trust and relationships.

Indeed, social capital has been given the power to identify certain groups in particular ways that are oppressive, rather than liberating or empowering. These views have resulted in value-laden development policies about low socio-economic regions that are said to be in need of social capital. Additional homogenising stories about co-operative and voluntary activities have also emerged and generated difficulties in understanding the moral particularities of community life. These results are indicative of the capture of the social by social capital and the strategy it provides to neo-liberalism to assimilate opposition.

In this context, it becomes questionable as to whether social capital can be considered as a platform for creation and building of ethical communities, as theorists like Latham and Botsman (2001) have claimed, or whether social capital results in a reinforcement and reassertion of the values of moral community and oppressive master narratives. If values and principles lie at the heart of ethical
communities, it is necessary, that these are clearly articulated and match our moral purposes, as argued above. As Cox (1995) acknowledged, there is a dark side as well as the light side to social capital, and currently social capital has resulted in successful capture of the social by economists once again.

Bullen and Onyx (1999, 29) advised that ‘our communities are likely to be better places if the generation of social capital was one of the criteria used to plan and evaluate direct services’. But are not co-operatives, credit unions and some voluntary groups already examples of communities that embody trust, reciprocity and cooperation? Again, community here is treated in a dis-embedded fashion. The problem has been that State imposition of certain criteria in communities has often resulted in failed programs that do not last beyond the life funding of the program (Jamorozick and Beck 1981). Additionally, if certain groups and places are identified as ‘low’ in social capital, then it means that programs such as Place Management and Community Renewal Schemes (designed to build that community capacity) will once again target specific groups as both in-need of change and the sources of social problems. The broader result is that other dominant groups in communities come to identify these communities and groups as the causes of social problems creating divisive social relations.

An example of this process can be seen in the discussions on “emerging communities” in the United States. In this context, inner-city poor communities with high black populations have become popular locations for investors to buy into for the future. The low rents and prices attract buyers and developers who work slowly over time to push low-income people further out of the inner-city
areas to places where they can afford to rent or buy (Servon 2002). From Servon’s (2002, 12) perspective because the social capital of these communities is not understood:

Investors have undervalued inner-city markets...Creating social capital and building upon its existence requires connections between communities and larger institutions, connections that emerging communities often lack.

This reflects an unquestionable capture of the social within a dominant economic story; social capital needs to be understood in communities for investment potential and the capacities unleashed from emerging communities, which often lack connections between larger institutions and communities.

Perhaps the focus ought to be more about what is required in communities to generate social spaces where activities that would usually be considered as part of an alternative social vision can take place and flourish. What is the moral purpose behind understanding and appreciating social capital for increased investment into poorer inner-city communities? Again, this returns to Bauman’s (1995, 49) point that ‘the forms of togetherness so far discussed share certain remarkable characteristics, perhaps decisive for their moral consequences’. The moral consequences of top-down investor focussed strategies are questionable for the development of ethical communities.

The ABS (2000, 5; 2002, v) discussion paper on social capital measurement indicated that ‘there is a strong push from the general community to use social capital as a way to not only describe but also to understand community well-being’. Just who this general community is and what defines ‘well-being’ in communities is another under-examined aspect of social capital. In community
development policy, social capital and well-being are linked with policies related to education, training, employment, community safety, crime, justice, health, families, arts, culture, sports, recreation, housing, transport, urban planning, volunteering and women’s issues (ABS, 2002). These are vast areas for one ambiguous concept to cover, and it is also likely that social capital can be identified in any one of the above examples in a variety of ways.

The ABS view presupposes, again, a dis-embedded view of communities. Similar to Servon’s (2004) above notion that some communities lack connections, it reinforces Carson’s (2004) suggestion that communities become responsible for their problems. Additionally, what is echoed within these views of communities is the charitable organisational logic identified by Kenny (2002) that it is individuals who are the problem and not the conditions or structures within which they find themselves embedded. As a further example of how social capital is used as a neo-liberal bulwark, the ABS (2002, 7) cited Neighbourhood Watch programs as emulating the networks and norms required for social capital formation.

While neighbourhood watches may enhance a surface level of trust and signify that people are co-operating for mutual benefit, it could be said that the focus on this type of crime prevention and safety activity might represent a bit of a shift away from original types of networks that were said to create social capital. Neighbourhood Watch programs would appear to be focussed on a mistrust of others, rather than on generating trust in communities. This is difficult to appreciate for some theorists, as Putnam’s (1993a; 1998) earlier accounts
appeared to include all things that are community or civic based in his equation.

He did contend, however, that:

> [Neighbourhood watch programs] provide a frail replacement for the vanished social capital of traditional neighbourhoods – sociological AstroTurf, suitable only where the real thing won’t grow. (Putnam 2000, 107)

In Cooper’s (1997) terms, Neighbourhood Watch programs might in fact be more characteristic of those activities that foster closed and enclave-like communities who prefer strangers without to stay out. They could be said to represent an attempt to restore order to chaos. Indeed, crime itself can be said to represent an event or episode in communities that spurs a ‘moral panic’ which can be seen as a generator of moral community (Cohen 1973). Crime instils a sense of ‘symbolic crusades’ almost, where ‘particular groups and the actions of certain interest groups are targeted in a moral enterprise: …the creation of a new fragment of the moral constitution of society’ (Becker 1969 in Cohen 1973, 11, original emphasis).

It has certainly been the case that those who have associated themselves with alternative social visions and, those who embody alternative sets of values and principles to dominant institutions, have been on the receiving end of the moral enterprises of the moral panics in the past. McCutcheon (2005, 38), reflecting on his community and conservative family’s response in the 1950s to what was positioned as moral delinquency, described the attitude to outsiders thus:

> A feeling of disdain towards these outsiders grew into aggression. Who did they think they were? And where on earth had they come from? These teddy boys who had suddenly appeared. The bodgies and widgies who were in town. I remember being told at the age of seven that nice people didn’t hang around milk-bars, and because I knew my parents were afraid of them, I watched these so-called milk-bar boys with much interest.
So, there must be caution that the social capital tale does not fall into a moral enterprise that positions outsiders and insiders against each other. A deeper consideration of, not only those activities that foster trust, reciprocity and cooperation, but the type of trust, reciprocity and cooperation they are based upon would seem to be necessary to the conceptualisation of ethical communities.

De Filippis (2001, 781) reasoned that a larger issue at play in social capital definitions is not only the conflation of terms like social capital with civil society, but that social capital has ‘fail[ed] to understand issues of power in the production of communities’. He went on to question how affluent people (here he is referring to the United States context) who were also ‘struggling with social disconnectedness and isolation’ themselves can prescribe social capital, ‘as a way of moving low-income people and communities out of poverty’ (De Filippis 2001, 782). This criticism is not dissimilar to that levelled at community development’s use of the term “empowerment”.

Indeed, a similar question can be asked about why social capital can be seen to reduce crime rates that are argued to be ‘disproportionately concentrated geographically’ (Sampson 2001, 89). The focus on crime reduction has tended toward finding those ‘characteristics and places that lead to high rates of crime’ and working toward changing these via community or neighbourhood programs (Sampson 2001, 90). These views dominate in the sorts of narratives told about poor, transient and emerging ethnic based communities, and they do, in fact, draw upon master narratives to support their views.
For example, Sampson (2001, 92) argued that ‘rates of interpersonal violence are generally higher in predominantly black and foreign-born areas than in areas of maximum ethnic heterogeneity’. This constructs those who are black or foreign born within a deficit model whereby other ethnic groups are said to be needed to create heterogeneity that counters violence. In contrast to Sampson’s claims for ethnic heterogeneity, Derbetin (2002, 8) argued that ‘ethnically diverse areas tend to have low social capital’. Both statements confuse the issue of heterogeneity and social capital formation, and echo arguments that are used to support government integration and assimilation strategies to reduce interpersonal violence rates.

Additionally, as a result of these perspectives broader social groups can come to understand and define those who are different as violent. One can see, then, how identities can be constituted by social capital in not so pleasant ways and, as Nelson (2001) contended, because identity and agency are interconnected and defined in relationships with others, those ‘black and foreign-born areas’ can experience a diminished sense of agency to enact change. Indeed, the official government approach will be to see these others as in need of gentrification and renewal programs that create Bauman’s (1995) cautionary concept of civility.

Dominant groups can begin to position these foreign or emerging areas as those in need of social capital assistance and as a result agency is diminished and identity damaged. Because identity is malleable to construction by others in oppressive ways, these identifications in social capital can also create boundaries of eligibility in terms of service provision and institutional arrangements. This is a

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51 The civic culture model was a method to discuss the alternative ways of accomplishing collective goods and a conceptualisation of democracy (Edwards & Foley, 1998).
form of togetherness that can only characterise being-with relations. Institutions, then, can re-create and re-perpetrate injustices based on these identity representations; the moral consequences of such activities will be decisive.

Indeed, Bullen’s (2004) study of social capital and community development in Warnervale, Sydney, illustrated De Filippis’ (2001) concerns. Bullen (2004, 78, emphasis mine), who was advocating for community development strategies to continue to increase social capital levels, suggested:

Universal strategies with a personal invitation/contact component are likely to be effective in reaching out to marginalised people because they identify all the people in the community (including marginalised people) and reach out to people rather than expect the people to reach out to the community activity. Marginalised people are less able to reach out.

For these above reasons, De Filippis (2001) saw the use of social capital in development contexts as both ironic and problematic. The potential for social capital to become and be deployed as a master narrative is further demonstrated by the final statement that ‘marginalised people are less able to reach out’. However, do people who are marginalised have such extensive disabilities? Bullen’s (2004) statement illustrated, again, the interplay of stereotypical depictions of marginalised people as helpless and in need of assistance in social capital accounts. It also demonstrated those embedded values and viewpoints in community development theorising that have not received adequate ethical consideration and evaluation. Here again, individual and collective agency is diminished by an account constructed by a dominant group, and community is considered in a dis-embedded context.
Additional problems lurk in the social capital story. The conflation of social capital with the term *civil society* leaves little sense that it is anything more than the ‘civic culture model used to label norms and values of empirical democratic theory of the 1950s’ (Edwards & Foley 1998, 1). Conceptual confusion, an absence of any discussion of political or moral factors that motivate people to work together outside of the State, and the idealisation of the types of activities said to generate social capital are but three pre-established areas of criticisms against social capital (Putzel 1997).

Researchers interested in examining community life have always used levels of participation in community groups or activities as a method of measurement. Just how and why people participate, however, is never entirely explored in such analyses. In short, normative rather than descriptive accounts of social capital are needed to work toward the development of the ethical rather than moral community and a possibly less conservative view of community as a concept is necessary itself.

Moral purposes, alternative social visions and guiding principles cannot be adequately understood via examinations and surveys on newspaper readership, voter participation and levels of volunteering (cf. Putnam 1995; 2000).\footnote{With particular reference to newspaper readership, Putzel (1997, 954) contended that there was a serious distinction that was absent in Putnam’s (1997) analysis. This distinction between ‘quality press and the much more widely read gutter press,’ must be acknowledged in the establishment of social capital indicators. Further to this, Putzel (1997) suggested that, if newspaper readership is to be analysed as an indicator, then, the implicit political agendas and messages contained in newspapers are also worth considering because sometimes these are ‘uncivic’. Putzel’s (1997) criticism alludes to the deeper considerations that would allow for further appreciation of moral motivations and how they interplay with questions of social capital.}
Moreover, as it has been argued above, some evaluation of which principles and values are required to foster ethical communities is needed. Coupled with these issues, the way that Putnam originally explored participation and membership in the types of organisations and associations is problematic (1993a).

Keen’s (1999) examination of associations in Australian history traced membership rates and association involvement from the late 19th century to present in Australia. Her conclusion was that ‘cycles of civic engagement [actually] fluctuate with economic conditions’ (Keen 1999, 13). She noted that there were declines in associational involvement during economic downturns and then rises in participation during economically stable times. Therefore, contrary to Putnam (1993a; 1998; 2001) and other theorists’ claims about how social capital is formed, Keen (1999, 13) suggested that ‘an economic upswing may well be all that is needed to restore associational life and stimulate at least some form of social capital’. Social life is in decline, for Keen (1999), because of economic downturns.

While Keen’s (1999) analysis is still considered problematic here, because it privileges economic cycles over social life and, hence, can be used as a form of capture, it does provide an explanation to the decline of civic participation that is different to Putnam’s thesis (1993). Instead of fragmented social ties being attributed to economic decline, Keen turned this around to suggest social capital is in fact economically determined. In one sense, this can be supported by the reality that many co-operative examples from the 19th century and beyond have been the result of injustices caused by the political-economic systems of the
times. But again, there must be consideration of moral purpose and the alternative social visions on offer in these activities to fully understand their successes and associational membership.

If social capital is positioned largely as being about levels and rates of membership to associations, newspaper readership and civic participation, then, we are left in a quandary about the actual relevance of social capital for community development. One does wonder why community development would need people to read newspapers, in terms of Bullen’s (2004) claim that social capital is the foundation for community development.

Research on social capital can thus be divided into two major categories. There are those who examine specifically the associations and groups that Putnam (1993a; 2000) claims create social capital, although this aspect of research is argued to be diminishing (Latham 2000; 2003). Moreover, this tends toward an examination of membership rates and levels of participation over any kind of exploration of moral purpose or alternative sets of principles that underpin practices. Then, there are those who attempt to look a little deeper into how the norms of trust, reciprocity, participation and mutual benefit are fostered (Bullen & Onyx 1999). Again, these accounts assume that these norms are necessary prerequisites for community development to occur.

Social capital is, however, based on a Western conception of what makes communities work or what makes us ‘civil’ and it rests on a vision of ‘Western liberal democracy, that Putnam (1993a; 2000) sees as coming from a common
source’ (Putzel, 1997, 941). In a sense, the historical civilising mission once conducted under colonialism can now be completed under the new guise of social capital. This reinforces Carson’s (2004) above claims that ‘community itself is Anglo-centric, if not neo-colonial’, although it is possible to suggest that not all community is Anglo-centric and neo-colonial, perhaps it is more of a question that the dominant narratives about community have privileged this viewpoint. Those co-operators involved in counter-communities illustrate that this is the case. The danger is that such activities become captured in a social tale that considers them in a dis-embedded, de-contextualised light ignorant of their moral purposes.

As chapters 2 and 3 have demonstrated the motivations and rationales underpinning organisations, community activities and even civil society are many and varied. What is problematic about social capital lies not only in the manner in which certain neighbourhoods and groups are identified, but also in its easy alignment with a mix of the charity and market rationales discussed above by Kenny (2002).

Social capital has thus been criticised by some community development theorists for its universal and homogenising nature and for its failure to recognise that sometimes capitalism and democracy are antithetical paradigms (Derbetin 1998). This is because free-market competition can be argued to be exclusionary, unjust and largely undemocratic, resources are not distributed equally and not everyone has equal opportunity (Gibson-Graham 2003). Therefore, people turn to activities like co-operatives and credit unions in particular, to reclaim a sense of agency and
control in this context, rather than to be civically engaged and assist the
democratic functions of government. These are actions of moral protest.

Indeed, social capital might put the social on the agenda of the economic
rationalists, but this has meant that it has become more and more linked with the
concept of a good that is traded and maximised for utility. Derbetin (1998)
argued, for example, that social capital has become a feature of the utilitarian
State. Turner (1999) fleshed this out to say that social capital is ‘those forces that
increase the potential for economic development in a society by creating and
sustaining social relations and patterns of organisation’ (Turner 1999 quoted in
Servon 2002, 5). Servon (2002, 5) suggested that this view combined
‘economics’ traditional emphasis on self-interest with the notion that social
capital generally derives from altruistic activity’. Again, the mix between the
charitable and market organisational rationale is present (Kenny 2002).

Others have argued that social capital has been constructed as being ‘normatively
and morally neutral’ (De Filippis 2001, 784). There has been limited
examination, for example, of how dense interlocking networks between
individuals and groups, trust, norms of reciprocity and mutual respect, and social
agency (Onyx 2001, 84) can also create enclaves with restrictive and exclusionary
tendencies. As Carson (2004) highlighted, the view of community within social
capital policy formations is itself problematic. In short, social capital requires a
normative understanding of community that can adequately explore and
distinguish both the moral and ethical (in Cooper’s 1997 sense) features on offer.
Friedman (1993) has previously suggested that communitarians have argued for community but they have failed to examine the implicit power and structural problems within communities, such as gender. The sorts of communities where social capital programs are said to be of benefit must first be understood before they are implemented in such top-down fashions as have been indicated by some (see Gittell and Thompson 2001, 115-135).

Additionally, there must be a way in which those members who embody and live the experiences of these communities in question are given avenues of voice to present their stories and understandings of their own lived experiences. For example, Putzel (1997, 942) examined the reference to ethnic enclaves in Putnam’s (1993a, 2001) work and argued that networks of trust might:

Make behaviour more predictable, but it does not necessarily mean that they will contribute to democracy; this has much more to do with the political ideas and programmes transmitted through them.

Again, the underpinning rationales, the principles and alternative social visions offered in some networks can be democratically or otherwise focussed. Moreover, resources that are created through such ties and bonds are not exactly for the benefit of the whole society ‘except in the rather diffuse sense of contributing to economic growth’ (Putzel 1997, 942). Similar analyses can be made of co-operative examples, except that their distinguishing principles of inter-cooperation and concern for community are a measure of avoiding this exclusionary and enclave-like potential. The way in which principles are embodied and practised will contribute to either open or closed communities.
Social capital is said to embody the ‘norms and networks of civic engagement [that are] a precondition for economic development, as well as for effective government’ (Putnam 1993b, 2). Here, the true matter and agenda of social capital starts to seep into the picture -- ‘preconditions for economic development’.

De Filippis (2001, 785) noted there was a shift away from social capital being something that ‘people possess to something possessed (or not possessed) by communities, cities, countries or continents’. Social capital started to be seen as a measure and mechanism of economic as well as social success, but as Putzel reminded us, social capital as presented by Putnam (1993a) provided a model to measure the ‘performance of government organisations and institutions,’ but it is not necessarily the elixir that it is claimed to be (Putzel 1997, 940). The problems of embedded master narratives in social capital are evident in how the theory has been deployed to identify others “without” certain capacities and characteristics as in need of social capital formation. The further potential that social capital has to be used itself as a bulwark to capture social alternatives must also be acknowledged.

Social capital cannot be said to foster those subtleties of moral responsibility that the ethical community commands, albeit in an unspoken manner.

Taking moral responsibility means not to consider the Other any more as a specimen of a species or a category, but as unique, and by doing so elevate oneself (making oneself ‘chosen’) to the dignity of uniqueness. (Bauman 1995, 60)

The forms of togetherness on offer within social capital remain those of being-with relations. This makes it difficult for people to imagine how to be-for others in their communities.
Social Capital - a contemporary bulwark of neo-liberal master narratives

Current wisdom suggests that social capital is, in fact, a productive asset that, when present enhances investment in physical and human capital. If this is true, then social capital will be particularly important in emerging neighbourhoods – those neighbourhoods that have historically been disadvantaged but possess key assets and are poised for development. Further an ability to articulate the benefits of social capital in these neighbourhoods will be critical to marketing emerging neighbourhoods to potential investors.


Common criticisms to target from the distinction between high and low social capital, as argued above, have referred to the fact that the distinction itself echoes oppressive terminology used in early development literature. This terminology positioned nations of ‘the South’ as underdeveloped, not industrialised or in earlier literature still, as backward. The development of Southern nations has historically been measured against ‘the North’; that is, dominant Western conceptions of what it has meant to be developed and civilised. In this respect, current social capital usage continues to perpetrate this trend. This is played out on a local level also with some development of communities measured against the success of other community examples. Communities have come to be defined and measured as either high or low in social capital.

To illustrate, Bullen (2004, 21) proposed that areas with high and low social capital are characterised by the following traits:

> Where there are high levels of social capital people will feel that they are a part of a community, feel useful and be able to make a real contribution to the community, will participate in local community networks and organisations, will pull together for common goods in floods and bush fires, will welcome strangers and all will help out with something but no one will do everything.
He continued:

If there is low or no social capital present the causes may include the human capital required for social capital’s core building blocks is absent, there are inadequate levels of material well-being – people are struggling for survival, there is inadequate physical infrastructure – such as places to meet, public spaces, telephones and newspapers and, the human, economic and physical infrastructure pre-requisites are present but there have been no opportunities to develop the networks and interconnections between people. (Bullen 2004, 21)

Yet, it is well documented that people ‘struggling for survival’ often exhibit characteristics of resiliency, trust between networks and relying on each other more than other social groups (Ostrom & Ahn 2003). Indeed, in the context of development in the South, there is most certainly inadequate physical infrastructure, but it does not mean that communities are not trusting, reciprocating or working together for mutual benefit.

In fact, small self-help groups and co-operatives, those activities that were said to be the generators of social capital by Putnam (1993), are central to many nations’ economies (Korten 1998). It might just be, as other theorists have contended, that what social capital is differs across time and place, and the development of an overarching term that can be applied universally is problematic (Ostrom & Ahn 2003; Servon 2002). Indeed, as Carson (2004) argued, dominant studies draw on problematic conceptions of community in their accounting for social capital and sometimes these conceptions are linked to the geographical areas for analysis.

For example, a study by Krishna (2003, 57-62) on alternative measures of social capital illustrated the dominant foci of research conducted into social capital from studies at the individual or household levels, to neighbourhood or community levels, to regional levels and to national levels.
At the individual or household level of studies, Krishna cited Schneider et al.’s (1997) study which revealed that, government policies influence the level of social capital. *Structure influences social capital*, and not vice versa as Putnam et al., suggest. A Tanzanian study by Narayan and Pritchett (1997) found that ‘more heterogenous groups are associated with higher social capital’, while another United States based study by Brehm and Rahn (1997) argued that ‘more trust leads to higher civic engagement. *Norms influence networks* -- an opposite conclusion again to that presented by Putnam et al. Krishna also noted that another study by Grootaert (1998), this time based in Indonesia, concluded that ‘more heterogenous groups are associated with higher social capital’. Finally Rose’s (1999) study in Russia found that ‘specific networks assist solidarity and trust within particular social institutions’. So, at the individual and household level a range of views exist about how social capital is formed some contrary to Putnam’s initial findings.

At the neighbourhood and local level Portney and Berry’s (1997) United States based research contrasted with Narayan & Pritchett’s (1997) study. They argued that ‘not all types of networks support community feeling. Homogenous networks are more supportive than heterogenous ones’ (Portney & Berry 1997 quoted in Krishna 2003, 59). Another United States based study by Sampson et al., (1997) revealed that ‘more homogenous neighbourhoods have higher levels of collective efficacy’. Krishna and Uphoff’s (1999) examination of social capital in India suggested a different pathway again, ‘informal groups are salient for social capital in this context more than formal ones’. These neighbourhood findings are different from the household and individuals studies, highlighting contrasting
perspectives on the role of homogenous communities and heterogeneous communities in social capital formation.

At the regional level Putnam et al’s study of Italy had suggested ‘horizontal groups are associated with higher social capital in comparison with those that are more hierarchical in their organisation’. Morris’s (1998) study of India, however, proposed that ‘state-created and government-managed groups are well endowed with social capital that has been successful in reducing poverty’. At the national level Hall’s (1997) study of Britain also contended, as Morris’s did, that ‘state policies influence social capital formation’. Knack and Keefer’s (1997) cross-national study opposed Putnam’s regional study to argue that ‘social trust and network density [we]re not related to each other. Creating horizontal networks may actually damage social capital’. Finally, Stolle and Rochon’s (1998) study across Germany, Sweden and the United States found that ‘different types of networks facilitate building social capital in different cultural contexts’ (cited in Krishna 2003, 62).

The absence of normative analyses of social capital has contributed to De Fillipis’ (2001) contention that social capital has been treated as morally and normatively neutral. The above issues demonstrate this case and the embedded views of community within accounts serves to shape how different studies position the role of social capital. In Australia, Stewart-Weeks and Richardson’s (1998) qualitative study of social capital in Australia begins from the premise that social capital exists and is not in contestation. The term is accepted by the researchers
and used in this morally and normatively neutral manner to discuss 12 people’s stories of social capital.

The conceptual difficulties with the notion of social capital can be identified in many current research projects and problems with how the distinctions between high and low social capital are deployed, might well be linked to the dominance of quantitative measurement approaches in this social capital research as well. Trying to survey communities and conduct questionnaires to fit certain criteria boxes does not really shed much light on normative behaviours that generate trust, reciprocity or cooperation either. Moreover, this style of analysis does not provide understanding about co-operative engagement or voluntary activities, where it might be that moral purpose, or the embodiment of alternative sets of principles to dominant institutions, is a motivational factor in participation.

As an outcome of its popularity with so many institutions and disciplines, social capital has become firmly embedded within master narratives used to describe, define and develop communities in ways that can be considered oppressive. As Carson (2004) well articulated, social capital tends to treat community in a dis-embedded manner that helps to foster the neo-liberal push for self-help in framing communities as responsible for their disadvantages and deficiencies.

Indeed, other authors have examined social capital in different cultural settings and provided counter claims to Derbetin (2002) and Sampson’s (2001) narrative positionings that certain ethnic and cultural identities are characteristic of communities low in social capital (cf. Healy 2000). Additional counterstories are
needed to contest Servon’s (2002) position that the trend toward understanding and generating social capital is to provide market and investment advantages.

Arguments from authors such as Servon (2002, 13) have suggested that ‘qualitative and quantitative work by researchers, as well as practitioners’ on-the-ground experiences, demonstrate that social capital does matter’. But, what should matter more is communities themselves and how ethical communities can be fostered and maintained. Many studies, for example Stewart-Weeks and Richardson’s (1998, 102), take the position that social capital is an item that is ‘traded.’ They frame their participants’ responses, which refer to favours and ‘pay-backs’, as a demonstration of this. Effectively, this creates expectations and a view that social capital occurs and happens because ‘I scratch your back now so that in the future you will scratch mine’. If this position is applied to the activities that are said to create social capital, such as co-operatives and credit unions, then the rationale that underpins these actions is self-interest, which simply ignores the alternative social visions on offer.

An additionally problematic aspect to emerge in social capital theorising is how family has come to be seen as the ‘bed-rock of social capital’ (Winter 2000a, 5). According to Winter (2000a, 5), this focus has ignored how ‘the family is a power structure imbued with fundamental gender inequalities’. In this sense, social capital can be said to reflect a typically liberal-communitarian account of community (Friedman 1993). Friedman (1993, 241-2) suggested that this is because liberalism has:

Always condemned, in principle if not in practice, the norms of social hierarchy and political subordination based on inherited or ascribed status.
While liberals historically have applied this tenet only to the public realm of civic relationships, feminism seeks to extend it more radically to the private realm of family and other communities of place.

This extension of how community is understood to include the lived experiences of co-operators is also commanded by the encounter with social capital, because without it all we are discussing is the servient civility to a master narrative. Indeed, the focus in Putnam’s (1998) work is on the civic, and inherently it is arguing for more equality, trust and reciprocity in communities, but like many communitarian accounts it ‘dovetails on that mythic idealisation known as “the family”’ (Friedman 1993, 240). Putnam (1998, 6-7) also raised the question of whether the decline in social capital was primarily due to the feminist revolution and women’s entrance to the workforce. He claimed that this and other factors led him to view the emergence of two career families as the possible ‘important single factor in the erosion of social capital’ (see Putnam, 1998, 7). Many have thus begun to ask whether it is women, then, who build these relationships and norms of trust, reciprocity and cooperation at the centre of social capital (Cox 1995).

Certainly, Bullen and Onyx’s (1999, 9-11) study into neighbourhood activities in five Australian communities revealed that the largest proportion of people involved in volunteer activities and management of civic groups is women. It is not as simple a proposal, however, that one gender creates certain normative features over another; this serves only to perpetrate further oppressive structures. Similarly it is not a case that certain activities create the necessary norms and values, because when the co-operative example is considered, again, we note that gender inequalities have been a problem faced by co-operators as well. As it was
argued above, regardless of how Mondragon held the principle of open and equitable membership, women were still excluded within co-operative activities (Berger and Clamp 1983). This is a failure in social capital theorising to explore embedded master narratives.

So while some co-operative activities, as Putnam (1993a) claimed, might contribute to trust, reciprocity and cooperation and, hence, social capital, this does not make those norms ethically neutral or uncomplicated. Under the surface of Putnam’s (1995; 1998, 8) claim has been a view that social capital has eroded because the nuclear family has fragmented. This can be said to reflect another conservative view of contemporary community and family life and it is in fact a possible master narrative fragment of a liberal-conservative communitarian position (however odd this may seem) on how to resolve social ills. Putnam (1995, 3) argued that social capital is a public good; that is it ‘is not the property of those who benefit from it. Like other public goods, from clean air to safe streets, social capital tends to be under provided by public agents’. Putnam (1995) intended here that governments turn their gaze and agendas to trust, reciprocity and cooperation, a task easier to advocate for than to realise however.

De Filippis (2001, 801) argued that ‘people who realise capital through their networks of social capital do so precisely because others are excluded’. If we take the co-operative as a case in point once again, this is true in so far as membership creates a boundary between those who are committed to the embodiment of co-operative principles and those who are not. Yet, the additional principles of cooperation, which assure inter-cooperation and concern for
community, also suggest that benefits of co-operative practice can be extended
beyond those membership boundaries. Indeed, the principle of social
transformation, education and training is implicitly concerned with this latter
point.

Social capital theorising seems to not be able to extend beyond a discussion about
how norms are generated to deeper questions of social transformation because of
three reasons. First, it is argued that the theoretical framework of social capital
contains embedded master narratives that can be used as a tool (intended or
unintended) to regenerate or maintain oppressive conditions within communities.
Second, this has allowed for social capital to become another ensemble,
patchwork policy of neo-liberalism in many Western countries and, finally it does
not allow for emotional relationships with the other to be formed as a result of
this. For these relations to occur, social capital theorising will need to move
beyond the definition of places and others as either high or low in social capital (a
master narrative tactic that creates boundaries of who belongs and who does not),
and identifications which position others as thing-like.

In this respect, social capital theorising will also need to move beyond, then, the
problematic views that emerging or poor communities lack connections and
capacity. To develop the emotional relation with others Bauman suggested that
three things:

First, emotion marks the exit from the state of *indifference* lived among
thing-like others. Second, emotion pulls the Other from the world of
finitude and stereotyped certainty, and casts him/her into the universe of
under-determination, questioning and openness. Third, emotion extricates
the Other from the world of convention, routine and normatively gendered
monotony, and transmits him/her into a world in which no universal rules apply, while those which do apply are overtly and blatantly non-universal, specific, born and shaped in the self-containment of the face-to-face protected from the outside influence by the wall of sentiment. Through these three feats, emotional engagement makes the Other into a problem and the task of and for the self...now it is up to the self, and the self alone, to do something (an unspecified something) about the Other. The other turns into the self's responsibility, and this is where morality begins as the possibility of choice between good and evil. (Bauman 1995, 62, original emphasis)

The conventional views of community and moral responsibility held within social capital will require transformation beyond their civilising agenda, to embrace and embody an alternative social vision for the future. Yet, it must surely be said that this self-responsibility is not that of an individualised state of relations because the call to face the other and to take responsibility for this is set within a dialogical relationship. Self and other are entwined in their fates; I am, as you are not entirely knowable, but we are entwined beings nonetheless. Once theorising about social capital can see people as subjects of their lives, rather than objects of capacities, this will move us closer toward a vision of ethical communities. It is for these reasons that many co-operative examples represent an opportunity to counter dominant narratives of social capital and repair the diminished identity representations arising from these narratives.

Conclusions

The prominence of social capital as a new theory and strategy in community development means that community development’s social identity has been further captured in an economic story. Social capital does not seek to understand the normative features of co-operative, credit unions and other voluntary
associational activities. Nonetheless, it has captivated the audiences of community development and government circles, and become an elixir prescribed by large-scale development bodies, government institutions and as a strategy for community engagement. These institutions do not seek to foster or embody the alternative principles and social visions that some other activities proffer. In light of this, co-operative counterstories need to be heard to understand and appreciate the social and ethical dimensions that have been ignored in social capital analyses.

To cite two common examples, social capital is a strong bulwark of neo-liberal master narratives that is a repeated theme and ensemble within the Australian Commonwealth government’s national Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and the Victorian government’s Community Capacity Building Initiative. Both of these policy examples contain implicit and problematic views of community that demand reconsideration in terms of their moral consequences. Social capital assists in reinforcing self-help as a strategy for communities to develop their own solutions to their own problems. Some of these aspects are seen in the co-operator counter narratives and counterstories that follow in part III.

Social capital’s links with neo-liberal and liberal master narratives cannot be ignored and, in fact, these are the aspects that require most contestation by co-operators and community developers in order for them to develop and maintain their counter-identities. In social policy circles, social capital has become an official story of community life and what is means to live civilly. The dark sides of social capital illustrate the oppressive master narrative features, however,
which have captured and defined the social in problematic ways. Fragments of patriarchal narratives and the underpinning conservative communitarian position of the family all make social capital a term that warrants caution. Associations of low social capital with either racial or class differences also draw on oppressive master narratives to tell a social capital tale. Further, underlying master narratives of gender also demonstrate the potential for social capital to contribute to moral communities rather than ethical communities. The forms of togetherness do not and cannot foster *being-for* ethical relations.

A feminist driven and embodied account of social capital could go some way to countering these potentially problematic trends in social capital and reclaim the social within social capital from the empirical-positivist base that research to date has drawn upon. Additionally, some reflections on the moral purposes of using social capital in community development may assist to ethically evaluation its relevance in the 21st century. Social capture of the alternative social visions and co-operative principles within a dominant economic story requires contestation from community development and co-operative circles to retain the moral purposes of the practices.
PART III RESISTANCE
By telling you anything at all I’m at least believing in you, I believe you’re there, I believe you into being. Because I am telling you this story I will your existence. I tell, therefore you are.

Margaret Atwood. *The Handmaid’s Tale.*

Part I and II relied on second and third person perspectives to achieve two things; first, to understand how identity has been composed by co-operative and community development practitioners and theorists; and second, to explain the way that master narratives and other dominant economic narratives have also contributed to the construction and deconstruction of these individual and collective identities in doxastic ways (Nelson 2001). To this point, the study has detailed the sorts of dominant economic narratives and master narratives that are up for contestation. This part presents the counterstories and counter narratives to these as told by the six co-operators.

Master narratives, it was argued, have largely captured within an economic paradigm the alternative sets of social values and co-operative principles once embodied by many co-operative and community development activities. This economic and social capture resulted in the diminishment of counter-identities upon which these practices were based. In turn, diminished identity representations restrict the capacity of co-operators and community developers to work toward their desired ideals of social transformation. Hence, their moral agency is curtailed.
Without solid counter-identities, many co-operative and community development activities risk becoming practices that emulate achieving economic objectives over the development of social values and the embodiment of co-operative principles. This part, as indicated, explores the first person accounts of resistance to neo-liberal master narratives. Of particular interest are those co-operator stories that resemble the characteristics of Nelson’s (2001) counterstories because, as she contended, it is these narrative types that facilitate narrative repair of diminished identities and reclaim captured moral agency. This task assists to address the research question of why and how some co-operative practices can and do resist capture by current narratives of economic rationalism and seek to offer ethically motivated alternatives to mainstream arrangements.

An important point that Nelson (2001) made is that counterstories will differ according to the master narratives that they counter -- there is no one set prescription of how a counterstory will look. Therefore, while each of the co-operator stories might reflect the criteria that Nelson (2001) prescribed, each will do this in a different way. Counterstories are also of interest because to this point they have intimated a pathway of transition away from closed and homogenised moral communities to open dialogical and multi-logical ethical communities in Cooper’s (1997) sense of the terms. As part II has demonstrated moral communities are the dominant mode on offer in economically influenced community development stories. By understanding how co-operators’ identities are constituted there is the additional possibility of demonstrating further why social capital fails to adequately account for the moral purposes of co-operative activity.
Table 6 provides a summary overview of where each co-operators account met Nelson’s (2001) three credibility criteria which are moral self-definition, resistance and narrative repair. This table provides the starting point from which to examine, in this chapter, moral self-definition. The chapter begins by establishing how the co-operators’ stories meet the first of Nelson’s (2001) three credibility criteria -- moral self-definition. Counterstories, according to Nelson (2001), are stories of self-definition and this chapter aims to identify those segments in each co-operator’s account, which illustrate self-defined moments of individual and collective co-operative identity composition.  

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53 Composition is used intentionally to denote how second and third person accounts have been selectively drawn upon to compose a particular story about co-operator and community developers’ identities and practices. This is not a newly created story, however, because co-operative accounts have historically and contemporarily told stories about alternative social visions and represented a real alternative to dominant institutions. This is similarly so in the case of how the first person accounts are analysed because to be truly ‘self-defined moments’ the co-operators themselves would have had to have selected and interpreted which parts of their accounts they believed were self-defining. In this case, this ‘first person’ composition of their identities still remains the work of my interpretive gaze and an application of Nelson’s (2001) theory to their narrative accounts. The evaluation does not seek either to make moral judgements about any one co-operator’s morality; each desired to embody social justice alternatives in different ways. It is important to remind readers that this is a constructed composition. It examines the accounts according to the counterstory criteria identified by Nelson. While it may appear that evaluation of the accounts with respect to these criteria appears as a ‘coding’ of the narratives, it is important to bear in mind that the moral particularities of each account do not make this possible; none of the narratives fits the criteria in a pre-defined way that produces a law-like theory.
### TABLE 6

NELSON’S (2001) THREE CREDIBILITY CRITERIA AND THE CO-OPERATOR ACCOUNTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nelson’s Credibility Criteria</th>
<th>Co-operator One</th>
<th>Co-operator Two</th>
<th>Co-operator Three</th>
<th>Co-operator Four</th>
<th>Co-operator Five</th>
<th>Co-operator Six</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Moral Self-Definition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-moral</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Levels of Resistance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal of master narrative</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repudiation of master narrative</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contestation of master narrative</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Narrative Repair</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant group accepts</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counterstory</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminished moral agency is repaired</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterstory causes changes to the master narrative</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Defined Moments of Identity-Constution

Moral self-definition refers to how an individual ‘define[s] or redefine[s] a group to which [they] belong and from which the individual takes some significant part of her identity’ (Nelson 2001, 15). Moral self-definition happens by narrative exposure, our life experiences, social practices and relationships. Over time, humans develop their perspective on the values that count for them and commitments they hold dear; how people narratively self-define can shape whether the story being told is one of strong, weak or nonmoral self-definition. This means that all narrative accounts are self-defining in some way or another, but strong moral self-definition is what counterstories require to free moral agency and conduct narrative repair. Master narratives, for example, are mostly stories of nonmoral self-definition.

One’s ability to reflect on how values were formed, to present one’s reasons on why these continue to be important or are no longer relevant, and how the values and principles contribute to future commitments, all determine whether a person is seen to have strong, weak or nonmoral self-definition. While moral self-definition can tell us about the kind of person someone presents themselves as, it is largely about that person’s capacity to reflect on their past and present experiences and how these have shaped their identity.

These identity-constitutive features of one’s life can indicate how a person understands themselves, how they view their moral character and the reasons they give for choosing to act as they do. This provides both an individual ‘narrative of moral identity’ and a collective ‘narrative of moral identity’ (Walker 1998, 112,
emphasis mine). The individual narrative tells us about the values and commitments that each person takes to be important -- their moral identity or moral character in a sense, while a whole picture starts to form from the combinations of each account about the collective narrative of moral identity. Individual accounts tell us about the wider socio-political and cultural narratives in circulation too, because in many co-operative contexts they are often generated in opposition or at least in relation to these other dominant narratives. Thus, individual accounts can be analysed for the personal story at play, the cultural, socio-political stories that encircle it and, for evidence of master narrative fragments. Of the three forms of moral self-definition presented by Nelson, strong moral self-definition, as suggested above, is central to the telling of counterstories.

Strong Moral Self-Definition

Strong moral self-definition not only tells us about someone’s values and commitments but it also illustrates, as indicated above, a sort of moral competence whereby a person or group reflects on their ‘moral track record’ in order to evaluate their past actions (Nelson 2001, 15-6). Moral competency develops as a result of this reflection and evaluation, which formulates a sense of strong moral self-definition. In addition to someone purposefully reflecting on previous commitments to values and experiences, strong moral self-definition is found in an account where an individual:

[provides] a backward looking story that explains to [them] who [they] have been…[which gives rise to a] commitment to a future course of action [in a] forward looking story that shows where [they] want to go. (Nelson 2001, 16)
Strong moral self-definition represents one’s ability to ‘install and observe precedents for themselves which are both distinctive of them and morally binding’ (Walker 1987 quoted in Nelson 2001, 15). This can be illustrated accurately by co-operator three’s backward-looking account, which shows self-awareness of how the past has played a role in his current course of action.

I put Fridays aside every week when I was a student and did volunteer community work for a couple of years. That was very interesting, in some ways, that volunteer work it was really instrumental in what I’ve ended up doing. So I was involved in supporting local people with mental illness through one of the local hostels as a volunteer. I continue to relate with a whole range of those people, even now. The other thing that I did was get involved with refugees in the area.

Co-operator three is a member of a consultancy-based co-operative and these past actions continue to play a role in where he wants to head, in terms of imagining a new way of doing things and working with vulnerable others in communities. In fact, he and co-operators one, two and four are all members of co-operatives within the same inner-city local community, as the introduction explained. The above account shows how he installs and observes precedents that are distinctive of him and morally binding which is a feature shared in all four co-operator accounts. All of these co-operators have lived for a period or time, and some continue to live, within this local community, as well as conducting their work there. Evaluating the past for factors that have contributed to possible future courses of action, co-operator two also reflected that:

Yes, [the co-operative] is a great thing in and of itself, but the reason why I dedicated a lot of time to it, like a lot of voluntary time for a very long time -- as well as other people, was that it would be linked to the [peak non-profit that it emerged from] and benefit [that non-profit], as well as benefit the community in the co-operative’s wider aims and objectives. And it would benefit the people who work there, in that the co-operative provides meaningful work.
Co-operator two, like co-operator three, tells a backward-looking story that shows how commitments to a future course of action have developed via this voluntary time. These are, again, commitments that install precedents which are distinctive and morally binding upon him and the collective. He shows a commitment to the nature of co-operative practice and its principle of concern for the wider community, while expressing a desire to participate in the co-operative because it provides ‘meaningful work’. Additional value commitments are expressed within co-operator two and three’s statements by their references to their volunteer experiences. Co-operator three said:

We had a clear ethic of working with the disadvantaged, so for some people that meant working with Indigenous groups of people, for others it was working with newly arrived refugees, for others it was working with people with psychiatric disabilities. So it was very much about working with the disadvantaged and not worrying about the whole community.

The account illustrates how value commitments played a role in the formation of this particular co-operative which seemed to be based on a collective commitment to work with the disadvantaged. In the case of co-operator two, his additional value commitments are expressed by recounting that the co-operative was developed purposefully to be linked to the larger non-profit organisation and benefit that non-profit. So, in his case, he has expressed comfort with and commitment to his ‘meaningful work’, which provided further economic contributions for the non-profit peak body to which the co-operative is attached.

In co-operator three’s case, the groups with which he had worked are all characterised by dominant groups and literature as vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged. Both co-operator responses reflect constitutive features of their respective identities and how they are individuals who care for others and commit
to values beyond their paid roles. These accounts illustrate how people with potentially strong moral self-definition ratify their history to justify how they are on their present course of action, or to remain on this course.

‘Meaningful work’ is an interesting term used by co-operator two and it does appear to be formulated in relation to other dominant narrative which traditionally have defined voluntary and unpaid work with less status than paid roles. This tension between how professional and non-professional roles are valued by wider society was present in community work literature as chapter 2 discussed.

Co-operator two reflected on the backward part of his story, about how the co-operative developed.

[It developed to] do good things environmentally but also provide an income for the [peak non-profit] so that people would not need to volunteer their time to do their work with the peak body. They could actually get paid and therefore their work would be acknowledged and meaningful within societal terms.

In the context of the co-operative’s formation, co-operator two’s actions can be understood as intentionally seeking moral recognition from dominant groups, as expressed in his statement that ‘their work would be meaningful and acknowledged within societal terms’. This implies that previously this work had not been acknowledged. His aim for moral recognition seeks to achieve two things: first, to [re]define what co-operatives do in terms of providing meaningful employment, and, second, to [re]identify activists and volunteers as participants in meaningful activities in relation to wider societal perceptions. People could actually get paid for their work if they formed a co-operative instead of volunteering so much time and not getting paid for it. Second, members are
afforded societal status by being employed in the co-operative; hence, their identity representations are changed from those who are seen by others as idle, unemployed, rabble-rousing activists, to active citizens who make valuable social and economic contributions. Rather than being morally regarded as on the outer fringes, the co-operative is re-presented as a meaningful work place that is respected within the local community.

Co-operatives can often be developed to serve their geographical region or local communities because they form in response to social, economic or political matters that have been identified by community members. As such, they are actions of moral protest, because people feel compelled to resist an oppressive situation and provide an alternative. This is what Nelson (2001, 16) referred to as repudiation, whereby co-operators ‘repudiate history and start to chart a new course that commits them to certain values in the future’. Co-operators’ desires to transform or respond to such injustices see people come together to provide, as co-operator two reflected, either a meaningful work place, or a site where those who exist on the margins and experience a sense of exclusion have a place to belong. In this respect, many of the co-operative activities in this particular geographical area appear to be underpinned by a strong social justice ethic that enables groups to form and provide alternative opportunities.

In the case of co-operator two, the geographical location for the co-operative was identified because the community was seen by him and his group to be ‘a generous community’. Additionally, the co-operative sought to offer an alternative environmentally-friendly mode of transport by recycling bikes.
Without a close location to the inner-city region this simply may not have been a viable trading option. Two factors, then, would appear to underpin the formation of the co-operatives that co-operators one and three are members of: (1) a wider community that is supportive of the co-operative or the alternative measures it promotes, or at least certain social groupings within the wider community who are supportive; (2) in the case of co-operator three, certain socially diverse groupings and marginalised others within this local community to work with, a heterogenous rather than homogenous community -- either way, the pre-existence of these relationships creates the opportunity for both co-operators to commit to morally binding values that are particular to their identity formations.

For co-operator one, who participates in a newly-formed consultancy/community based projects co-operative, geographical location, also plays an important role. She described this co-operative as:

Working multi-dimensionally; so, the basic work is community education and community empowerment projects. We run all sorts of projects to achieve those ends. (Co-operator One)

There are some similarities between co-operator one and three in terms of their co-operatives having a community development focus. It is possible to see how dominant community development narratives that describe activities under the banners of community education or community empowerment inform her perspective. Co-operator one’s account also confirms, again, how this particular local community was seen as responsive to new ideas and a supportive environment in which to establish their co-operative endeavour. Some attribute this responsiveness to the area’s cultural diversity and its history as a place of traditional settlement for newly arrived migrants (Pollock 1990). The local
community is presented as an area of difference and diversity compared with other wider city regions.

This is, however, also an area that has been affected by local and state government gentrification processes. Its close location to the inner city has seen the community be identified by dominant groups and represented in much media coverage of the area, as a home to those on the fringes, the alternatives, the hippies and the marginalised. This pattern of narrative positioning has also occurred with other regions with high levels of ‘alternative activities’ for example, Maleny in Queensland, Byron Bay in New South Wales, and Nimbin, also in New South Wales.

Co-operator one continued:

[This area] is a good place to be [because people can start new things here] and the other reason of course is that what we are doing is very much attempting to challenge corporatisation. I suppose at the local level we can see [corporatisation occurring] through gentrification. [This area] is right in the crux of that at the moment so it is sort of an interesting place to be working. That’s why we are doing what we are doing here.

Co-operator one’s explanation of her commitment to a future course of action is driven by a desire to resist corporatisation effects in the local area. The statement reviews the local area in a backward manner to provide justifications for why she is involved in the co-operative’s activities. Gentrification processes are said to encourage corporatisation, because in the classic urban development and planning model, small local businesses are always taken over by large multinational corporations; the signifier of gentrification is often the arrival of the large-scale shopping complex in a local community.
To counter some of these trends, co-operator three has worked on additional community-based projects to promote ethical consumerism and for the community to support fair trade. She said:

So one of the bigger projects that we’ve just done was to produce an ethical consumer guide, which was very much oriented toward consumer education, but had a wider political framework - it’s not just about consuming ethically, but limiting consumption as well. (Co-operator One)

All of these activities point to actions of moral protest, rather than actions that contribute to the effective functioning of government institutions in the dominant social capital sense of things. The projects express value commitments to purposes and practices that are directed toward social change. Additionally, co-operator one added:

This [place] is interesting because it is so diverse. There are still people who have a lot of needs here, so it would be nice if they could actually stay here rather than move to the outer suburbs.

In addition to the issue of gentrification, community organisations that traditionally supported the diverse social groups in this area have also been moved to other locations with cheaper rental spaces and greater accommodation options. Very few of the 14 social services, for example, that were found in this one area in 1990 remain today (Pollock 1990). All of the co-operative examples selected from this area can be said to be unique counter examples that seek to repudiate, in different ways, the dominant trends of corporatisation and gentrification. This is, of course, taken in the context of gentrification and corporatisation not being seen as unique to this locality. Communities situated in inner-city locations across Australia, which were originally perceived as either working or low socio-economic class, have undergone similar transitions -- Port Melbourne in Victoria
is a recent case in point. Whether there are similar counter examples in these localities is beyond the focus of this study.

Gentrification has created local problems around affordable housing, the provision of adequate support services to those considered to be on the margins, and an overall change to this and other communities’ social character. The gentrification story is confirmed by co-operator four’s account of how their co-operative developed.

Initially it was set up…because at the time it was after Expo 88 when a lot of people were being pushed out of the inner city. So it was set up so that people on low and middle incomes could still afford to live in the city.

This co-operative’s formation is also embedded in the backward-looking account that provides the impetus for the future course of action; there is repudiation of the historical situation, which commits these co-operators to values in the future. The local neighbourhood paper at the time lamented:

Protest is not enough, nor are town planning controls. Urban development proceeds according to the Golden Rule – those with the gold make the rules. It’s not communities who decide how development will occur. Those decisions are made by investors with the money to spend. These investors can be individuals, corporate groups, or government bodies, who hardly represent the community interest. (Neighbourhood News c.1989, 1)

In response to these issues the local community paper continued:

The only way for our community to control its own future is to take this power away from these financiers and governments. We need to find ways to co-operatively determine the development investment decisions which affect our homes, jobs, leisure, and shopping facilities.

From their perspective, co-operative models can and do provide an alternative to investor power, which supports the above claims that some people’s attraction to
co-operatives is precisely because they do embody an alternative social vision. The four co-operative examples above, then, can be said to have developed within the context of backward-looking accounts that have contributed to future courses of actions.

These features of backward and forward looking accounts, however, whereby values are either ratified or repudiated, are not enough to provide all co-operators with strong moral self-definition. Additional features of purposefulness and substantive commitments are also required with respect to how individuals explain their actions and reasons for co-operative participation, as it shall be demonstrated below. These sorts of commitments have been alluded to by co-operators three and one in their earlier recounts of volunteer participation.

An element of activism also seems to be an identity-constitutive feature in all four of the co-operator accounts; however, it particularly figures purposefully in co-operator two’s backward-looking story which explained his course of action to form the co-operative. Co-operator two expressed commitments to activism that indicated that questions of social justice provided moral purposes outside of the co-operative.

[The peak body was] the impetus for the project…we want[ed] to provide a service that was as environmentally friendly as possible hence the recycling of [products], it's our core activity. It also need[ed] to be as grassroots as possible, hence the semi-grassroots nature of the business even if it is a commercial business. (Co-operator Two)

By the above statement, co-operator two ratifies his past actions and shows how these become commitments to principles and values that are morally binding of
his present actions. Many of the participants’ stories are grounded in an activist-like context that repudiates the changes to the local community, which sometimes appear to provide the motivation for their co-operative engagement. For example, co-operator one:

    We really set up the office to do this [consumer guide] project and that came out of wanting to do something about gentrification.

The co-operative model can therefore be interpreted and represented as a means used to achieve a greater end for co-operators, as a strategy to repudiate one set of values and to intentionally commit to another set. The means-to-the-end focus, however, is not solely a utilitarian approach, such as views expressed by community economic development theorists about co-operatives (c.f. Zeuli 2001). There are obvious principle and value commitments that characterise co-operatives as enriched contexts which provide for the embodiment of moral purposes for each co-operator.

A common experience for these co-operators is how their time for their social change commitments has become constrained because of co-operative commitments. These constraints are either related to the actual day-to-day running of the co-operative or tensions between the mix of co-operative and business models that exist.

    That’s an interesting aspect of it, I’ve been involved on a voluntary basis and activist basis for the last however many years, and that’s something that I haven’t been able to do purely since the co-operative has opened, because it has taken up all of my time. (Co-operator Two)

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Sometimes, you know, just from the management side of things, there are some contradictions there. I just don’t feel active enough running a business, you know with other people just operating a business, but at the
same time if you remain true to the vision and have foresight then you know that the greater cause for what you are working for – it’s still there it’s just in a bit of a disguise. (Co-operator Two)

We are sometimes running community development projects that governments like the sound of so we can get funding. We also participate in a network of social action; so, sometimes it puts us, as a funded organisation, it does put us in a dicey situation. (Co-operator One)

A number of questions emerge from co-operator two’s statement; such as, who are the other people who just operate businesses that he referred to? Why does he feel that he is ‘just operating a business’, particularly when co-operative practice can offer so much for people? What is the disguise? Co-operator two has shown the important role that backward-looking accounts play in strong moral self-definition, because without his explanation of his previous commitments, one could easily assume that the co-operative is merely a commercial business.

This, however, is clearly not the case because his account ratifies his commitment to environmental issues and this resurfaces as a justification and motivation for future actions throughout the rest of his account. The importance of this backward-looking feature of counterstories is demonstrated by the reflections co-operator one made. Without this recount of the past, the importance of the tension that is created by accountabilities to funding bodies and the co-operator’s ability to participate in a social activist network is also lost. Her account differs from co-operator two’s constraints, whereby she said:

No, I think sometimes for me personally, the problem of being involved in a whole lot of activist stuff has sometimes meant that [the co-operative] has been neglected. (Co-operator One)
To position any of these trading co-operative examples merely in a business light, as it is possible to do, would clearly disregard these moral purposes and social visions expressed by all three co-operators in their accounts. To expand, co-operator one said:

I’d spent the last three years really thinking about community building and seeing all sorts of quite progressive community economic development stuff happening, alternative education and lots of women’s co-operatives working. So it was really good to move somewhere, where community issues were quite a big focus of the local community.

Her actions for the future were clearly shaped by those past experiences of strong collective examples that represented an alternative, just as co-operators two and three drew on their previous voluntary participation to explain their commitments to current and future courses of action. This shows how these three co-operators ratify their past to contribute to future value commitments that become morally binding of them. This is a subtle aspect of moral self-definition that distinguishes between their accounts and co-operator four’s account.

Likewise, the backward-looking accounts of the sort of local community they are all a part of illustrate how geographical communal contexts play an identity-constitutive role in co-operative identity formation that needs to be acknowledged and recognised. As it was stated above, however, the concept of strong moral self-definition is also shaped by whether co-operators express commitments that are either intention-like or substantive. Co-operators across the globe commit to co-operative principles by becoming members of co-operatives. It is, however, the embodiment of these principles that distinguishes strong from weak moral self-definition in co-operative identities.
Understanding these subtle contours of intention-like and substantive commitments, and how these shape co-operators’ activities, contributes to what Nelson (2001) called “strong purposeful moral self-definition” or “inadvertent strong moral self-definition”. Nelson (2001, 78) explained:

Intention-like commitments, which might be thought of as a steadfast determination in the sense that one has settled upon one course of action and is determined to see it through and substantive commitments, which might be thought of as fidelity to a value or a person that endures over a considerable portion of one’s life, [differ]. It’s our substantive commitments – the commitment that one has to political causes, for example, or to moral principles, ideal and even to other persons – that are identity-constituting.

While co-operators one, two, three and four all express backward-looking stories that have contributed to their present courses of action, there are differences in how these commitments are expressed as either intentional or substantive between the four accounts. Co-operator three explained his beginnings:

I met [Roger] who was talking about a few of us wanting to share the way that we understood our faith in light of community. It was more about the people than the [geographical location] at that point.

Faith, then, in this account played an identity-constituting role, just as much as a concern for environmental issues provided co-operator two with motivations and intentions. Both express purposeful strong moral self-definition by their ratification of substantive commitments to moral principles and to others beyond the co-operative. Co-operator three elaborated:

Some of it was motivated by faith through justice [and] some of it would have been motivated by community work theory and practice in terms of working with the marginal.

The reasons provided for his resistance and desire to be a part of a co-operative are obviously different from co-operators one, two and four. Additionally, as co-operator three and one both seek to provide community development
consultancies, it will be interesting to see why one co-operator faces more constraints on their individual and collective agency than the other. Each of the four co-operators’ accounts does share in some form of moral purpose that underpins their actions; they all express commitments to social justice either by links to a social movement, working with marginalised or disadvantaged social groups, or for the provision of affordable housing options. Whether these commitments have manifested as intention-like or substantive is open to discussion across each example. In some ways, the telling will be in whether these commitments provide the co-operators with the needed resistance to oppose infiltration of economic values.

It becomes apparent that for co-operator three being in a co-operative was a form of values-based protest against existing bureaucratic and political forms which were diminishing his sense of being an agent of social change, a counter-identity. As a community development practitioner he expressed clear substantive and purposeful commitments to social justice. It seemed that his commitment to some of these social justice values was compromised by some standard community development practices which lead to the formation of the co-operative.

…the co-operative was established by a group of us who...I...we had a number of motivations. One, we didn’t want to work as community workers for management committees that we thought were highly dysfunctional, and we were tired of the politics. So, the [co-operative] is a form of self-funded community workers.

In this instance, it is possible to see that the co-operative has been established as an act of moral protest against standard community development and management committee arrangements. By taking this stand, co-operator three is expressing substantive commitments to social transformation that he seeks to embody in his
day-to-day practices with others. From co-operator three’s account one is also enabled to see that individual and collective moral self-definition is entwined, that is, there are many moral identities at play in the one co-operative example. The 'I…we’ in his account cannot be distinguished from each other in terms of how the collective provides a place for everyone to embody such substantive commitments. Furthermore, his backward-looking account indicated that the course of action in his example is not related to local community issues so much as it is by faith and a substantive commitment to the moral principles of community development practice.

Having a moral purpose that is grounded in an alternative social vision shows how co-operative activity can provide the opportunity for the embodiment of substantive commitments rather than intention-like ones. Co-operator two has shown that substantive commitment over time to political causes via voluntary roles in the environment movement is identity-constituting both for him individually and for the collective co-operative identity. This is different from the intention-like commitments articulated by co-operator four, which illustrate how one can settle on a steadfast course of action, but not necessarily express substantive commitments over time to particular moral principles. This is indicated also by this co-operative experience being the first one that the co-operator has participated in. When asked what her interests were in joining the co-operative, co-operator four said:

I think just the idea; well, for housing mainly the idea of affordable housing, but also the idea of belonging to a group of people and acquiring new skills. You know, the ethics of it. (Co-operator Four)
Over time this commitment might transform to one that is substantive, as the cooperator continues to maintain fidelity to the values of the co-operative and the ‘ethics of it’, as she referred to it, but as an initial telling of her motivations to join the co-operative the reasons appear intention-like at first. There is a sense that in this account that the means (the co-operative) simply justifies an end (affordable housing); those substantive commitments embodied by the other co-operators do not appear to surface in her account. She is not motivated, as co-operator one, two and three are, by either faith or a particular political or social cause.

Not only are co-operator two and three’s commitments substantive, but they are purposeful commitments too. This latter point plays a vital role in the evaluation of strong moral self-definition, because purposefulness and inadvertency are what distinguishes co-operator one and four’s identity-constitution from co-operators two and three as well. If commitments to co-operative principles are intention-like, then it is probable that a co-operators’ moral self-definition will continue to be strong. Importantly this strength will be inadvertently developed rather than purposefully, however, and remain speculative because there is no way of predicting what will happen in the future.

The physical space and structure of co-operatives may provide people with a place to embody their moral purpose that enables them to, individually and collectively, foster strong purposeful moral self-definition, rather than strong inadvertent moral self-definition. Nelson (2001, 16) explained this distinction as:

Purposeful moral self-definition is where the agent deliberately sets out to define herself in terms of the values, experiences and commitments she takes to be identity-constituting, [whereas] inadvertent strong moral self-
definition [is where] the agent non-purposefully and perhaps even unconsciously makes of herself a particular sort of person.

Because co-operator four’s account appears as though affordable housing is the end sought by the means of her participation in the co-operative, her membership is seen not so much as an intentional act to make of herself a particular sort of person, but rather a case of inadvertent strong moral self-definition. When compared with co-operator two and three’s embodiment of visions of faith through social justice, or an environmental alternative, this purposefulness and its role in strong moral self-definition becomes clearer. Moreover, co-operator two and three ratify their historical commitments, while co-operator four does not give the sense of ratification or repudiation outside of the issue of affordable housing.

The way in which co-operator four ‘just liked the idea and was motivated to join for affordable housing’ is characteristic of how inadvertent strong moral self-definition can develop. The differences of purposefulness and inadvertency rest between the comparative way in which co-operator two and three offer their past experiences as identity-constitutive and contributing to future courses of action, and how co-operator one and four only provide these motivations for joining their respective co-operatives when asked.

It is important to highlight, however, that actions and intentions are often structured according to meanings and values which we might not consciously articulate at the time, but which are open to reflexive monitoring in the ongoing flow of our life. This is why co-operator four’s commitment to the ‘ethics of it’
might make of her a particular person in the future that creates a sense of strong inadvertent moral self-definition.

For co-operator two, the co-operative provides a space where he can continue to contribute to environmental causes. He ‘deliberately defines himself in terms of values, experiences and commitments that are identity-constituting’ (Nelson 2001) and, indeed, morally binding on him and the co-operative. Yet, there is a tension presented in the narrative; purposeful and substantive commitments are inadvertently being shaped by the social realities of being a trading co-operative, being a manager and ‘just operating a business’. Whether the three trading co-operative examples (co-operators one, two and three) can maintain their moral purpose, to be part of an alternative social vision, is yet to be determined. They do, however, attempt to maintain this alternative by being registered as non-profit trading co-operatives.

It is surely the case, however, that because co-operators two and three are characters who express strong purposeful moral self-definition via substantive commitments, it is anticipated that resistance to dominant economic narratives is more likely from these two. The resistance implied from co-operator four and one does not, at this stage, seem as if it will have the strength to counter because of the inadvertent nature of their strong moral self-definition and the intention-like characteristics of commitment and identity-constitution in their accounts. Sometimes they accept parts of economic narratives, not necessarily by choice, and other times they challenge these narratives by their purposes and motivations.
Purposeful moral self-definition, then, originates from the substantive commitments made by co-operators not only to co-operative principles and practices, but also to the belief in these values beyond the co-operative. Co-operator one indicated inadvertent strong moral self-definition, rather than purposeful, even though she expressed commitment to the local area because it had community issues high on its agenda, saying:

I’d been working in an NGO in India for about three years when I first came back to do my Masters of Community Development. I didn’t know [this place] at all and just ended up [here]. I found it to be the perfect place for me to be because I had just spent the last three years thinking about community building and seeing all sorts of progressive stuff happening…it was really good to move somewhere, where community issues were quite a bit focus of the local community. I grew up [somewhere else] so there is a big difference…I didn’t know this [city] at all and just ended up in this [local area]. So I guess that’s me being here personally, not so much the [co-operative], but being here was a really good place to feel like you could get things started.

The inadvertent self-definition is expressed by her statement that, ‘I just ended up here’, but it turned out to be a useful place in terms of her values because ‘community issues were quite a big focus’. Importantly, even though someone’s past is not ‘mined for the particulars that guide current actions…this doesn’t mean that [the person] is not defining [themselves] morally’ (Nelson 2001, 17). They are still self-defining.

Co-operator one is obviously someone who identifies as a counter-identity. She has a commitment to an alternative social vision and the embodiment of co-operative principles to work toward this. She is looking for somewhere to flesh this identity out, but in a sense, co-operator one non-purposefully makes of herself something not entirely intended. There are not really any concrete examples of these commitments being morally binding upon her in terms of the formation or
joining of co-operative endeavours, not in the same ways as co-operator two and three. In this respect, co-operator one and four both participate in somewhat unconscious acts of self-fashioning. Additionally, both co-operator one and four’s accounts reflect the organic nature of co-operative establishment whereby their emphasis on change and fluid transitions can also appear on the surface to reflect inadvertent moral self-definition.

We ummed and aahhed, do we just do this project or do we keep building something that lots of projects can be run from? And so we just ended up developing the two things together and developing an organisational structure. (Co-operator One)

Again, there is a reference in her account to ‘just ending up’ doing things that seemed to indicate an inadvertent decision; however, as discussed above this might in fact be due to the organic way in which many co-operatives develop. She expanded: “we have evolved very organically”, which illustrates how sometimes, inadvertent strong moral self-definition can be confused with weak moral self-definition because the way in which the person recounts their story does not appear to indicate that her moral competency is well developed. Again:

Well, partly, it was a bit of a decision once we finished the guide, you know, are we going to wind up now or are we going to keep going? And we got a couple more projects approved so that was the reason for keeping on going…there was some energy with people expressing that they’d like to be involved, so we thought we’d keep on going. (Co-operator One)

To appreciate that this is, however, a representation of inadvertent strong moral self-definition indicates that while her commitments are not expressed in a substantive manner, there is still an embodiment of her commitment to co-operative principles. She ratifies this commitment by maintaining an alternative social vision based on social justice principles, however, the co-operative’s formative history is not ratified by her account. This is particularly the case when
this is contrasted with the specific purpose of co-operator four’s co-operative --
developing at the time of Expo 88 in response to affordable housing crisis -- or,
co-operator two -- the co-operative developed to do good things environmentally.
For co-operators two and three the co-operative structure was drawn upon as a
measure to ratify some of their substantive rather than intention-like commitments
to their various practices as well. Having tradition, alternative structures and
different ways to make decisions, were all reasons why co-operators two and three
intentionally sought to become members of co-operatives.

This suggests that many co-operatives do provide a site to embody an alternative
social vision and to express one’s strong moral self-definition. Co-operator two:

I just love [the co-operative]. I can’t imagine wanting to work for anyone
or anything else. The co-operative – what it aims to do, what it does, and
the way it does it, makes me feel like I am very much a part of a
community itself.

The important factor highlighted by this statement is the relational nature of co-
operative engagement. The co-operative clearly provides a space for commitment
to broader social and environmental causes, but the ““way it does it makes me feel
like I am very much a part of a community itself””. Therefore, a combination of
moral purpose and substantive commitments seems to cultivate a sense of
communal belonging for him. This signifies a distinctiveness, or moral
particularity, described by this co-operator which is not likely to be found in other
hierarchical type organisational models, ““I just love it. I can’t imagine wanting to
work for anyone or anything else””.

It is likely that the moral purpose which guides one’s actions contributes, then, to
the development of purposeful strong moral self-definition as well. People who
indicate a sense of moral purpose draw on this in subtle and overt ways as measures of ratification of value commitments. This can be understood further by looking at co-operator one’s account where her moral self-definition is influenced by previous co-operative experiences encountered, mostly in Third-World countries, as a community worker. She tells a backward-looking story that brings this experience into the forward-looking story which sees social justice principles as formative of the collective and individual identities in the co-operatives; this makes a social justice ethic morally binding of her and others. Her example also illustrated how moral competency is formed for people in relation to their ability to reflect and evaluate on the past, present and future. So, co-operator two and three show well-developed moral competency because their accounts are reflective and evaluative; however, the difference between co-operator one’s moral competency and co-operator two’s and three’s is again linked to how much moral purpose features within the justifications and evaluations of their actions.

In subtle ways, though, moral purpose is present in both co-operator one’s and four’s accounts even though at a surface level it might not seem that this is the case. For example, co-operator four illustrated an interest in the ‘ethics of it’, while co-operator one affirmed:

We wanted to work on social change issues but also have the structure within the organisation as a change process in itself, a process that was creating a microcosm of a healthy way to function in society I guess.

All four co-operators have identified in their recounts a need for social changes in relation to dominant social systems and not only at this broader societal level, but within their locally-based communities. These commitments demonstrate how
co-operative principles underpin people’s actions in both formal and informal community development contexts.

Co-operator one’s statement above indicates that there is a need to function in a healthy way in society and, so, each co-operator can be said to be a participant in co-operative activities that provide an avenue for some measure of moral protest. Co-operator two’s reflections illustrated how co-operators respond to oppressive policies, in his case those impacting on the environment, and how these issues drove him to be a part of a co-operative story. Co-operator three demonstrated how injustices of dominant institutions which keep people marginalised and disadvantaged, in addition to bureaucratic community organisations, motivate people to come together to work toward an alternative. Finally, co-operator four’s account highlighted how affordable housing needs were not being met and oppressive policies of gentrification saw people come together to form a housing co-operative in a response to these injustices.

Overall, even though there are subtle distinctions between how commitments are embodied and represented, these can all be said to be actions of moral protest which demonstrate purposeful and strong moral self-definition that is underpinned by substantive commitments. Sometimes, this moral purpose and protest is used to ratify past, present and future actions, while at other times it is a measure of repudiating some past action or event that contributes to how the future value commitments are developed. Furthermore, these co-operators have all installed and observed precedents that have become distinctive of them and morally binding in a way that the other two co-operators (five and six) do not.
Weak moral self-definition is now examined to explain how this does not provide as much of the much-needed heft for counterstories to emerge as strong moral self-definition does. At present, the four accounts that have been discussed all show at this level potential to become counterstories; however, aspects of co-operator four’s account also resurface as weak moral-self-definition. Even though her inadvertent actions, described earlier, might result in strong moral self-definition in the future, her account does not always exhibit the kind of purposeful and substantive commitments present in the accounts of co-operators one, two and three. For example, there is not always ratification or repudiation of the past to evaluate a future course of action. This does not suggest that co-operator four is not telling a counterstory, but rather she swings between strong and weak moral self-definition. (In some ways, this can be said to be more reflective of the difficulties that are presented when one tries to categorically evaluate narrative accounts according to pre-established criteria, than being a judgement on her morality, because there are particularities in narrative accounts that do not always fit within the boundaries of strong or weak moral self-definition.)

Weak moral self-definition

In the same way that strong moral self-definition can be said to reflect someone’s moral competency, weak moral self-definition can also allude to moral competency. Weak moral self-definition is found in accounts which intimate moral competency by evidence of backward-looking and forward-looking stories; however, there is no justification or reasons provided to support these claims of
competency. An individual’s history is not ratified and neither is it repudiated to illustrate how this has contributed to a future course of action which, therefore, itself displays little evidence of substantive commitments or purposeful moral self-definition. This means that these are tellers with weak rather than strong moral self-definition.

To illustrate further, in the case of weak moral self-definition, the group or individual is constructed in the telling itself as morally competent, that is, to be trusted. For example, the statement, “I can borrow your car because I have good judgement” (Nelson 2001, 15) is a claim to moral competence, but it does not provide a justification of why this person ought to be trusted that lies outside of the merely persuasive elements embedded in accounts of past performance. Weak moral self-definition was alluded to in chapter two in the example of large-scale dairy co-operatives who say, ‘Trust our co-operative identities because we do have co-operative principles’; yet, scratching below the surface of this revealed a dominant corporate structure and model. The commitments expressed in those examples are intention-like and not substantive ones.

The nature of how inadvertent strong moral self-definition might appear also as weak moral self-definition is highlighted in co-operator four’s recount of a history of past performances:

Occasionally we have get togethers.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

We’ve got 14 dwellings and they’re spread around. We’ve got two duplexes.
Just the nature of meetings and, you know, coming to consensus or agreement about issues, or staying on track. Generally, everybody does work co-operatively. We have working bees and stuff like that.

[The co-operative] is very organic because somebody could leave the co-op this year, and then at our next induction we could have new members and they would never have known the founding members. Like, I don’t know any of the founding members.

Her account is merely recounting a history of past performances which does not illustrate commitments to values that become morally binding for either her or the other co-operators. She inadvertently makes of herself something that may not have been entirely intended. Co-operator four does show some level of moral competency, however, and this saves her story from becoming a nonmoral account, as typified by this example:

I think I just prefer to be in a co-operative rather than government housing. It’s cheaper for a start, and I like to think that I have some control over what is happening - that I am part of an organism that is about my housing as well.

A precedent is set by co-operator four to commit to co-operative housing over government housing, to participate in the decision-making of the co-operative in terms of having control and to be a part of an organism that is about her housing. This is the beginning point where moral competency is being formulated in her account, but because there is no great expression of ratification or repudiation of the backward-looking story that contributed to this future course of action, the account appears as if it is weak in moral self-definition. She does not sanction or renounce past actions that have contributed to this future pathway.
Co-operatives with strong moral purpose seem to be equipped to resist master narratives and dominant economic stories because their opposition is driven by values and substantive commitments to principles to work toward an alternative social vision. These values and principles, however, are expressed in the context of having had an historical commitment that carries through into these present courses of action. In other organisational structures the ability to act and express one’s commitments and values can be compromised by the hold that master and dominant economic narratives have on an organisation’s culture.

Co-operator five shares intention-like commitments to co-operative principles whereby he inadvertently makes of himself something not entirely intended in his account. He stated:

I don’t have extensive knowledge of co-operatives. I really came into this concept [social enterprise] as a social entrepreneur so too speak, so I am quite familiar with all those buzz words. But, from my limited understanding, I think they are very similar, [social enterprises and co-operatives] are very much the same and that possibly social enterprise may be a business, a politically correct terms from a business point of view, sometimes explaining a co-operative.

Co-operator five unintentionally contributes to the capture of co-operative identity within a master narrative of enterprise culture here, while acknowledging that he has not had extensive experience with co-operatives. He also positions co-operative practice as a buzz-word, popular in community circles, however, better understood as a business from his perspective. This is confirmed in his backward-looking account of what he believed were co-operative examples in Africa:

When you went through the market you saw a couple of the stalls doing that, they were saying, you know, that all the money from this goes to the local school and this [activity] was in response to a need that they [had]. They needed funds for the local school but that was like a little co-operative as well as those who were participating got paid. They weren’t
getting exploited as much as they were in the other [industries and businesses], they were getting a minimum wage for it so their needs were getting met in terms of employment. There was an opportunity for people in the villages to take a leadership role.

Co-operator five has had extensive informal experiences with co-operatives, as researcher of co-operative and social enterprise models, and practitioner within a charitable organisation that now identifies itself as a social enterprise. In the case of the organisation of which he is a part, it represents a counterstory to the dominant trend that other community organisations are taking, of movement to companies limited by guarantee.

His personal co-operative account, however, simply does not illustrate a backward-looking account that contributes to a future course of action to commit to co-operative principles. The above statement is a recounting of a past performance of other people working co-operatively, but does not include him in it. This distinction is made clearer, again, when compared with co-operator three’s recount of her experiences of co-operatives in India.

Her account has strength, in terms of substantive commitments to co-operative principles, which cannot be said to be evident in co-operator five’s account. Moreover, his example is presented as local communities turning to self-help measures to meet their own needs within the local school, even though his representation of this is that these community examples have emerged in response to the exploitation of the tourist industry in Africa. There is little acknowledgement of the transformative capacity of co-operative endeavours in this context.
He did, however, indicate an awareness of master narratives like individualism but was not as concerned with dominant economic stories, seeing co-operatives themselves as business activities too. Co-operator five said:

> From my experience [community] is very fragmented. I call it the ‘I’ mentality or it’s the ‘me’ mentality – it’s all about me rather than the community. And that was the difference again when I was in Africa, it’s all about talking to people, it’s all about the village and the community and us. They use the word ‘us’ all the time, whereas here people are, like, What’s in it for me?

This backward-looking story sets a future course of action that inadvertently constructs and self-defines how communities within which this co-operator works in future will be viewed. Underpinning the account is a sense that a dominant individualistic narrative that promotes the I or me mentality is eroding social visions.

> Whereas if we get to the communities where people are in high need, they do need each other more because of financial or social issues, we realise that just giving money from government isn’t going to solve it, but what’s going to solve it? It’s working co-operatively that’s the only way to solve it. (Co-operator Five)

Co-operator five, to re-define dominant narratives of competition and individualism, intentionally deploys here ‘working co-operatively’. But overall, he does not ever present a vision of what working co-operatively is. Unlike co-operator two’s intentional redefinitions of co-operatives as meaningful sites of work, or, co-operator three’s explicit account that a co-operative model enabled the group to work with the disadvantaged or marginalised, co-operator five sees co-operative practice in a more generalised sense. It is possible to suggest that his view reflects those dominant narratives which position co-operatives as employment generation activities and indeed, as third-world development strategies of self-help.
Unfortunately, neither co-operator four or five’s accounts show capacity to free moral agency, or to repair diminished counter-identities, in ways that co-operators one, two and three show. While re-definition does occur, as Walker (1998, 196) contended ‘aspects of free agency are fundamentally relational; their successful exercise requires reception and appropriate recognition’. Without someone or some dominant group to take up the stories that are told, they remain counter narratives characterised by being against master narratives but not necessarily for the embodiment of an alternative social vision that transforms injustices. There is a need for those emotional relationships with others, as Bauman (1995) referred to them.

The starting point of narrative repair can be said to begin, then, in self-understanding, strong purposeful moral self-definition, expressed substantive commitments and, importantly, a moral purpose around which one’s identity is shaped. When moral purpose is not present, co-operators fall into a mere recounting of the history of their past performances that reflects weak moral self-definition rather than strong moral self-definition.

Co-operator five, for example, reinforced his intention-like commitments to co-operative principles when he said:

Really, to me, when people talk about social capital I just make general assumptions about developing resources to resolve their own concerns, issues and needs. That’s how vague [social capital] is for me.

While he acknowledged that definitional issues abound in social capital theory, co-operator five does not reject social capital outright, and see it as a tool of a
master narrative that captures co-operative principles and practices. Yet, he does contend that:

In terms of viewing [social capital] as the latest trend, you have to be careful not to generalise it, because to me it’s just one tool, its one thing that can happen within a community. We can’t force it on community because there may not be the individuals within community, there may not be the capacity in the community, and they may not be ready for it.

His account echoes some of the dominant accounts of social capital that were discussed in chapter four. The notion that social capital is a program that is applied to communities, the idea that social requires certain types of individuals and, indeed, the final statement that a community may not be ready for social capital implementation, all suggest a top-down focus to community development.

It is a problem that occurs when governments capture social activities and try to develop them into homogenous programs for resolution of community issues. This was illustrated above with the employment focus on co-operatives, but also, in co-operator four’s experience, the difficulties of their co-operative not being entirely autonomous from government has meant:

Nothing works to our benefit with being a co-operative working with government. I guess because they don’t have as much control over us as they would like to have. There’s a new Housing Act now and there’s lots of grey areas in it, it was meant to iron out the grey areas but there’s actually a lot of grey areas. They have been pressuring co-ops to sign over their housing stock, to still be managed by the co-op, but government housing would have control over what happens in the co-operative.

We are still answerable to them we have to send stuff to them every year. But we still maintain equity. We didn’t sign over our properties we still maintain equity in our properties.

Co-operator four’s account turns from a mild discussion about the activities of the co-operative to a piece that becomes scattered with imagery of opposition and mistrust; issues of control emerge. Suddenly, ‘them’ and ‘us’ become terms used
to self-define and define others. The government is other, seen as separate, far away from the realities of co-operative experience, perpetuating misrecognition and misperceptions. The account becomes reflective of earlier stories of captivation those strategies and stories from part two which seek to capture co-operatives within the confines of government institutions.

For co-operator four, the co-operative becomes a protective enclave that shelters in more than one meaning of the word.

Yes they don’t understand co-operatives, they don’t want to. It’s a bit threatening. As far as the housing department would see, there’s more potential for things to go horribly wrong because we do it our own way, not necessarily doing it the way they say we are supposed to.

Here, it is possible to see how moral self-definition is shaded. The comparison between her account and co-operator five’s account suggested that his gaze tended to blur the expression of his substantive commitments. Co-operator five appeared to express only intention-like commitments to co-operative principles, there were no values and moral principles discussed beyond the economic and employment benefits of social enterprise. When these two accounts are placed together, co-operator four’s account has more strength of self-definition, which suggests that it can be considered as a counterstory of sorts. Co-operator five, while having moments of rejection and contestation in his account, does not share in a moral purpose that works toward social transformation, and so his account is not sturdy enough to become a counterstory. The final co-operator account for consideration, co-operator six, cannot be a counterstory either, because it suggests nonmoral self-definition.
Nonmoral self-definition

Some narratives illustrate nonmoral self-definition when a person or a group does not contest, resist or redefine an oppressive narrative; they just say they are one thing (Nelson 2001). The category of nonmoral self-definition is still important in the context of counterstories because ‘groups too can tell self-defining counterstories that, on their face, say nothing about their moral character but instead identify them in nonmoral terms’ (Nelson 2001, 19); that is, the group’s moral character is still defined by the nonmoral nature of self-definition. In nonmoral self-definition the tellers merely recount a history of past performance and observe their position, possibly even repeating elements of master narratives.

Norco’s (2005) corporate mission and purpose statement discussed above comes to mind here. Nelson (2001, 15), for example, suggested that:

A corporation tells such a story of nonmoral self-definition when it advertises itself as socially and environmentally responsible, and a teenager does the same when she recounts instances of good judgement to persuade her parents that she can be trusted with the car keys.

For example, co-operatives that have moved closer to reflecting corporate models say, ‘Trust us we still have co-operative principles’, but there is no purposeful moral self-definition at play or demonstration of a moral track record to show how these substantive commitments evolved.

If co-operator four’s and five’s accounts remain somewhat weak in terms of moral self-definition, co-operator six’s account is outright nonmoral -- there is no opportunity for narrative repair, nothing is re-defined, things just are how they are according to dominant narratives. This identity, again, is certainly not counter,
but rather seems to embody and emulate the dominant institution from within which it speaks. Where co-operator five demonstrates some resistance and leanings toward a counter narrative, particularly in his accounts of the relationship between co-operatives and social enterprises with community development, co-operator six has already assimilated co-operatives as a function that serve his master narrative viewpoints. Co-operatives are mechanisms for providing employment to disadvantaged others and resolving some of the problems with ‘the people’ in the area.

Now the main issue when it comes [to this] area is presentation – now that’s a consequence of low socio-economic area...attitude is a hard one because most of these guys attempts to get employment...no attitude is a different one because they haven’t yet developed their attitude that’s necessary to get employment.

Here, master narratives are drawn upon and reinforced in co-operator six’s account. This is the kind of account that could be used by a government body, for example Centrelink, to establish or re-establish how people can qualify or be disqualified for assistance. Therefore, if an individual does not reflect or mirror these necessary attitudes they may not be qualified as eligible for assistance, which will restrict and limit their moral agency.

Moral agency is not only about having the necessary material resources to participate in life, but it is also being able to be free to have the opportunity to flourish as a human and live an ethical life. Its relational nature means that there is a pre-requisite demand for people to see each other’s faces as humans. Somewhere out there in the master narrative reflected in co-operator six’s story, is an attitude that we must all develop if we are to be employed. Lurking in the background of the account is a dominant government model waiting, ready to
captivate the audiences with ‘glossy brochures of community renewal schemes and employment plans’ (Co-operator Six). It sounds like the sort of program that is applied in a top-down fashion for unemployed people to comply with the normative codes and regulations established by institutions. It seems to be a model that requires caution in its perpetuation of master narrative depictions and could easily be the type of model that might be used to restore order in times of chaos characteristic of Cooper’s (1997) moral community.

Further demonstration of this nonmoral self-definition is found in how the group is defined as one thing or another.

Now I don’t mean to be derogatory, but the problem is that these people haven’t been able to gain access to those institutions so they, in this case, they need a translator, a boundary rider, whatever you want to call them, to assist – you have to have that specialist advice in that area.

This is an unemployed group who become ‘them’. ‘These people’ do not seem to know any better – they need a translator or boundary rider to assist – it really does not matter what the assistance is called for co-operator six, ‘these people’ just need some expert advice – the piece almost shouts this out. There is absolutely nothing counter in co-operator six’s account, and the way that he continued to view co-operatives within a community enterprise model reinforced this.

Co-operator six’s (or should this be co-optor six’s) story begins to show the interlocking and interweaving of master narratives described in part two. At one point, the narrative starts to indicate a semblance of a background resistive-identity as co-operator six turns to discuss:

My idea of social capital is that people have skills and, they may not necessarily be recognised in a formal context, but anyone that can bring up
a family send kids to school and survive on unemployment benefits, to me, has some skill.

Co-operator five and six here seem to indicate a similar position on social capital, that it might be about resources and skills not recognised in a formal context. Co-operator six’s statement does afford some level of moral [re]cognition to groups that have been perceived as marginalised and incapable of looking after themselves by dominant economic narratives by virtue of the fact that they are unemployed. To co-operator six, to survive on unemployment benefits shows skills of survival. But that’s just it. The dominant group’s perception and, hence, negative identity representation becomes a story about the survival of poor unemployed people.

The account continued:

I couldn’t do it [be unemployed] I wouldn’t know what do to I’d be going to these guys and asking them and saying how do you do this? So I mean, they’ve got a great deal of skill already…not only that they have free time on their hands. Now some of them spend their time doing things like drinking and going to the Pokies, but others actually have, they develop hobbies.

At the junction of possible contestation, the master narrative tentacles re-surface and re-affirm their grip. Unemployment is presented as something that you ‘do’-- a ‘lifestyle’ almost-- rather than an experience of vulnerability and frustration, based on political and social contingencies. But here a dialogical encounter unfolds; co-operator six suddenly recognises the face of the Other.

The statement that he ‘would not know what to do if unemployed’ reveals co-operator six’s own fears and vulnerability. Here there is an opening -- albeit a glimpse -- to recognise the feelings of uncertainty, loss and contingency of
unemployment. This, perhaps, points to a better starting point for all unemployment programs -- shared understandings of vulnerability. A question about how the program might look from this perspective is invoked -- of course, this is not taken up and the rest of the account continues onward in a nonmoral self-definition that cannot be a counterstory. The elements of master narrative representations resurface in the next chapter to illustrate further those master narratives that co-operative counterstories like one, two, three and possibly four are up against. For the moment some preliminary conclusions have emerged to consider in chapter 6 -- resistance that facilitates narrative repair.

Conclusions

This chapter has used some excerpts from the six co-operator stories to illustrate how strong and weak moral self-definition can be normatively understood. The analysis has allowed for the beginnings of a shared ‘moral’ understanding of co-operative identities to evolve and showed that one must appreciate that moral self-definition contains shades of grey that are shaped by individual interpretations. It was noted co-operators who demonstrated substantive and purposeful commitments to co-operative principles exhibited strong moral self-definition. These co-operators could be seen to embody co-operative principles in practice and held a vision of a social alternative. Those with weak moral self-definition expressed understandings of co-operative principles but there was not a substantial commitment to these.
Co-operative principles enable co-operators one, two and three to embody their purposeful commitments to social change and social justice even if, in the case of co-operator one, her strong moral self-definition is inadvertent. Co-operator four also finds that her membership to the co-operative provides a measure of living an ethical life. Even though there are shades of weak moral self-definition presented in her account it is still possible that, in the parts where inadvertent strong moral self-definition did surface, a counterstory might emerge. Co-operative principles still offer the possibility for strong moral self-definition to evolve for co-operator five and six; it is just that the individuals have not taken them up in this instance.

From this analysis, it seems that co-operators five and six have not taken co-operative principles up because they do not have a commitment to a moral purpose beyond the co-operative examples they discuss. These two co-operators do not embody a desire for an alternative social vision, in the same way that co-operators one, two and three do. It is highly unlikely that co-operators five and six’s accounts will become counterstories because narrative repair of diminished identities has not occurred, to this point, which means that moral agency will not be freed by their stories.

The relational nature of co-operative practices provides a site in which co-operators can share with others similar values and commitments. This preliminary evaluation of the accounts has demonstrated that co-operative examples are indeed diverse and shaped by different value commitments over time. It is not possible that the term social capital can adequately account for these diversities and distinctions, or the role that moral purpose plays in the
development of substantive and purposeful commitments. All six co-operator stories provide the basis from which to now consider their relative analytic strengths as counterstories that resist dominant economic stories and master narratives.
NARRATIVE CONTESTATIONS: CO-OPERATORS’ [RESI]-STANCES

If a desirable ideal for the narrative composition of co-operative counter-identities could be fashioned, it would be based on accounts that can show strong purposeful moral self-definition and substantive ethical commitments, as demonstrated above by co-operator two’s and three’s accounts. Moral self-definition and substantive ethical commitments are the pivotal points which give counter-identities strength to resist diminished identity representations and the constrictions that are placed on moral agency by master narratives and dominant narratives of economic neo-liberalism. To become full-blown counterstories, however, accounts also require particular types of opposition to create counterstories with enough ‘action, strong explanatory force and heft’ to conduct narrative repair and free moral agency (Nelson 2001, 151).

Although, by analytical necessity, this study deals with moral self-definition and resistance as almost separate categories in respective chapters, the two concepts are interrelated in such a way that one appears to lead to the other and then turns back to the other again. For example, finding moral self-definition in the six narratives meant looking for possible resistance to master narratives from co-operators by looking for hints of contestation to dominant economic and social capital stories as a guide. To be able to demonstrate such resistance meant that the co-operators needed to show strong or weak moral-self definition too.
So, moral self-definition and resistance are interrelated, not separate, concepts. Each of the co-operators’ accounts have now been evaluated for strong, weak or nonmoral self-definition. Co-operators one, two and three definitely demonstrate strong resistance to dominant economic narratives. While co-operator four’s resistance may not have the same force as these three examples, there is still opposition on her part, but it is with respect to different parts of master narratives than the other five co-operators. Co-operators five and six with weak moral self-definition and nonmoral self-definition, however, are not likely to resist in the manner that is required for a counterstory to form.

There are no ‘actual’ fixed locations of resistance with respect to master narratives outside of the desire not to be complicit with the representations on offer or the oppressive system which supports such representations (Nelson 2001). Therefore, resistance loci will vary according to the different master narratives contested and according to differences of identities. Importantly, counterstories need one of two sorts of resistance, either maximum contestation or patchwork repudiation to succeed in the dislodgement and ultimate transformation of master narratives (Nelson 2001). A third form of minimal resistance via refusal is also possible for counterstories, but this does not extricate the group from oppressive identifications of master narratives (Nelson 2001). Table 7 details the distinctions between these three forms of resistance. This chapter now considers each of the co-operator stories for their loci of resistance to neo-liberal master narrative themes and fragments of competition, consultancy and enterprise trends.
Loci of Resistance - taking a stand, contested spaces of neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism has been said to construct narratives about the kinds of identities it requires for it to sustain its powerful grip personally, politically and systemically. At a personal level, neo-liberalism supports identities that share characteristics of self-interest, self-sufficiency, autonomy and independence (Porter 1991). Politically and systemically, neo-liberalism fosters competition, free-market capitalism, privatised public services, deregulated markets and efficiency. These traits are considered antithetical to those values expressed by counter-identities in community development and co-operative practices. To this point, co-operative characteristics have been said to include cooperation, interrelatedness, concern for community and interdependency. The previous chapter’s analysis found, however, that these co-operative traits are in some cases accompanied by a strong moral purpose that underpins past and future justifications for actions.

One of the biggest challenges that some co-operatives and community development sectors face has been the impact of dominant economic narratives upon co-operative principles. This has subsumed many of the alternative sets of values once embodied in these sectors and, hence, it has restricted individual and collective moral agency to work toward social alternatives. Some of these dominant narratives, as part I and II argued, have been assisted in their circulation because they provide bulwarks for neo-liberalism to maintain its power. Dominant narratives like social capital, for example, have assisted to subsume many of the alternative social visions that some co-operative and community development practices once offered. Resistance to these dominant economic
narratives and new forms of socio-political arrangements are necessary if co-
operators are to maintain their ability to embody the intrinsic morality of co-
operative principles and its vision of a social alternative. Moreover, this
opposition is required to free co-operators’ constricted moral agency from the
clutches of neo-liberalism. To evaluate whether the accounts can achieve the
needed opposition and hence become counterstories, means determining whether
the accounts illustrate one or another of the three types of resistance outlined in
Table 7. The following subsections evaluate the co-operator accounts for further
examples of the oppositional stances they have taken to master and dominant
economic narratives.
### TABLE 7

**THREE OPPOSITIONAL FORMS OF RESISTANCE IN COUNTERSTORIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Resistance</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>REFUSAL OF MASTER NARRATIVE</strong> (Minimal Resistance)</td>
<td>Denial that the master narrative applies to the self or group. Tend to one’s own counterstory. Counterstories circulate within the group but are not known outside of the group. Expectations of the master narrative are familiar to the group, but they refuse to accept the master narrative’s depiction of them. Refusal does not change the dominant group’s perception; it shifts how individuals within the group understand who they are so self-understanding is changed but nothing political or systemic is shifted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REPUDIATION OF MASTER NARRATIVE</strong> (Patchwork Resistance)</td>
<td>Use of the self-understanding that arises from a counterstory to oppose others who are applying the master narrative to them. Opposition is piecemeal – ‘bucking the narratives in certain situations but not in others’ (Nelson 2001, 171) but both the group and the dominant group are incorporated in re-definition and re-identification. The attempt is to limit damage from both a first and third person view, not merely from a first person view as is the case with refusal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONTESTATION OF MASTER NARRATIVE</strong> (Full or Maximum Resistance)</td>
<td>Opposition to the master narrative with a counterstory. This opposition is public, political and systemically. It says, “we don’t buy that story. It oppresses us. Here’s who we are”. This is completely counter to the master narrative in question and it is told in a public context that enables dominant groups to take up the new representations on offer. By taking these representations up narrative repair of diminished identities occurs. The telling and adoption of these new representations by dominant groups then re-identifies the subgroup and individuals in question which serves to transform political and systemic oppression. This transformation and redefinition of a group or individual as morally recognisable by dominant groups, frees previously restricted moral agency.</td>
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Social and economic capture of co-operative principles has seen government agencies and large-scale development bodies develop top-down models for social capital generation, adopt worker co-operative models for employment generation and formulate enterprise responses to encourage community economic development. Co-operator five’s and six’s accounts showed evidence of this in their discussions of social capital and community enterprises. The trend is a worrying one because the economic and political reality of free-market arrangements is underpinned by an internal logic of economic growth based on competition. The outcomes of these arrangements can be said to result in competitive individuals, competitive communities and competitive nations.

The ability to actually embody co-operative principles and counter competitive dominance to achieve social change has, therefore, been restricted by the ascendancy of neo-liberalism and its economic rationalist policies. With this increased competition between agencies, organisations and groups that once would have adopted pathways of collaboration has been on the rise. In a sense, the partnership agenda has fostered further competition between agencies, just on a larger, some might even say, oligarchic scale. As co-operator three said:

We articulate an ethos of cooperation and collaboration, and we are competing against each other. I mean, we still do that as a co-operative sometimes with our friends. I mean it’s a really horrible reality…So we were being set up to compete with our friends, our colleagues in the City, and we decided to subvert that. There’s nothing to stop that Council from going and finding other people to do the job, but yes [the co-operative] it’s a part of a moral protest. Against the [status quo, the dominant and competitive] way.
Here co-operator three highlighted how a co-operative model does not mean that the group is autonomous from the broader political-economic system and that competition can be avoided. He recounted, however, that the co-operative does provide the group with some measure of resistance to competitive dominance. As he said in response to whether the co-operative was a form of moral protest:

“Yes, the co-operative … It’s against the way”.

Co-operator three elaborated:

We are also aware that everything was geared toward competitive tendering and we were, like, in light of this competitive tendering how do we imagine another way of doing this? And we still don’t know. There’s no answer to that social context and economic and policy context, but a co-operative challenges some of that, and we’ve had some great wins. We’ve had the Council fax us and invite us to tender, and they said we’d be competing with two other groups. We found out who those two groups are and invited them to collaborate with us and put in a joint tender!

With their knowledge of who other competitors might be, the co-operative members intentionally sought and formed partnerships with these groups to submit one tender rather than compete against each other. In spite of how government agencies find partnership to be a popular term and strategy for community engagement, for community development organisations it might also be used as a resistive strategy of contestation against competition. This is difficult, however, when one takes into consideration the variety of ways in which the terms cooperation and partnership are co-opted by government agendas. Co-operator six:

They are all sprouting co-operative partnerships, but they don’t really understand what co-operative partnership is or what they want out of a co-operative partnership. It works on a couple of different levels. You have, from a government level, where they would like to see more than one funding body applied to for a project. There’s another level where [government] want to see co-operative partnerships developed by the service providers…then there’s the third level of co-operative partnership were it happens on a very basic level in communities where they don’t even realise that it’s happening.
Here, co-operator six indicated an awareness that broader government interests might be at play in the emphasis on co-operative partnerships. In a sense, partnership is almost used by government as a value-adding strategy to ensure that funding applications are not solely from one organisation but sometimes five partnered bodies. His account confirmed that, in the current political-economic climate, projects must be bigger and better and incorporate interagency and inter-sectorial relationships for organisations to even be considered in the running for funding. In this respect, partnership is not a co-operative choice per se it is a necessary survival tool in the political-economic climate.

Even though co-operator six hinted at some tensions that co-operative partnership as a term creates, particularly in terms of how government or communities understand co-operative partnership, his overview of co-operative partnership is merely recounted as fact rather than an expression of any kind of resistance. He also demonstrated his own lack of appreciation of the nature of co-operative engagement with his reference to ‘basic level[s] of co-operative partnerships in communities where they don’t even realise that it’s happening’. Indeed, one can see cooperation in light of people within communities collaborating, working together and sharing values and positions, however, co-operative partnerships would appear to have much more intentionality underpinning them than co-operator six gave them credit for.

Intentionality is an important aspect of co-operative engagement and, indeed, this is why co-operators seem to provide a particular counterstory to neo-liberalism because as Nelson (2001) outlined, counterstories are purposive. This could be
seen in co-operator three’s [resi]-stance, where he frees his individual and collective agency to co-operate rather than compete in the competitive tendering process. The contestation of this process contributes to its transformation and shows the beginning of a counterstory that is conducting narrative repair.

In the case of co-operator three, if dominant groups can afford moral recognition to co-operators and community development groups as those agents who embody co-operative principles and co-operativism, instead of being organisations in competition, then narrative repair is occurring. In particular, because those dominant Council groups cannot ignore how the strategic partnerships are formed to counter this competitive tendering process, they are demanded in a sense to re-consider how co-operative activity is identified. This act of opposition contributes to political and systemic transformation of what are considered to be unjust and inequitable structures that have resulted from the competitive tendering model, albeit in subtle ways.

Nelson (2001, 175) suggested that ‘for oppressive master narratives to be transformed, members of counterstory communities must intentionally avail themselves of dominant standards to bring about change’. Co-operator three most certainly is availing himself and the co-operative of a dominant standard. Co-operator six cannot be said to have availed himself of dominant standards and expectations in the same way.

In addition to this, dominant groups will need to be prepared to give something up, to lose their hold on some belief or resources, for diminished moral agency to
be freed. Compared with co-operator six’s perspective, whereby the description of co-operative partnership is uncritical and largely uninformed in terms of co-operative principles and philosophy, co-operator three intends that his moral agency (individual and collective) can be freed to embody an alternative social vision. Further to this, not only is competitive tendering contested but the principle of social transformation is embodied in this action.

In this way, the contestation has again contributed to some narrative repair of the co-operative story, and it has enabled those co-operators’ individual and collective agency to be freed to embody alternative principles and an alternative social vision. Co-operators desire an alternative to the dominant competitive models.

I mean one of the tragedies about the way that the community sector is funded is that agencies are pitted against each other. So the agencies fight with each other in inter-sectorial conflicts. Community workers are embroiled in that [conflict] because they are advocating for their community… It’s very difficult, but despite that reality it’s absolutely [necessary to resist]. Community workers, they have a great responsibility to try and subvert that stuff – our values are antithetical to that.

Here, co-operator three’s account reflected contestation in a manner that suggested, ‘we don’t buy that story. It oppresses us. Here’s who we are’ (Nelson 2001, 172). He stated explicitly that co-operative principles are antithetical to competition as does co-operator one.

I think that since we’ve had the Howard Government in [power] there has definitely been a real return to the co-operative movement. [The movement] has become stronger due to having a more right-wing government in power because it makes people think that they have to do things for themselves. We can’t rely on government and [co-operativism] actually creates a much stronger foundation of grassroots democracy.

Co-operator one has alluded to how competition is a dominant characteristic of right-wing models of economic liberalism, but additionally that individualism and
self-sufficiency are themes that appear in tandem with this norm. She implied by this reference that a stronger foundation for grassroots democracy is needed to counter the right-wing government trends and that co-operatives possibly offer this social alternative.

Her statement reinforced the fact that government reduction of financial and social supports to communities and individuals has, in fact, seen people turn to many co-operative models to free their restricted moral agency within the dominant system. Here, even though she does not make a direct reference to social capital, there is contestation that people co-operate to ensure the effective functioning of democracy. If dominant groups take up this sort of position and statement in the future, then, narrative repair of how co-operative principles have been socially and economically captured can be achieved. Dominant relationships can be re-shaped around co-operative principles rather than competitive ones.

This is a difficult challenge, however, because master narratives provide groups with power and standing in society. Co-operator six said:

Yes you are right, [co-operative partnership] is a word that’s used in government, and they want to develop it. But I think in a lot of cases [government] don’t know how to do it. I think that there are also some people who are very good at doing it, but I find in lots of cases you have to sell a particular idea so that the government department develops ownership. And that’s when you get the true co-operative partnership happening when the government owns it, and that’s a sell! (Emphasis mine)

Co-operator six’s response, in true master narrative fashion, falls hook, line and sinker into the business storyline, co-operative partnership is an idea to sell to government for them to own. Co-operator six explains the insidious way in which
government is sold programs merely to seek endorsement:

We were realising that it was going to be a document that other people were going to use to justify programs. We were able to put a lot of work into the presentation of the document; as you saw yourself, it is a glossy. We did that on purpose, but we didn’t do many of them. We wanted to ensure that we had the support of Government, which is really an unusual approach for them. [The community] were a bit concerned about it, but the whole concept was to get government endorsement.

Co-operator six’s account remains a good example of the sorts of tactics used by master narratives to regain control, ‘the community were a bit concerned,’ but because the means justified the end of getting government endorsement, it does not seem that it was necessary to take into consideration these community concerns. Here, co-operator six inadvertently makes of himself perhaps something he did not quite intend, because his actions of seeking government endorsement (and the implication in his account that this was an innovative approach) will make of him something in the future.

What becomes clear is that a strong and consistent stance of opposition is needed to conduct narrative repair that can free moral agency. It must be acknowledged that because counterstories are said to resist some parts of master narratives in different ways, resistance might differ according to the fragment or theme being opposed. It is, therefore, possible to suggest that any one account might reflect all three forms of resistance at different times dependent on what is being opposed.

It is, however, only in the instances where contestation and repudiation occur that narrative repair can happen. Additionally, as it was noted above, co-operator four’s contestation and repudiation is different again to the other co-operator examples because her housing co-operative faces different master narratives that
oppress.

How stances of resistance -- [resi]-stances -- can shift within the one narrative account is illustrated by co-operator one’s opposition to the dominant competitive trend in applying for funding; opposition which turned out to be more typical of what Nelson (2001) called repudiation. Nelson (2001, 171) proposed that repudiation tends to limit the damage to first and third person views of co-operatives, rather than repair. The sort of refutation that happens has the intended purpose of re-identifying an individual’s or collective’s identity; however, it is only to the point where that individual’s or group’s boundaries are set. In short, the sort of resistance is one that, ‘buck[s] the narratives in certain situations but not in others; opposition is piecemeal (Nelson 2001, 171). This means is that some parts of a master narrative are contested, while others are left intact.

When co-operator one, for example, discussed grants funding she agreed that, ‘Yes applying for grants isn’t the best way to go about things’, but later in her account she continued to recount how grants have been applied for and how the co-operative is dependent on these. She refutes competition in some parts, but leaves it intact in others. Shifting [resi]-stances happen also in co-operator two’s account:

> We have to operate like a commercial business; so, we do have to make profit. But, you know, that is a means to a greater end for us. [We are part of] a system, in order for us to be viable and continue to do what we do, we have to be a part of that system. But we do try to espouse an ethic of an alternative norm.

Again, competition was refuted in other parts of co-operator two’s account; yet, in this part the dominant system is left intact. The sense is one of resignation to this
state of affairs. Still, co-operator two demonstrated repudiation of the idea that the group is to be defined solely as a for-profit business. The co-operative does try to espouse ‘an ethic of an alternative norm,’ he claimed and the co-operative by its wider community involvement shares this beyond the group itself.

One way that the co-operative counters the dominant system is with respect to its formation of values and principles. Another example from co-operator two was to have involvement from community members.

This is a token example, but at our birthday parties we have a competition (for want of a better term!) where generally just community members come up with our new slogan for the co-operative for that year. That [slogan] gets printed on a t-shirt. It’s a token [gesture] but it’s [still] meaningful interaction from the general public and they are contributing to a part of our general marketing strategy. I think that, that is a kind of community empowering tool. (emphasis mine)

Again, co-operator two repudiates some parts of the competition narrative, demonstrated in his awareness by usage of the term competition, but other parts, in terms of having a marketing strategy that can shore up community involvement in the co-operative. He tends to leave aspects of the dominant business model approach in place. Additionally, he adopted what could be seen in community development literature as a traditional view of community empowerment, whereby participation is seen as a method by which communities become empowered. How this empowerment occurs by these activities is not really considered.

In spite of the tension posed by co-operative values and having to run a trading style co-operative, co-operator two has illustrated how the co-operative maintains its commitment to the co-operative principle of education, training and awareness
raising. Additionally, the co-operative is seen to serve a greater end than merely generating profit by these examples and this illustrated his refusal to be individually or collectively positioned within a dominant economic story. He also highlighted how the co-operative holds workshops for community members which, again, served to illustrate how repudiation can still contribute to social transformation of structures even if in a piecemeal kind of way.

The tensions between the co-operative and business model impact heavily on co-operators three and one as well. In fact, co-operator four also pointed to the additional tension of being linked to a government authority for reporting purposes, but these are concerns to do with authority and power, rather than the issues of competition and efficiency that business models create. Co-operator three suggested that their co-operative could also be understood as a small business collective, but, again, it too continued to be distinguishable from dominant business models because of the co-operative’s substantive commitments to the co-operative tradition (Co-operator Three). For both co-operators two and three, making a profit serves an end greater than monetary rewards and so, in this respect, the co-operators reject some parts of neo-liberal master narratives and, again, leave other parts intact.

The minimal focus on profit can be established as an identity-constituting feature of these co-operatives. The representation of this story beyond the co-operative serves to sway dominant groups’ understandings of co-operatives as business entities and it re-shapes group relationships. Co-operator two reminded us:
Recycling is our core activity. It also needs to be kind of as community accessible as possible, hence the semi-grassroots nature of the business, even if it is a commercial business.

This is why repudiation and contestation are required to conduct narrative repair, if accounts only demonstrate refusal, as co-operator two’s statement indicated, the counterstories are not known outside of the group (Nelson 2001, 170). In this way, the infiltrated consciousness of the group itself can be repaired, but nothing changes outside of the group, and so narrative repair does not occur and his moral agency to be the desired semi-grassroots identity is not realised.

Again, refusal is presented in co-operator five’s account whereby he unintentionally rejects the trend of individualism brought on by competition, and the separate, isolated view of communities where people feel, as co-operator one alluded to, ‘that they have to do things for themselves.’

You talk to young mums who live in urban developments and they say that they haven’t spoken to anyone outside of the house for two weeks. That’s very sad when you hear that. It’s a long time not to be involved in the community. Or, you have a neighbour who has been dead for a week in their house and nobody knows it. It’s a bit of a worry. I mean I have to admit that I am a little bit guilty of it myself. I was in my house for a year before I went and got to know my neighbours.

Co-operator five can be seen to not accept certain aspects of the possible culture of individualism that is growing in Australia. His refusal of this does not resonate beyond himself, it is not a public contestation, and so it remains against without transforming any negative identifications or definitions of identities. Co-operator five also refused to be positioned with the dominant enterprise discourse even though large parts of his discussion supported a business approach to community development.
I don’t classify myself as a social entrepreneur because there’s a level of risk taking involved in being an entrepreneur that I am not comfortable with. So I’m honest, I’m an enabler.

While at an individual level, co-operator five contested an identity-representation that could be made of him, again, this does not change any outside groups’ perceptions. When compared with co-operator three’s expression of contestation and how this presented a challenge to dominant perceptions from the local Council, or co-operator two’s repudiation of for-profit business structures, co-operator five merely refuses some parts of master narratives but leaves plenty of other parts intact.

What co-operators two and three do achieve by their accounts is a re-identification of co-operative members’ commitments to co-operative principles and values, rather than reinforcement of the dominant economic narrative that business is for profit, run by self-interested individuals and that it necessarily requires a competitive stance. It shows that co-operative engagement is a complex site of resistance characterised by all three forms of resistance -- contestation, repudiation and refusal.

Co-operators one, two and three all indicated an awareness of how big businesses are using co-operative structures to their own advantages. There is contestation and repudiation from all three that not many of these corporate co-operative examples embody co-operativism:

Some co-operatives can end up being not that legally different to an incorporated association…Sometimes they just have a board of directors, which is just like a management committee, and they have a co-ordinator and it’s not co-operatively managed. (Co-operator One)
I don’t think a co-operative in and of itself necessarily means anything. You can operate as a co-operative non-co-operatively. You can form a company limited by guarantee and run it in a co-operative form, so I actually don’t think [that] the legal infrastructure actually means anything. So the advantage of the co-operative is that you align yourself with a tradition that’s how I see it. (Co-operator Three)

I mean, I suppose that co-operatives don’t necessarily have to benefit other co-operatives, or benefit other businesses. It’s more about benefiting the internal mechanisms of the business itself. I mean Paul’s Milk is a co-operative. In no way does it share, or I’m guessing that, in no way does it share the sorts of ideals we do in terms of flat organisational structure for example. It’s important to define what the particular values of a co-operative are. (Co-operator Two)

These statements indicate how co-operators need to come to feel associated with principles and values and embody these within the collective (Ludlow n.d.). Indeed, not only are co-operatives an alternative to dominant business/corporate models, but they have a tradition, certain structures and values that are antithetical to the competitive system of the free-market. Co-operator two:

You know it’s not like a Fascist regime in that way. There are lots of executive decision-making powers, but for major other decisions that we need to make we have a fortnightly meeting with the workers and we also have meetings with the all of the directors every 4 to 6 weeks.

Co-operator two contested the idea that co-operatives can become closed-enclaves, bureaucratic with power held only by the few at the top. Additionally, he provided a counter example to corporate arrangements where shareholders might meet once a year, receive a bi-annual newsletter and not be involved in the day-to-day decisions within a business.

To this point the accounts have illustrated that co-operatives, in particular, trading co-operatives, face particular tensions and challenges, whereby they risk being
captured within economic and social stories that exclude their moral purposes. How far one can contest before being marginalised to a point of ineffectiveness is, however, a question that requires serious consideration by the co-operative movement.

As co-operator two rightly contended, many co-operatives are part of the current economic system. It does not mean, however, that co-operatives need identify with that system; it is those values and principles that are embodied within the co-operative that count. Contestation and repudiation of competition within and between co-operatives will require strong reference to the underpinning moral purposes of co-operatives and the alternative social vision that co-operators aspire to. How much this resistance can be achieved with the increased emphasis on enterprise arrangements is yet to be seen.

Enterprise Models – the assimilation of opposition

The International Co-operative Alliance’s (ICA) (1995) reconfiguration of co-operative principles from ones that embodied an alternative social vision to principles that reflect dominant economic values has resulted in co-operatives being predominantly understood within a business-enterprise storyline. This representation means that many dominant groups identify co-operatives as new forms of enterprise, rather than as activities that seek to embody an alternative social vision. The rise of social enterprises as a new model of community development has certainly played a role in this. Certainly, the enterprise view dominates in co-operator five’s and six’s views on co-operative activity, and
indeed it was noted in part II that many community development organisations have begun to deploy social enterprise models as a strategy to increase funding and provide employment and training opportunities in organisations (O’Neill 1999). The key driver of these arrangements is the fact that social enterprise is seen to be a source of income generation.

Counterstories are generated with the view to free moral agency; so, to do this in the co-operative context means co-operators must be able to identify that which sets them apart from master narratives. Co-operator three, for example, illustrated how competition has diminished counter-identities and showed the co-operative’s strategy to subvert the competitive tendering process. He freed his own individual moral agency and the co-operative’s collective moral agency as a result of this action, while the attention of dominant groups was also commanded by the act.

Co-operator two set out to narratively repair the co-operative’s moral purpose by proposing that the co-operative, while enmeshed within the system it resists, allowed for the embodiment of an alternative norm and ethic. He contested also that co-operatives are fascist-like, closed enclaves, where power is held by only a few at the top. Co-operator two re-defined how co-operatives are represented within economic stories as alternative business institutions and thereby freed his agency, and the collective’s, to embody an alternative social vision. What distinguished co-operator two’s and three’s accounts from co-operator one’s was this presence of contestation and repudiation.

Because we do run Work for the Dole too, people have come into [the co-operative] from that. We have done two Work for the Dole projects we run them in a co-operative environment. (Co-operator One)
Co-operator one’s opposition to dominant neo-liberal trends is piecemeal, some parts are rejected, while others like the Work for the Dole program are accepted as a means to obtain funding. For dominant groups in government, this co-operative remains a community development organisation running Work for the Dole programs, nothing is changed in terms of how these groups will identify or define co-operative examples as a result. She repudiated the dominant government model of competition in earlier accounts, yet the co-operative is firmly entrenched in this system by being a provider of government programs. It is possible to suggest that the co-operative can receive criticisms because of taking a supportive stance of oppressive government policies like Work for the Dole.

This is an inadvertent act of identity-constitution on the co-operative’s part because it is clear from her earlier refutations that co-operator one would not intentionally support oppressive policies. The co-operative is caught in the complex web of funding needs which sometimes sees it repudiate some aspects of master narratives but leave other intact. An important aspect that requires further consideration is, however, that master narratives do have certain tricks they draw upon so that opposition is assimilated. Co-operative partnership was highlighted in co-operator six’s account as one of these potential strategies. Here, again, he proposed:

No [co-operative partnership] is not resistance, it’s realising the goals are of the particular organisations, what they want and how to get there. Then translating what you want so that they win out of it. I hate to use it, but it’s a win-win situation for all.

Co-operator six indicated awareness of the dominant capitalist credo that is based on a teleological purpose to create a win-win environment for all, but he did not
seek to use other terms. He contested that co-operative partnerships are acts of resistance and reinforced their instrumental focus. In this respect, any opposition offered by co-operative partnership is assimilated within a rather utilitarian, instrumental view. Another strategy of assimilation that neo-liberal master narratives draw upon can be said to have emerged in the increased development of an enterprise culture within community development broadly, of which the New Enterprise Initiative Scheme (NEIS) that co-operators one and two participated in can be seen to be a part. 55

It makes sense that trading co-operators must necessarily be business savvy; however, how much and how far this is taken is the difference between upholding a co-operative identity and becoming a co-operative enterprise. Co-operator two acknowledged that their co-operative needed to use government supports that were available, saying at first, ‘We are a 100% non-government organisation. What we do is totally independent of government’. This is a strong attempt at contestation that falls unavoidably to repudiation.

Well, I need to take a step back here, because in order for the project to get up and running the wages for the first year were paid via a government initiative called NEIS. But that’s as much involvement as we’ve had, and it wasn’t a lot of involvement. Anyway, it was more having welfare benefits without being hassled for the year.

While co-operator two would seemed to have preferred that government did not have to be involved in the co-operative’s establishment, there is a common theme

that re-surfaces and is carried over from one of co-operator four’s responses--
‘government hassles’. His suggestion is that since the co-operative has had time
to establish itself, ‘that’s the only involvement the government has had and it
wasn’t a lot’. The only reason the co-operative members participated in NEIS
was to have unemployment benefits without the continued hassle, rather than this
being representative of a desire to become productive economic business persons.
Co-operator two almost contested outright that the government had a role to play
in their success.

This theme of being hassled and using the NEIS scheme for wages for the set-up
of co-operatives resurfaced in co-operator two’s account. Similarly, co-operator
two’s intentions for joining NEIS indicated necessity to develop business skills
and a hint of a desire to escape government demands created by Centrelink as
well. Here, the co-operators turn what can be used as a strategy of assimilation by
master narratives into a means of resistance.

We’ve just been approved to do the NEIS course and at the end you
submit your business plan and you’re properly put onto NEIS. Even to get
on the NEIS course you’ve got to do all of that…It’s quite a bit of work
before you get to that point…and at this stage we’re just going through the
course, the Small Business course, and so at the end of that we will
properly be put on NEIS, which is really good because you sort of get a bit
of a grant for the year so you can live off that.

There is a risk, however, that the contestation desired by co-operators one and two
might fall to repudiation because of this link with government; however, it is
obvious that in both cases the co-operators saw the scheme as a grant strategy.

Repudiation is the most likely form of resistance that is possible from co-operator
one and two here because the re-identification of co-operatives and their activities
by dominant groups is no longer really possible. This is because powerful and
dominant bodies like Centrelink only see the co-operators as being compliant and
morally competent because of their participation in this business development
scheme. An oppositional stance is still being taken, however, and here it seems
that NEIS is more of an avenue for obtaining a ‘bit of a grant’ rather than being
considered a necessary business development tool.

One must necessarily ask why it is that government provides support for small
business development, but there are not similar programs to support and develop
co-operatives. Co-operatives, for example, might not require the same sorts of
business plans that small businesses do. The nature of the enterprise culture,
however, will surely have as much impact on small-scale co-operatives, as it has
on large-scale co-operatives like Mondragon, if resistance is not upheld.

Enterprise models have become popular mechanisms for the community
development sector to engage in because often the activities that are conducted
generate much needed incomes for small organisations. These models,
particularly those that are social enterprise structured, have presented new
tensions for the co-operative movement and community development sectors to
consider. Co-operator five expressed some of these tensions:

There [are] some people who come at [social enterprise] from the interest
that [it] is a great way to provide a service to people in community, or
meet a need in the community, so that they can engage people in a way
that is meaningful and gives them opportunities to grow and develop. I get
a little bit concerned that some people see it possibly as a way to make
money too, which it definitely is not. It is a way to provide social
outcomes to participants or, possibly, looking at a way to alleviate the
responsibility of government in terms of paying for programs and
activities.
Co-operator five indicated that contestation of social enterprise models being merely profit-making endeavours is needed. Yet, many social enterprise models are so firmly entrenched within government strategies to combat unemployment and provide training that it is hard to see them in anything other than a business light. While co-operator five refused this part of how social enterprises might be understood, he still believed, as discussed below, that the business benefits of enterprise could inform and organise a somewhat disordered community sector.

It has been argued that a distinctive feature of the social enterprise model is how all profits are re-invested back into the endeavour to continue the employment and training of participants. But unlike co-operatives, social enterprises are not bound by substantive commitments to any other principles than those they choose themselves. People are not members in a social enterprise, unless as it is emerging, these are co-operative enterprises; instead, in social enterprises people continue to be in an employer-employee relationship. Participants do have equal votes and decision-making capacities in social enterprises, as co-operator five later said in his account: ‘[Social enterprises] are social purpose businesses’.

Co-operator five is an interesting character of resistance because he repudiates some parts of master narratives and not others. For example, he became uncertain about the role of social enterprise when he considered that it might yet be neither about business or social benefits, but a result of federal and state governments balking at their own responsibilities and pushing these back onto communities. His account represents a counter narrative, one of piecemeal opposition with master narrative and dominant story fragments scattered throughout it. Nelson
(2001) called this an alternative story, it is not a counterstory and it is not a master narrative, what it does do is stand in for the wrong things in its resistance.

According to co-operator five:

[Social enterprise] is an additional activity not something that government should be doing as a way of alleviating its funding to, say, community activities…The business side of things is a secondary consideration.

Here co-operator five expressed further repudiation of the government trend to roll-back financial and social support services to communities, yet he still maintained a business storyline. Business considerations cannot be avoided in trading co-operatives, neither are they ignored by housing co-operator four; co-operatives still have to be accountable to the dominant reporting systems. This is further illustrated by his explanation of social enterprise.

I think that’s why social enterprise appeals to the business sector so much, because they can understand it. It’s a business. It’s about earning an income; so, I think that as time goes on businesses will get more and more behind social enterprises. I think that the community sector is still a little bit hesitant, because they can see the potential for it to be utilized for non-social outcomes, for exploitation or for simply alleviating funding requirements of government or things like that. But they also don’t have the skills. That’s the other issue with social enterprise… that people from the community sector don’t have the skills to run a business.

This is the beginning of a statement of someone who is undermining the cognitive authority of those who might resist enterprise models.

Co-operator five’s statement echoed an inversion of Milton Friedman’s (1962) position in that community sector people are said to be better equipped to deal with social problems not business problems, ‘they don’t have the skills to run a business.’ Friedman’s (1962) contention was always that business need only deal with its responsibility to shareholders and that social responsibility was the job of
government not business. In a strange fashion, co-operator five contested some parts of the neo-liberal project but left others, like stereotypical identity representations of community people as unskilled for business, intact.

It is not that co-operators do not face challenges in the development of business skills in trading co-operatives; co-operators one and two both said that they faced such challenges. However, the continued success of all co-operatives has contested the idea that business acumen is some specialist skill-set and knowledge base that community people cannot learn. The reality is that many community people are indeed hesitant about social enterprise models because they are not only antithetical to the co-operative principles that underpin their practices, but also because enterprise models may well be used to assimilate opposition into the dominant economic narrative.

Consider this aspect of co-operator five’s account:

I’m a big believer of learning where you can, and one of the things that I think that the community sector needs to learn is this concept of developing business plans. That’s the other thing that I saw overseas is that when you’re developing a social enterprise they’re not applying under the normal grants and government funding models. They actually have to develop business plans and look at sustainability and look at who else is offering the service in the community… and again we don’t want it to become corporatised. But I think that developing a business plan is a new way for the community sector to start thinking about what they are doing.

The possibility that community sector activities would need to develop business plans to obtain funding is not unrealistic in the current neo-liberal climate, but one asks why business plans per se? Indeed, why is it that the community sector needs to start thinking about what they are doing and not businesses -- in terms of consequences of their actions and practices in communities -- is an interesting
question brought to the surface by co-operative five’s account. Co-operator five noted:

Definitely [governments] see [social enterprise] as a way to contribute to and achieve the goals of community development. They see social enterprise as a different or new way.

Here, co-operator five’s account confirmed the impact of enterprise models in community development, but a contestation must be reinforced here that the goal of community development is not necessarily to run a good business. Community development has, like co-operative practices, broader moral purposes which underpin the desire to facilitate empowerment, control over decisions and build relationships. There will undoubtedly be tensions between the social enterprise model and community development purposes as co-operator six’s comment reflected:

They are thinking about how do we develop these co-operative processes and…one of them is going off and approaching a local timber merchant…they don’t really know what they are going to get out of him and they don’t really know what they want from him, but they are sitting down and talking to him.

Refusal of economic values or economically driven programs cannot be said to evident in co-operator six’s account. He believed that community enterprise is a good thing because it generates much needed employment in the local community. The approaching of the timber merchant might lead to more jobs in the community, but given that the group does not know what they want it is unlikely that they will form a co-operative that resists these economic trends.

What happens when two quite antithetical models are blended with one another, as social enterprise and community development have been, is that the principles which provided the moral purpose underpinning activities risk being subsumed.
How co-operator five repudiated and enforced master narrative assimilation at the same time is shown in his following account.

Just that fact that they [government] see [social enterprise] as something new is quite ironic, because it’s been around for a long, long time; it’s just the latest trend, so to speak…That’s the other concern that I have about social enterprise; the government’s going to develop these big mainstream programs, and once you get them to that level, [social enterprises] are no longer about community, they are about government programs. So the idea is that it’s got to be bottom up, and I know that everyone says that it has got be bottom up, there needs to be services and facilities there to support people when they get to that stage…but you can’t make people do it.

As a community development worker, his counter-identity lurked in the background in his refutation of government coming in to develop big mainstream social enterprise programs. He raised the concern that mainstream programming comes with rules and regulations that ‘make people do it’. Something of value in communities is lost when these big mainstream programs are developed, things have to remain, echoing co-operator one’s earlier points about grassroots democracy, bottom-up. Co-operator five’s repudiation, however, slides into refusal because while he can define and re-define social enterprises in these ways, no other groups hear his story to change their dominant perceptions.

The rise of enterprise narratives in community development and co-operative sectors requires caution. While social enterprise alludes to a pathway of resistance, it is unfortunately an assimilation strategy deployed in the neo-liberal project to enforce economic models and values in community programs. From co-operator five’s account of social enterprise, it would not appear to provide the same strategy of contestation as the co-operative model does for co-operators two and three. Co-operator six’s reflections also indicated that enterprise models have
become a normative practice in community development. He, in fact, was cynical that co-operative partnerships could offer anything more than a means to an end. Certainly, social enterprise can be seen to provide education and training, and employment opportunities to disadvantaged groups; however, dominant groups can still identify participants within these enterprises according to sometimes unjust dominant norms and values. Social enterprises are not part of a purposive counterstory that seeks to contest dominant identifications and definitions. While participants might experience an increased sense of empowerment because they have employment opportunities, this is still defined in accordance with dominant standards that actually demand contestation and repudiation, not just refusal.

In many co-operative models, people can be represented according to their own normative understandings, world-views and moral purposes. This makes it possible to embody co-operative principles so that the conduct of narrative repair is probable. When dominant groups’ perceptions are changed, moral agency can be freed to collaboratively contribute to the embodiment of an alternative social vision, rather than to reinforce a new version of the employer-employee arrangement, as is the case with social enterprise models. What happens is what co-operator five indicated:

I think that’s why social enterprise appeals to the business sector so much because they can understand it. It’s a business. It’s about earning an income; so, I think that as time goes on businesses will get more and more behind social enterprises.

There is no contestation, repudiation or refusal of the enterprise model and by adherence to this model, one’s agency is restored along dominant lines; however, it is restored according to the terms and conditions of master narratives; so, it is not freed. Business will, in time, get more behind social enterprises. In the free-
market arrangement this means further competition between businesses to achieve social purposes.

Consultancy Trends – a case of epistemic rigging

Just as competition and enterprise models have increased the potential for the diminishment of counter-identities and their moral agency to work toward an alternative social vision, consultancy too has played its part. Consultancy represents a third tentacle and a bulwark used by proponents of neo-liberal master narratives to capture co-operative practice. ‘Nothing morally objectionable appears to be going on’ in the consultancy arrangement (Nelson 2001, 162). This is particularly evident when one considers that both co-operator one and three supported the consultancy model by virtue of their respective co-operatives providing such services. While consultancy trends are evident in the co-operative sector the situation is by no means clear-cut. As it has been shown above co-operator one and three have both contested, as much as adopted some parts of dominant economic narratives.

The economic way of operating and thinking has become so normal that people like co-operator five can be said to have started to forget to question the problems that are caused by dominant business practices. Additionally, one would think that co-operator five would seek to embody co-operative principles as a community sector worker. Perhaps it is possible to suggest that economic values from the neo-liberal master narrative have infiltrated his consciousness to such an extent that it is no longer possible for him to see those associated issues.
Infiltrated consciousness is not something that co-operators one, two and three have suffered from to this point, because all three expressed an awareness of neo-liberal master narratives and highlighted their tensions between balancing substantive co-operative principles and engaging with the political-economic system. Their self-understandings and commitments to moral purpose have played a role in the strategies of contestation they deploy.

It has been understood that community development practitioners represented a counter-identity to dominant institutions and oppressive policies. This is why co-operator six made the distinction between the consultant who wants to get paid and the practitioner on the ground.

One of the first things about the Community Action Plan is [that] in thought it is good but, realistically, it’s fairly predictable. There’s not much in it that’s terribly exciting. There’s not much in it that’s visionary, and it does not stretch the barriers at all. It’s all stock standard solutions, they haven’t changed anything – this is what a consultant does – a consultant will not put up anything that challenges because they want to get paid and, so, there’s an inherent problem in that. Then that comes back to the practitioner on the ground and how you take that information and how you implement it on the ground. (Co-operator Six)

Recent political-economic shifts, however, have seen enterprise models come to characterise many community organisations and it is not uncommon to now find consultants who are also community development workers. The boundaries between these two roles have become blurred. This means that the counter role that community development traditionally played to the consultant -- who was often a highly criticised and critiqued character said to be looking out for their own economic interests -- has been subsumed.
One asks why, then, does a co-operative consultancy appeal to co-operators one and three who have had strong backgrounds and involvement in community development? With this notion that consultants do not put up anything new these co-operators face diminished moral agency to achieve an alternative social vision in this arrangement. Co-operator three believed that being a member in a co-operative:

> Might [provide] a market advantage against some other consultants, because people say, “oh well, it is a co-operative”.

At this level, co-operator three only intimated refusal of the dominant consultancy image, yet, he also described that the importance of the co-operative model was its emphasis on a tradition. Because this notion of tradition figured heavily in the co-operative’s identity it seemed to provide a measure to maintain contestation of the dominant economic model, while simultaneously participating within the system. For co-operator three, then, the co-operative enables them to participate in a dominant activity--consultancy--but in a counter manner.

> A number of us wanted to set up a consultancy business anyway as a form of self-funded community work. Well, we thought there are a lot of consultants out there. What’s a way of imagining how to do that differently? So we started to explore the co-operative forms of enterprise as one of those models.

Here, co-operator three has illustrated that the co-operative provided a means by which to participate in an alternative enterprise that is different to a standard small business example. On this front, something is repudiated, however, little is refused in terms of consultancy being part of the dominant neo-liberal economic arrangements in either his or co-operator one’s account. This is highlighted further by his comment:

> Well, people say you are a bunch of consultants; you’ve got no
accountability or whatever, and that’s been a criticism levelled at us. We’re like, well, we are accountable to the clients.

Traditionally, community development sought to serve communities and central to this was the empowerment of people to take control of their lives and decisions that affected them (Kenny 1999). The fact that co-operator three’s statement is imbued with the dominant narrative’s terminology (‘clients’) serves to further signify the changing nature of community services and how some aspects of these dominant narratives have infiltrated the co-operative model after all.

His refutation of criticism levelled at the co-operative illustrated a measure of repudiation, then, where some parts of the neo-liberal master narrative are left intact and others are challenged. Combined with this patchwork resistance he also contested that the co-operative could be identified as a mainstream consultancy activity.

But we are practising the same way we do any bit of community work where relationships are integral to that; that’s the heart of community development, that relationships are authentic, they are real, there’s a level of mutuality. So, it’s not the expert consulting model in the same way that the community development worker is the expert in the community; their role is [actually] to facilitate a process that brings people together and [to] create their own solutions to their own problems…There’s integrity in our community work practices at all levels.

The issues of consultancy and funding are obviously higher on the agendas of service-based co-operatives than for many workers’ or housing co-operatives. This is because the former are dependent on project work for funding to become available so they must necessarily engage with some parts of the dominant system and not others. Yet, service based co-operatives and housing co-operatives both face reporting, regulatory and accountability requirements imposed by government which restrict their abilities to embody an alternative social vision.
In spite of the above implication that can be drawn about co-operator three’s commitments, he reinforced that the community work on offer still retains integrity and is ultimately about the formation of relationships. There is another picture of identification on offer to dominant groups. He also contends in this statement that the co-operative does not adopt ‘the expert consulting model in the way that the community development worker is the expert in the community’. In this respect, co-operator three saw the co-operative as providing a pathway of narrative repair to free their agency on a number of fronts. First, it enabled these co-operators to resist the dominant models of community development and the expert approach that came to characterise some parts of the field with the professionalisation trend in the 1980s. Second, the co-operative provided a means by which to retain integrity in the face of business trends, he can remain committed to social justice principles and continue to embody an alternative in his community practice. Finally, it allows for the embodiment of real and authentic relationships.

The contestation does not, however, resolve the issue that co-operatives are challenged by their commitments to constituents and accountability to funding bodies. This tension was highlighted above in both co-operator one and two’s accounts where they indicated that maintaining a balance between business and activist needs posed challenges. Co-operator one:

We apply for government funds now but we don’t have recurrent funding. We do aim to be, in the long term, not needing to apply for grants at all, but perhaps have people doing consultancy work. So, definitely having that independent spirit of the co-operative movement has been really important.

Ironically, there cannot be much of an independent co-operative spirit in co-
operator one’s example if most of the co-operative activities are government funded and the ultimate aim is to move to consultancy work. In this respect, co-operator one repudiates some parts of the dominant economic narrative, yet she does not oppose or contest this dominant narrative in a manner that can change any dominant perceptions of who she and the other co-operators are. In this way, she has mostly expressed refusal and so, her individual and the collective’s agency remains restricted.

The appeal of the co-operative model has traditionally been that it provided people with a means to work together, autonomous from government intervention. The blurred boundaries between consultants and community development, and consultants and co-operatives, funding and accountability, however, provides new tensions that will need further consideration for co-operative counterstories to emerge. Co-operator one’s, two’s and three’s reflections and evaluation about why they came to co-operative practices serve to contest this perspective. The impact of economic values on principles and practices, however, has not been avoided by commitments to co-operative principles alone. A strong underpinning sense of moral purpose has provided co-operators one, two and three with the possibility to tell and share counterstories. Co-operator three:

I can remember the conversations. Well it’s like…well, consultants…it’s a mixture of these things. I think it was a smart strategic business decision and consultants are competing against each other all the time…So it’s good business sense and it was strategic and motivated by, well…why is it us consultants who are community workers, why are we competing with each other when we could be collaborating?

Co-operator three’s voice indicated frustration. There is an emotional layer to this response, “why are we competing with each other when we could be collaborating”? This sense of frustration has seen co-operator three introduce a
new aspect to resistance that is to be considered below; he has had an embodied response to oppression and the frustrations that community workers face. Whereas co-operator one accepts that consultancy-based work may be the future for community developers, competition seems pointless to co-operator three. So even as a consultant he contests and transforms those aspects of competition processes that he can.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be drawn from analysing what sort of [resi]stances co-operators have taken in opposition to dominant economic narratives and the master narrative themes of competition, enterprise and consultancy. Those stances of co-operators two and three illustrated the much-needed contestation to provide an opportunity for narrative repair that could free co-operators’ moral agency to embody an alternative social vision. Co-operator two’s and three’s moral agency has been freed in a number of instances to embody co-operative principles, live and work differently to hierarchical institutions and create community in relation with others. Aspects of the co-operative story are narratively repaired by co-operator two’s and three’s accounts.

Unfortunately, the repudiation and refusal of co-operators one, four and five meant that narrative repair could not occur in anything but a piecemeal fashion. This means that their moral agency to embody an alternative social vision is not always freed; in parts all three remain captured within a master narrative, but for different reasons. Co-operator one and four still offer counter narratives to

276
dominant economic values, but their accounts do not facilitate narrative repair of diminished counter-identities.

If those three co-operator accounts offered some measures of resistance, co-operator six’s account, and indeed somewhat confusingly some parts of co-operator five’s, offered instead assistance to neo-liberal master narratives to retain their hold. In these instances, co-operatives were identified and defined according to dominant economic values that ignored the moral purpose and alternative sets of principles co-operators sought to embody. The largely absent perspectives, within this chapter, of co-operator four illustrated not so much that there was not opposition in her account -- as chapter six demonstrated that she does contest master narratives at different junctures -- rather, the issues of competition, enterprise and consultancy are not as significant to that particular housing co-operative model as the other co-operative models people were engaged with. This co-operative faces different issues and potential for capture, partly due to its links with a government body. This means that the co-operative’s reporting, legislative and policy pressures are different again. What is important to note is that these are still the same themes that are the result of the neo-liberal master narrative; they are merely different themes to those which were identified for analysis within the chapter.

The chapter also highlighted that due to the way in which counterstories resist different parts of master narratives at various junctures, there is not always one type of resistance presented by co-operators throughout their whole accounts. Different shadings of resistance -- that is, different oppositional stances -- were
presented, as was the case with strong moral self-definition. All co-operator accounts illustrated any number of oppositional stances in their one account. Problematic though is how co-operator five, for example, sometimes reinforced and other time resisted dominant narratives; this made his resistance difficult to track and pin down. Importantly, however, this highlighted that purposive counterstories need to be told by counter-identities for narrative repair to occur; a point which Nelson made in her initial studies of counterstories.

Additionally, the chapter illustrated how dominant narratives are played off against each other in the increased trends of enterprise and consultancy arrangements in community development. This proves to be a complex situation because many dominant government narratives have relied on negative identity representations which characterise unemployed people, for example, as dependent bludgers. Not only are dominant narratives played off against each other, but the repeated themes and ensembles of other master narratives that are used within them give them more strength to assimilate opposition. For example, because enterprise models are said to move people out of financial and government dependency, some groups see it as a welcomed alternative and a possibility also for narrative repair and freeing of their moral agency. Dependency, autonomy and mastery, however, are themes of the liberal individual narrative that see individuals as aspiring to be autonomous, self-sufficient, independent, competitors. By taking on one part of a narrative that espouses financial independence, co-operators risk being captured within the economic master narrative. This reflects, again, how an alternative story, or counter narrative, can stand in for the wrong kind of master narrative because as it has been suggested,
social enterprises do not embody an alternative social vision in the same way that many co-operatives do.

The important part of counterstories is whether narrative repair occurs to the extent that restricted moral agency can be freed. Yet, “freed” to do what? is the question that is then posed. Competition does not free moral agency, it merely provides the basis to produce more profits. Social enterprises do not achieve interdependency if the underpinning narrative is one that looks down on dependency and favours autonomy. Because social enterprises are so heavily enmeshed in the dominant economic narrative that they cannot provide the needed alternative to develop counterstories; this is something that community development and co-operative practitioners must approach with caution.

The question of freed to do what is important because sometimes consultancy trends work as a counter-strategy for some co-operators to embody their co-operative principles and work toward an alternative social vision, while at other times freedom means merely the ability to freely compete to acquire more contracts. As the co-operative context is relational, so too are counterstories dialogical in their nature: counterstories demand, in a sense, that there are relational contexts for shared understanding to emerge. For these reasons, questions of narrative embodiment necessarily foreground the issues of narrative repair, because not only are narratives inscribed and incorporated onto the body, but as body-selves we embody the experience of oppression as co-operator three’s account began to illustrate. Additionally, counterstories need other bodies (from both the subgroup and dominant group) to listen to them and affirm their position;
embodiment matters cannot be ignored. Alone, counterstories do not have moral agency, it is the teller is who gives the account its needed action, strong explanatory force and heft to dislodge the oppressive parts of master narratives. Part IV below enquires into those narrative responses embodied by co-operators and the role of moral purpose in shaping whether co-operators’ experiences of resistance are those of defensive strategies of personal survival or actions that contribute to social transformation. It does this by application of Frank’s body-self type continuum to understand oppression and resistance from the perspective of embodiment.
PART IV TRANSFORMATIONS
CHAPTER SEVEN

NARRATIVE EMBODIMENT: BODY-SELVES

AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

it is 1968
i am a magic realist
i see the adorers of che

i see the pacifists
despair
and accept violence

we will make it
irresistible
even to racists

we want to change
the demonic character of our opponents
into productive glory.

Julian Beck. Paradise Now.

While the larger co-operative story can, to some degree, be narratively repaired from the individual accounts of co-operator two and three, it is clear that counterstories need persons; they need bodies to be enacted, to give them voice, and to affect changes in practices. Co-operator two and three tell counterstories that enable their moral agency to be freed to embody an alternative social vision and maintain their commitments to co-operative principles. They tell strong counterstories that have potential to engage with dominant groups to transform their negative and oppressive understandings of co-operator identities; this engagement between dominant groups and subgroups is a central requirement for the transformative acts that counterstories can facilitate.
Both of these co-operators replace fragments of master narratives with new co-operative identifications and definitions, which is a primary function of counterstories. This process of re-identification and re-definition, taken up by both the sub-groups in question and dominant group, is the act of narrative repair. Co-operator one’s and two’s accounts repair diminished dominant representations about co-operative identities and they contest master narrative themes of competition, efficiency and enterprise. Significantly, these co-operators make regular references to working with others in their accounts and how the communal experience of cooperation offers a motivational factor for this. This highlights how co-operative experiences and resistance are embodied phenomena, recursively defined by the embodied experience of oppression itself. This final chapter explores these embodiment considerations and evaluates how the co-operator accounts echo these in terms of adopting defensive strategies of personal survival or socially transformative practices.

Embodiment matters for co-operators because they intentionally commit to working with others, not merely in a theoretical or strategic capacity, but within a co-operative site where they come together to live out and practice forms of togetherness in their daily lives. This embodied aspect of co-operative togetherness illustrates how co-operators seek relations that begin in being-with others; these are relationships that are beyond the mere episodic encounters of being-aside, although there is a risk that fragmented relations will result with economic values superseding co-operative principles in co-operative contexts. The consequences of which will contribute to whether moral or ethical communities are on the horizon.
Resistance - embodied social transformation or personal survival?

This part suggests that the embodied experience of resistance and oppression can distinguish between co-operative practices that are socially transformative and those that fall to defensive strategies of personal survival. To explore this the chapter uses Arthur Frank’s (1995) framework for understanding the body-self in ethics and illness as analogously useful for unlocking these dimensions of co-operators’ experiences. In Frank’s account, people choose different responses to the onset of illness that see them become either: dominating, disciplining, mirroring or communicative body-self types. Each of these four body-self types is a different response to four embodiment principles of: control, desire, other-relatedness and body-relatedness. While Frank’s work concentrated on the onset of physical illness and bodily disease, this study has taken neo-liberalism as a metaphorical disease that co-operators attempt to struggle with, resist and transform via their practices. Indeed, the previous parts to the study have argued that neo-liberal arrangements have caused much dis-ease in community settings; these political-economic changes are affecting forms of togetherness in co-operative and community development contexts. To begin this analysis, Table 8 details Frank’s (1995) continuum of the four body-self types and their respective responses to the principles of embodiment.
To explain, Frank proposed that each body-self type is characterised by a correlating problem of action. For the dominating body-self this is force, for the disciplining body-self this is regimen, for the mirroring body-self this is consumption, and for the communicative body-self type -- Frank’s ideal -- it is recognition. People struggle with the four embodiment principles of control, desire, other-relatedness and body-relatedness which results in them taking on the characteristics of either a dominating, disciplining, mirroring or communicative body-self. Additionally, people may shift between different body-self types.

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56 Frank (1995, 30).
To illustrate, in the face of contingencies beyond their control, a person might seek to restore predictability by using regimens. In some cases neo-liberal values of competition, efficiency and productivity, for example, can be used as a regimen for people to comply with so that they may emulate the dominant ideal. This use of regimen is how the disciplined body-self responds to issues of control and desire -- but the response is turned inward, the disciplined body-self self-regulates, it is not concerned with others. In contrast, the mirroring body-self consumes images from popular culture to create itself in the ideal, the mirroring body-self is totally associated with others but only in so far as emulating the ideal. The dominating body-self, however, reacts to contingent experiences with force that is directed toward others. Dominating body-self types lack desire, but they are dyadic beings because they need others to direct their anger and frustration toward.

The most idealised body-self type is that of the communicative body-self. The communicative body-self is someone who can accept contingencies, is dyadic, able to recognise others; this person (or self) embodies the ethical relation of being-for others in ways that the other three body-self types cannot. In fact, Frank went so far as to suggest that different types of stories and narratives tell different body-selves into being (and vice versa), which is not dissimilar to what Nelson claimed that master narratives do in terms of identity-constitution. In the case of the communicative body-self, Frank claimed that the ethical practice it undertakes is to tell stories of quest. Co-operator counterstories can thus be seen as an additional ethical practice of communicative body-self types, which shall be explained.
What motivates individuals to work toward social transformation can perhaps be seen as a question of personal ethics linked with our self-understandings and narrative identities. Matters of identity are important because how we relate with others can be influenced by the ways in which we relate to ourselves. This certainly can be seen in those co-operators’ accounts where strong moral self-definition occurred. For example, co-operators one, two and three, expressed strong moral self-definition. For co-operators two and three, this was purposive and substantive moral self-definition grounded in a moral purpose beyond the co-operative, whereas for co-operator one moral self-definition continued to be strong, but it was formulated inadvertently. This last factor of inadvertency is what shifts co-operator one’s story into a counter narrative, rather than a counterstory. Because her purposive commitments are not clearly articulated, in terms of embodying an alternative social vision, her patchwork resistance always leaves intact some part of an oppressive master narrative that the co-operative ends up supporting. Likewise, co-operators four and five tell similar kinds of stories, except that when embodiment is considered co-operator five comes to share co-operator six’s characteristics of being a master narrativist in disguise.

In many respects, most of the co-operators showed indications of being dyadic (other-related), and associated (self-related through others) and mostly accepting of contingencies. Unlike disciplined body-self types who ‘assume the contingency of disease but never accept it’, co-operator one, two and three have an interest in the co-operative model as an alternative to dominant institutional arrangements, and a means to achieve greater social and environmental goals. This is a reflection of how they have accepted things beyond their control and
sought to develop an alternative to this (Frank 1995, 47). These three co-
operators did not turn their responses inward or direct their frustrations toward
others in a forceful manner. Their actions of resistance occurred via contestation,
and sometimes repudiation, to replace and re-identify some oppressive parts of
neo-liberal master narratives in a productive way. But, as it was indicated above,
co-operator one never quite achieves a forceful counterstory of narrative repair in
the same way that co-operator two and three do; understanding embodiment in her
account provides some reasons as to why.

Being dyadic and other-directed all reflect Frank’s (1995) ideal of the
communicative body-self who can accept contingencies without enforcing control
and is someone who works in a productive manner with others. The notion of
productive desire is important in the co-operative context because without it co-
operative principles do ossify. The loss of desire that co-operator four expressed
in her account, the sense of resignation to a power beyond her control that
emerged in her telling (government: its legalisation and policies), illustrated that
her co-operative might risk losing sight of principles of social transformation
central to co-operatives because of the embodiment response she has to the issue
of desire. It is not only her embodied response that will cause co-operative
principles to become stagnant; the collective co-operative body plays a reflexive
role too.

Frank’s notions of being either associated or dissociated, refers directly to co-
operators’ self-relationships, that is, the qualities of their association with their
own body and being. Co-operators one, two and three are dyadic and associated.
They express productive desire which can be understood as the desire to change, transform or do something in response to their position and in response to oppressive master narratives. There is recognition that oppressive conditions or circumstances need to be resisted and transformed by this person. In particular, co-operators two and three participate in dialogical exchanges of counterstories to achieve this; in fact, counterstories are an ethical practice of their bodies.

Co-operator four, with her weak moral self-definition is still a dyadic being, but her qualities of desire seem somewhat lacking in comparison to those with strong moral self-definition. Perhaps her weak moral self-definition contributes to her embodiment response, or maybe it is her embodiment experience that shapes her moral self-definition as weak -- either way, this illustrates the recursive nature of oppression and resistance. Co-operators five and four are both people who expressed weak moral self-definition, only resisting oppressive neo-liberal master narrative fragments via repudiation and refusal. Their resistance, at times, did not circulate beyond their own group. If a lack of desire takes over completely, those co-operators might risk becoming monadic, separated and cut-off from others. This might cause frustration that leads to either self or other-directed violence. If directed at the self and turned into a regimen that must be adhered to -- to maintain predictability -- co-operators might express, as co-operator six did, a disciplined body-self type. Because the force reinforces master narrative fragments, in fact his story tells itself in these fragments, co-operator six is an example of a master narrative. Consideration of the echoes of embodiment by co-operators and how these relate with Frank’s body-self type continuum now follows.
Mirroring body-self types: these tricks with mirrors you see!

There is more to a mirror than you looking at your full-length body flawless but reversed, there is more than this dead blue oblong eye turned outward to you. Think about the frame. The frame is carved, it is important, it exists, it does not reflect you, it does not recede and recede, it has limits and reflections of its own. There’s a nail in the back to hang it with; there are several nails, think about the nails, pay attention to the nail marks in the wood, they are important too.

Margaret Atwood. Tricks with Mirrors.

Because co-operatives have an appearance of being either a social alternative or an organisational alternative, to an extent they will always be seen as examples of people’s productive desire to enact change. It is deceptive, however, to think that this productive desire always works toward the association of togetherness that is advocated for. This present study has found that co-operators can just as easily come to lack desire if they are affected by contingencies beyond their control, or if the co-operative no longer provides the site to embody commitments to moral purposes and visions, desire might, again, come to lack. These contingencies mean that relationships within co-operatives can erode from being-with to the being-aside types of encounters that Bauman (1995) referred to. There is always more to the mirror than what appears on the surface. For co-operators the risk of practices becoming non-co-operative under current neo-liberal arrangements is real and imminent.

It was shown above that Mondragon Co-operative Corporation (MCC) and other large-scale co-operatives, for example Norco, provided cases of how appearance can deceive, as do emerging social enterprise trends in community development. These are examples of what Frank (1995, 44) called mirroring body-self types.
where the act of resistance only takes on the appearance of productive desire, instead masking a lack of desire that is actually motivated by being monadic (self-focussed), ‘what the mirroring body-self wants, it wants for itself’. The trend to corporate style structures in large-scale co-operatives, for example, can only be seen as being motivated by for what corporations want for themselves -- increased opportunities to compete in the global free-market for profits.

Social enterprise responses in community development and the co-operative sector can also be said to be the result of the changed contingencies faced by co-operators and workers. In this respect, some social enterprises are formulated as an attempt to re-develop an element of control within an increasingly difficult to resource community sector. The motivations are, however, also rooted in a desire to empower those who are disadvantaged or unemployed (O’Neill 1998). In this way, these actions intend to be resistive but stand in for master narratives in the wrong way; much the same way that co-operator five intends to resist in different parts of his account but ends up assisting the dominant economic narrative to gather further strength.

Mirroring body-self types create co-optical illusions (perhaps even delusions) that ask intentions, purposes and visions of co-operative practice to work toward social transformation within an economic guise. Consider this part of co-operator one’s account:

I guess we’ve been going as an informal organisation for this, so we thought, are we going to keep on going at this point? Should we become a legal [registered co-operative entity]? Plus, in terms of being able to go on NEIS and things like that, [becoming a legal co-operative entity] just meant that we could access much more assistance. (Co-operator One)
In a sense, co-operator one is motivated here to formally register the co-operative not by a commitment to social transformation, but rather, because the co-operators would be able to “go on NEIS and things like that…we could access much more assistance”. Typical of a mirroring body-self type she is prepared to participate in an act of consuming the dominant narrative to meet her (and others) financial needs; the collective body of the co-operative is metaphorically used to ‘consume and enhance the individual body in the images of other bodies’ (Frank 1995, 43). Her explanation of what influenced the decision to form a registered co-operative, results in a defensive strategy of personal survival in response to her contingent circumstances, rather than a socially transformative practice. Because mirroring body-self types see other images and desire to become them, they are more susceptible to perpetrating, unknowingly, oppressive aspects of master narratives.

Co-operator five has an awareness of these potential dangers in his reference to how social enterprise should be ‘an additional activity, not something that government should be doing as a way of alleviating its funding’. But, as it has been stated, his account does not conduct narrative repair either, it stands in for the wrong kind of narrative. The reasons for these bodies telling counter narratives rather than counterstories may well be linked to fact that they are mirroring body-self types. Co-operative five’s embodies a mirroring body-self because sometimes he repudiates dominant narratives and then, in the same instance, he re-instates them as an ideal:

I think employment is very much important with one restriction on that, the understanding that not all people will be able to gain employment and not to measure someone’s worthiness in society by their employment. I think [employment does] give a sense of participation in the community. It does give a sense of satisfaction, a sense of purposefulness around life. And I think that whilst we do a lot of activities, the ultimate outcome
needs to be around employment paid or unpaid.

So, not all people will be able to gain employment and it should not be the defining measure of success, however, the ultimate outcome still needs to be around employment, whether paid or unpaid?

Co-operator four’s intentions to join the co-operative, for example, were based on productive desire, yet this desire could be said to have been directed toward self-interest in terms of her membership meeting her housing needs. She reflected a body-self who seeks some predictability and control in relation to her circumstances signalled in her statement, “I like to think that I have some control over what is happening, that I am part of an organism that is about my housing as well” (Co-operator Four). This notion of control resurfaced again for co-operator four when she discussed government reporting and working relationships. She said, “I guess they don’t have as much control over us as they would like to have”.

The statement signified the tensions that emerge from government relationships for co-operatives in terms of autonomy from the state, often a relationship which forces co-operators to emulate dominant institutional standards, norms and codes. She continued:

They’ve been pressuring co-ops to sign over their housing stock, to still be managed by the co-op, but government housing would have control over what happens in the co-operative.

In this instance, the regulatory government-body seeks to restore order and predictability in the context of this housing co-operative. It seeks to impose reporting and bureaucratic requirements that take up people’s precious time to
work toward their envisaged social alternative. This reflects a desire from government to re-instate enclaves that are characteristic of moral communities. If the co-operators also turn inward and separate from others as a result of this experience, they too will become a monadic and isolated enclave.

Obviously, in an increasingly distant and complex global system having a sense of control over one’s destiny, economic situation and life circumstances are concerns that are relevant for both individuals and collective bodies. In some ways, co-operatives have historically sought to provide a level of predictable control to workers either via ownership of the means of production and decision-making capacities, or to consumers via fair and affordable pricing of goods. But the traditional moral purpose of co-operatives was not to mirror dominant institutions or master narratives, it was to embody an alternative to these and provide a place where co-operators could commit to co-operative principles as a form of togetherness. Social enterprise trends need to be considered with this in mind. The nature of the dissociated, monadic potential of mirroring body-self types is also problematic for the continuation of relations of being-with for co-operators. The use of regimen and turning inward of frustrations means that the ethical relation of being-for cannot emerge in the horizons of these encounters. Neither does it seem that the imposition and domination expressed in enforcement of moral community values seem to foster such potential for forms of togetherness.

Somehow, successful co-operative examples are those that are able to find the balance between predictability and an acceptance of contingencies. Co-operatives that are characterised by being dyadic and associated, like those of co-operators
two and three find this easier than others. The core issue of mirroring body-self type is that their monadic character and desire to only serve themselves, can be seen to fit well with the neo-liberal ideal of the autonomous, self-sufficient, independent individual. Co-operator six certainly reflects these ideals, but it is not as a mirroring body-self type, co-operator five, however, is an uncertain mirroring body-self type.

I think that’s the key difference, I haven’t seen anyone in Australia develop a social enterprise with a strong business model, sorry, balanced with strong social and community outcomes. (Co-operator Five)

These tricks with mirrors you see can be deceptive, for if co-operators continue to resist these dominant trends outright, as co-operators two and three illustrated, they can avoid the traps of the mirror (it is precisely because they are not mirroring body-self types that these two co-operators achieve their hefty contestations).

Dominant voices emulating master narrative fragments diminish the agency of co-operators to work toward their alternative social visions. Where this lack of desire turns inward or outward in a forceful manner, then, co-operators will begin to reflect the body-self types of dominating and disciplining characters. It is an ironic tension of the free-market that all of the touted choices we have on offer actually serve to regulate and provide regimens that oppress rather than free agency.

Co-operatives seem to have that thing they bring people first, they bring the involvement first, whereas a social enterprise is about bringing the business first. (Co-operator Five)
These are the distinguishing features of co-operative engagement -- co-operators and their ethical engagements are characterised by people first, rather than business. Co-operators one, two and three express the dyadic relation of being-with that shows potential to transcend to being-for. Their embodiment experiences will be decisive factors in whether this transcendence occurs. The problem of the sorts of engagements offered by co-operator five’s and six’s emphasis on dominant narratives is that they correlate with the values of neo-liberalism so much so that the only result may be the inconsequentiality of meetings that are about being-aside.

A friend described me as, ‘I’m a left-wing person with right-wing processes’. (Co-operator Five)

The limited ethical possibilities of the mirroring body-self type are demonstrated by co-operator five’s statement because images always come from elsewhere. The tendency of co-operator four and one toward the mirroring body-self type signifies how these body-self types emerge in the adoption of defensive strategies of personal survival. For co-operator five he thinks that his actions reflect socially transformative practices, however, because he is unaware of his infiltrated consciousness he re-perpetrates problematic aspects of master narratives that then become offensive strategies of survival. He is an uncertain mirroring body-self type because, as the following section demonstrates, his [resi]stance moves from one of consuming ideals to one of force.
Disciplined and Dominating Body-Self Types: the irony is that market freedoms often lead to force and self-regulation

Oppression you seek population control. Oppression to divide and conquer is your goal. Oppression I swear that hatred is your home. Oppression you just won’t leave bad enough alone. But oppression I won’t let you near me. Oppression you shall learn to fear me.


MCC and many co-operatives thus face a difficult and ironic situation. Should they mirror the values of the free-market, their co-operative principles and traditions risk being diminished and their productive desire co-opted within an efficiency and productivity discourse. If co-operators respond to the issue of control by seeking to restore order, predictability and separate into enclaves they might turn to opposition characteristic of dominating body-self types or the regimentation of disciplined body-selves; the overall result being, *moral communities.* These forms of togetherness are extremely unlikely to foster narrative repair, rather in the case of dominating and disciplining body-self types narrative despair will be expressed.

The irony in the neo-liberal tale is that rather than the free-market leading to unbridled freedoms, further constraints have been placed on individual’s abilities to enact socio-political changes. Dominant institutions and narratives have become the official measures of success.

That leads me to criticise the community sector as being incredibly undisciplined and unprofessional in terms of accountability in running community enterprises. Particularly some of the large community organisations, I am constantly shocked at how poorly they account for money, the wastefulness! Even the growing degree by which staff just see their work as a job. (Co-operator Five)
Undisciplined, unprofessional and shock are very strongly directed terms from co-operator five who turns his frustration outward in a forceful manner. His outrage at the level of mis-management that can occur in some community enterprises is displaced toward others. In this instance, he is still dyadic because he looks toward others, but Frank (1995, 48) referring to similar cases suggests that ‘the aggression of this turning against others may reflect the bitterness of the dominating body’s loss of desire’. Co-operator five might be said here to reflect bitterness. Expressing dissatisfaction with the loss of moral purpose almost in community work with staff who just see their work as a job, he added:

Like, you know, I should get an ergonomic chair, an ergonomic keyboard because I need that! Whereas I worked through the processes where when I started working with communities I had to go out and find my own chair and table!...I think that it is ridiculous that I can go out and get funding really easily for desks and chairs and I can’t find funding for workers! Who is going to make a difference in the program? Not the desk and chair, in the last twelve months we got $60,000 of funding for desks, chairs and computers and I can’t get funding for workers!

Here, co-operator five’s contestation and obvious frustration with the neo-liberal competitive funding arrangements is expressed very clearly. He outlined further that as a resistive strategy:

We try to get funding for desks and chairs which frees up money for workers – so we can look at it that way, but I just think that it’s ridiculous!

It signals the ironic tensions and disciplining affect that political-economic narratives can have on counter-identities. What co-operator five does in response to this is draw on a business regimen to restore order and predictability.

Co-operator six’s account began to indicate aspects of this problematic too in his reference to those unemployed types where, “people hadn’t developed the attitude
that is necessary to get employment”. His statement emulated a master narrative fragment of government stereotypes about unemployed people. Perhaps his account is most problematic because, even though he is not a mirroring body-self type, he assists other people to become mirroring body-self types:

[The community decides on the sector in the Community Action Plan (CAP)]. One of them came up and it was education and employment. That’s a pretty fundamental base for any disadvantaged community -- lack of employment, education and access to training -- addressing the barriers, these are the things that people engage in that give them a sense of belonging in a community. Our society has designated that as being indicators of being a meaningful member of a community so too speak. (Co-operator Six)

Co-operator six proposed that the community in question needs a dominant perspective, designated by society. He does not challenge this in fact he encourages the dominant image to be emulated by others. For co-operator six, “addressing the barriers, give[s] them a sense of belonging in a community”, but we know from co-operator two that the forms of togetherness he experienced in his co-operative provided him with a sense of community and belonging not found in other mainstream employment activities. Co-operator six’s association with these others is not in a social transformative capacity but rather as a means to foster strategies of survival for disadvantaged communities. He, like co-operator five, provides an offensive strategy of personal survival. Nothing is narratively repaired from either co-operator five’s or six’s account.

Co-operator five does what Frank’s (1995, 47) illness-dominated body-self does, ‘assumes the contingency of disease but never quite accept it’. In contrast to this, co-operator one and six reflects the characteristics of the mirroring body-self and the disciplined body-self who share a commonality of fate in their search for
predictability in the face of these contingencies. Co-operator one’s resistance is turned into a mirror as well when she discussed the need for cost-recovery if people, or outsiders of the co-operative, come to use equipment. Simply to be viable the co-operative must consider this option, but reinforcing co-operator five’s earlier point, ‘Yeah we got some grant money [for equipment]’ (Co-operator One).

How disciplined and dominating body-self types restore predictability to these contingencies is different, however. Co-operator five expressed his rage outward, he shows potential to become a dominating body-self and because of this, even where his account has repudiated dominant narratives, his story never becomes a counterstory. Co-operator six, however, maintains his control inwardly: the dominating body-self ‘displaces rage against contingency onto other people,’ while the disciplined body-self turns the lack of control inward (Frank 1995, 47).

Co-operative principles continue to be compromised with the rise of an enterprise culture in community development sectors. As co-operator five and six’s beliefs in enterprise models showed, these offer worrying possibilities for communities too. If enterprise models become imposed upon people as a strategy for unemployment or training whereby people must be compliant or lose benefits, then, these are acts of domination and force, not transformation. These are practices that will result in moral rather than ethical communities and counterstories that can facilitate narrative repair will be suppressed.

These examples demonstrate how co-operative relations can be used in non-co-operative and exclusive contexts where they fall to defensive strategies of survival.
over being social transformative. Co-operator five shifted between being the
disciplined body-self that used business plans as self-regimentation, to a
frustrated, forceful dominating body-self type. These matters of embodiment
indicate that co-operator five struggles to maintain defensive strategies of personal
survival in the neo-liberal climate and in fact, he uses some master narrative
themes and fragments as strategies of offence. Compared to co-operator three’s
strategy for contestation of the competitive tendering process, co-operator five is
not driven by the sort of moral purpose that demands dominant groups pay
attention. The difference is that co-operator three seeks to tell a counterstory --
most likely because he is a communicative body-self type -- co-operator five does
not indicate this kind of purpose; he reflects ideologies and purposes of dominant
narratives too much, even where resistance is piecemeal. The sort of stories that
disciplined and dominating body-self types tell are thus counter narratives that
reinforce oppressive aspects of master narratives in unethical ways.

One sees, then, that the embodied experience of oppression is a central part to
understanding the human search for freedom and social transformation. Humans
by nature might be said to have desires to achieve goals, but as Trunpga (1976)
asked “if the [goals and desires] arise from habitual patterns and negative
emotions is the freedom to pursue them true freedom or just a myth”? Being-
aside relations are a myth of togetherness overcome by the relation of being-with.
The desire for social change that arises from a communicative body-self, however,
can signify the possibility of being-for. In fact, as Frank proposed, counterstories
may well be the ethical practice of communicative body-self types and it is
possible that being-for is an ethical relation that this type also embodies as well as
A body that seeks to dominate by force is not an ethical choice that facilitates narrative repair and frees moral agency, it merely reinforces a dominant narrative of oppression that, in spite of Ben Harper’s claims can be taught to fear the oppressed, is not ethical practice or choice. Those people who mirror stylish ideals might be said to respond from narrative despair whereby they seek options for defensive strategies of personal survival. If desire is driven by a goal that seeks to impose regimens and discipline upon others, as co-operator five and six started to show, it is not ethical either.

These forms of resistance result in narrative despair and the return to moral rather than ethical community relations. From the appreciation of embodiment matters for co-operators, it seems possible to suggest that a meta-narrative of embodiment figures in Cooper’s (1997) distinction. This meta-narrative is outlined in Table 9 and premised on the principles and body-action problems that Frank described. The meta-narrative provides the basis to consider co-operator two’s and three’s experiences of embodiment and how these contribute not only to narrative repair that frees moral agency, but to the possibility of forming of ethical communities. This leads us to the final parts of Nelson’s work which argues that oppressive representations can be repaired by counterstories, however, a central consideration of narrative repair needs to be the structural and political changes that are needed to arrive at ethical communities.
TABLE 9
META-NARRATIVE OF EMBODIMENT IN MORAL & ETHICAL COMMUNITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CONTROL</th>
<th>BODY-RELATEDNESS</th>
<th>OTHER-RELATEDNESS</th>
<th>DESIRE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MORAL COMMUNITIES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Predictability:</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Dissociated:</td>
<td>Monadic:</td>
<td>Lack of Desire:</td>
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<td>predictability through</td>
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<td>the establishment of law</td>
<td>self. Dissociated</td>
<td>Characteristic of the</td>
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<td>a basis for <em>being-for</em>.</td>
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<td><em>being-aside</em>.</td>
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<td><strong>ETHICAL COMMUNITIES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Contingency:</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Associated: an</td>
<td>Dyadic: interrelated</td>
<td>Productive Desire:</td>
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<td>beings based on shared</td>
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<td><em>being-for</em>.</td>
<td>transcend into <em>being-for</em>.</td>
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<td>inclusion’ (Butler 1995, 41).</td>
<td>ethical disposition.</td>
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The Communicative Body-Self: the ability to recognise others requires the ability to [re]cognise oppression.

It is possible to surmise from table 9 that communities which embody normative characteristics of: productive desire; an acceptance of contingencies; a dyadic nature of being; and, are associated selves, are ethical communities. Taking this one step further to an embodied conception of community it is probable that ethical communities are fostered mostly by communicative body-self types. These communicative body-self types tell counterstories that can facilitate narrative repair of diminished counter-identities. They embody an ethical relation of being-for which means that oppression can be not only recognised by them, but [re]cognised (in the sense of thinking about people and resistance differently).

Two of the co-operators’ embodied experiences suggest living examples of good counterstories that contribute to the formation of ethical communities. These counterstories offer the possibility that socially transformative practices can be generated for dominant groups to take up new identifications and definitions about co-operators: their moral purposes, their commitments and activities. If taken up, the narrative repair of the co-operative story can be achieved and counter-identities can free their moral agency to work toward social change.

Productive desire expresses the demand for social transformation that is dyadic and associated with others; these are embodiment characteristics of the communicative body-self. Individually, co-operators from one to four do not represent entirely Frank’s notion of monadic bodies because they do not see
themselves as existentially separate and alone: if they did they would not be
members of a co-operative. But, this embodiment issue is problematised by the
realities of co-operator one and four being mirroring body-self types, a type which
is monadic itself. All four people are attracted to co-operatives because they
provide a place for certain forms of togetherness to be embodied, the distinction is
that co-operators one and four, being mirrors, means that they do not embody the
ethical relation of \textit{being-for}. The truly dyadic body is based on a relationship of
recognition that ‘even though this is a body outside of mine…\textit{this other has to do
with me, as I with it}’ (Frank 1995, 35, original emphasis). This is the embodiment
of Levinas’ ethical relation which can recognise others but at the same time not
become the other. Something is always left unfinalised, unique, different and
unknowable.

Co-operators two and three reflect dyadic bodies of the communicative body-self
type which:

Represent[s] an ethical choice to place oneself in a different relationship to
others…dyadic bodies exist for each other: they exist for the task of
discovering what it means to live for other bodies. The dyadic body is a
lived reality, not simply a conceptual ethical ideal. (Frank 1995, 37)

The communicative body-self, with its emphasis on recognition, is thus able to
recognise others and work with them in ethical forms of engagement in ways that
the disciplined, mirroring and dominating body-self types are not. The latter three
body-self types do not make ethical choices to place themselves in a different
relationship to others. This may well be because of their embodiment responses
to Frank’s four principles of control, desire, body-relatedness and other-
relatedness. Indeed, co-operator one and four seek to make these choices, but
their actions fall to defensive strategies of survival in the face of contingency beyond their control. Co-operators five and six, however, do not seek to make such choices, they place themselves in relationships with others based on dominant stereotypes and power dynamics. They have diminished qualities of association in their forms of togetherness because of the narratives they embody which they ultimately use as offensive strategies of personal survival.

In contrast, co-operators two and three embody strong qualities of association in their forms of togetherness and they intentionally aim to discover what it means to live for other bodies. This is the ideal person to create the ethical community and as such, their counterstories are important. For example, co-operator three:

I mean I came in as a student, but actually, right from that very day I was a part of a network of local people...I then lived in an intentional community house in 1989 to 1993 which had a voluntary, but very intentional vocation mission and sense of what we were doing in terms of hospitality.

What crystallizes these co-operative bodies and their ethical dimensions is the way in which they are being dyadic and producing desire. Co-operator two said:

It’s very easy to develop a meaningful dialogue and communication with all of the local businesses purely because they are people that you might see at the local park.

Co-operator two embodies a dyadic relation with others who might in other instances be seen as opponents. This showed his ability to see the “face” of other business people in a manner that embodies an ethical relation beyond merely civility. His relations are living examples of the act of transcendence from being-with to being-for; his very beingness is communicative. Co-operator two and three express Frank’s notion of moral moments where
The moral moment occurs when we who imagine ourselves as a “single cognizant and judging ‘I’” must decide whether to give equal weight to the other cognizant and knowing I’s around us. We acknowledge, or we do not acknowledge, that the very possibility of our self and thoughts has always depended on others. We enter into dialogue, or not. (Frank 2004, 45)

Both co-operators are people who have experienced a moral moment and they intentionally seek to create ethical relations. Co-operator four, for example, cannot transcend being-with others to being-for, in spite of her shared forms of togetherness she continued to see herself as a single, cognizant I. Her views that governments and others do not understand co-operatives and the way in which she sees her activities as dis-embedded from communal relations with others is not an ethical relation. This leads her to follow a defensive strategy of personal survival over socially transformative practices.

This defensive strategy of survival on her part does not enable her to, ‘see reflections of [her] own suffering in the bodies of others’ (Frank 1995, 49). This is in contrast to co-operator three who has a desiring body that ‘wants to and needs to relieve the suffering of others’ (Frank 1995, 49). Co-operator two and three, have aligned themselves with others communing in a shared story of cooperation that facilitates ethical relations and the openings of being-for. The recursive nature of the embodied experience of oppression and resistance means that this alignment makes them both communicative body-self types, and being communicative body-self types leads them to these choices. Their strong moral self-definition enables them to make these choices in a reflexive and evaluative manner which shapes the ethical nature of their resistance.
Peoples’ being in dialogical relationships with others is made flesh in some co-operative contexts, then, particularly in the co-operatives of co-operators two and three. For Levinas, ‘the transcendence of being through the ethical relation with the “face” of the other’ is the moral moment at which transformation of oppressive representations and identifications can occur (Levinas cited in Lipari 2004, 126). This happened with co-operator two showing recognition of the face of the other business people.

Because the concept of the face for Levinas ‘transcends social categories of identity’, deeply ethical and socially transformative practices are possible when we enable ourselves to see beyond these categories and distinctions (Lipari 2004, 134). Co-operators two and three do not “pass” their counter-identities off as some people often do with respect to the stigma associated with “spoiled identities” (Goffman in Frank 1995, 32). Their membership in a co-operative is kind-of similar to what Frank called a “reverse passing”, where by advertising it, they turn stigmas connected with particular identities on their head when they could have easily not contested the dominant perspective by just passing themselves off as something else, for example, community workers or business operators.

The counter narratives of co-operator one and four participate in reverse passing because they too do resist negative stereotypes and stigmas about co-operative activities and identities by merely being members in their respective co-operatives. But, in order for them to contribute to socially transformative practices their body-self types need to move away from being mirrors to
communicative body-selves who embody the ethical relation of *being-for*. In some ways the spoiled co-operative identities that co-operator four and one struggle may have been more easily adopted because of their respective weak moral self-definition and inadvertent moral self-definition.

The ethical relation of *being-for*, then, is not only itself an ideal like the communicative body-self, but also a counterstory to the dominant forms of togetherness on offer in competitive social arrangements of neo-liberalism. So, too, is the communicative body-self who embodies the ethical relation of *being-for* and brings forth counterstories, a counterstory character.

Communicative body-self types who are dyadic, associated and productive in their desire for social change can express narrative repair because these selves are told into being through counterstories. Narrative repair assists to free moral agency for co-operators to embody their alternative social visions and remain committed to co-operative principles. The subtle differences between counter narratives and counterstories is illustrated further, the ethical consumer guide produced by co-operator one in her co-operative. In some ways the guide is a representation of her resistance and contestation of oppressive consumerist master narratives. It is offered to dominant groups in the local community, not only to co-operative members and if these groups take these views up and change their cherished consumption patterns, then, some changes have occurred in the system that supports unethical production and sales of goods. This points to possibilities of transformation of not only identity representations, but potential changes -- albeit small changes -- to socio-political structures as well.
Another variation to the process of re-identification that could occur from co-operator one’s counterstory is that business groups, where taking up the additional counterstories told within the consumer guide itself, may start to see that ethical businesses are ‘real’ business options too. In this respect, ethical business is re-defined and dominant groups are offered the opportunity to see that it is not necessary to conduct business solely in the name of profit, competition and efficiency. The stereotypical view that ethical consumerism is participated in by only a few with certain values and an environmental agenda, can also be challenged by the guide.

The moral agency of co-operator one is not freed, however, to embody a socially transformative vision because her contestation for the rest of her account shifts to being mere repudiation. The other parts of dominant master narratives that she leaves intact serve to re-capture the co-operator within dominant identity representations. This could be said to be the result of her mirroring body-self, trying to survive under neo-liberal arrangements.

The way in which moral purpose figures in one’s resistance, then, might also contribute to whether actions become defensive strategies of survival or socially transformative practices. Indeed, it seems that moral purpose figures consistently with the ethical relation of being-for as well. Frank (1995, 164) proposed that:

The communicative body creates itself, recursively, as an ideal that guides choosing which actions can bring itself into being. The simplest analogy is faith: one must have faith in order to be faithful, and being faithful increases the quality of faith. Like faith, the communicative body is always an incomplete project; recursive processes continuously loop, never conclude.
Moral recognition is recursively created in co-operator two’s and three’s accounts because they continue to maintain strong faith in moral purposes beyond the co-operative. Identity, as Taylor (1994) noted ‘crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others,’ which co-operators two and three embodied (quoted in Frank 2004, 24). But, as Nelson (2001) rightly contended, dialogical relations can still be distorted relations, and co-operator four’s frustrations with dominant government structures might see her seek a finalising word about others that closes off any further possibilities for dialogue and hence, narrative repair. That is what co-operator six did when he talked about disadvantaged communities and unemployed people, he categorised their identities and closed off dialogue. His story of nonmoral self-definition does not conduct narrative repair but reproduces narrative despair.

Narrative repair occurs for co-operators two and three and not the other four co-operators because, to draw on Frank’s (2004, 29) statement ‘people were able to see their moral selves revealed in their actions, as actors in a story not imposed from elsewhere’. Co-operators five and six impose a narrative from elsewhere that clouds their moral self-definition. Some co-operatives seem to have fallen into the traps of exclusion and non-co-operative relations where productive desire might be driven by an unethical goal, which means when reached it is but a myth of freedom. The transformation of oppressive identifications involves more than simply telling a counterstory; it requires others in dominant groups to embody (incorporate) the person or sub-group’s counterstory. To do that, it must be possible to transcend the relation of being-with to the relation of being-for. These processes of how individuals transform their oppressive beliefs and values is
beyond the scope of this research, however, it is certainly necessary that for true transformation to occur, recognition of oppression by dominant groups themselves will be necessary. The ethical relation of being-for ought to be an ideal and it ought to be recognised that co-operators with strong moral self-definition and the ability to tell counterstories embody a communicative body-self that not only can, but do, foster ethical communities.

Conclusions

Counterstories embody a productive desire for social transformation that is generated by the teller’s embodiment of moral purpose. The most likely body-self type to tell counterstories is the communicative body-self, a body-self that recursively embodies counterstories as an ethical practice. Communicative body-self types see their stories as needing to be shared with others, they are dialogical beings whose dyadic nature means that their gaze is always directed toward others. This means that counterstories need to be told through these bodies so that dominant groups might hear and affirm the re-identifications and re-definitions.

Not only are communicative body-self types dyadic, but their sense of moral purpose provides guidance to them through contingencies beyond their control, whereas for other body-self types desire comes to lack. This moral purpose is also bound up with the need to tell the sorts of stories they do. Stories that are lacking this desire are thus unlikely to conduct narrative repair that frees moral agency for socially transformative practices to emerge. This lack of desire was expressed in co-operator one’s and four’s accounts who both reflected mirroring body-self
Co-operator six lacks desire too, but he turns this inward to become a disciplined body-self, whereas co-operator five becomes forceful and hence, a dominating body-self type. It is possible to suggest, then, that the communicative body-self maintains a productive desire by working toward an alternative social vision via the dialogical and dyadic nature of their beingness. This beingness includes the embodiment of the ethical relation of being-for which provides the motivation for this body-self to tell its counterstories. In turn, the telling of counterstories can provide in a sense a transcendental passing from being-with to being-for.

If co-operatives are important because they provide a site to enact and commit to principles that can foster ethical communities, they have further importance for the imagination of being-for ethical relations too. In encounters that reflect the economic master narrative, consequences only matter in so far as the bottom line has been met and profits are generated for shareholders. These are still consequences but they will be the morally decisive consequences of whether co-operative principles become subsumed by economic values. Co-operatives that continue to contest master narratives of economic neo-liberalism, like those which co-operators two and three are members of, offer the potential to foster ethical responses to oppression that create ethically motivated alternatives. These kinds of co-operatives are embodied examples of Butler’s (1995) permanently open, permanently contingent, and always contested notion of community; to close them off risks foreclosure of future claims for inclusion.
The barely being-aside relations of neo-liberalism provide little opportunity to embody socially transformative practices, and instead, often cultivate and enforce defensive strategies of personal survival. For master narrative strategists, these have practices are used as offensive strategies of personal survival. Political-economic arrangements that ultimately foster defensive and offensive strategies are the result of narratives of despair. In these narratives it is easily forgotten that our fate as humans is intricately entwined with our relationships with each other.

The imposition of norms of competition and efficiency in community development and co-operative settings is only directed toward moral communities; which ironically also risks decaying into the projected neo-liberal ideal of the autonomous, self-sufficient, independent and isolated self. Counterstories, like those that co-operator two and three tell, are needed to conduct narrative repair to free counter-identities and their moral agency to embody and work toward an alternative social vision. By the telling and embodiment of these counterstories these two co-operators also foster Cooper’s notion of the ethical community.
CONCLUSION

NARRATIVE REPAIR OR NARRATIVE DESPAIR?

Many visitors come here and ask us why we have such an unusual business. But, I say to them: Don’t you think it’s strange that more organisations in the world aren’t like this one?

George Cheney. Interview: Work-member of Mondragon.

Cheney’s (1994) interview with a worker-member of Mondragon shows that co-operators themselves are often perplexed by why people ask them why they have ‘such an unusual business.’ To some co-operators, the corporate hierarchical model seems abstract, and they, for their part, too wonder why people do not form co-operatives. “Don’t you think it’s strange that more organisations in the world aren’t like this one”, the interviewee asks (Cheney 1994). If anything, this statement signals how the two organisational forms are distinctive from each other, and that the intrinsic morality -- the identities, values and relationships -- embodied within many co-operative organisations is not the same as that of hierarchical businesses or non-profit organisations.

Recently, the traffic has become decidedly one-way; while co-operatives such as Mondragon have sought to transfer to corporate arrangements, there are not many examples of non-profits that have sought to transfer their organisations to co-operative structures. Most organisations seem to continue to be re-structuring to emulate a new hybrid mixture of market-charitable rationales offered by neo-liberalism, rationales that see individuals as the sources of problems not structures, conditions or systems.
Indeed, many community workers comment that this hybrid mix is the only choice they have, an irony in view of the limitless choices supposedly on offer in a free-market system. If community organisations, and even co-operatives, are to survive in the neo-liberal climate they appear to be forced to adopt company by guarantee structures or corporate arrangements more compatible with the dominant neo-liberal system. There is little choice in these decisions at all. If this is the only story that is told, however, it will be assumed as a fait accompli that dominant economic narratives have subsumed communal values and co-operative principles. What is left of an alternative social vision will become relegated to the chronicles of history and those co-operative principles that once formed the value and practice base of community development will be washed away with the competitive, economic tide. The result is a narrative of despair, bereft of moral purpose.

The present study has uncovered other stories to these dominant and oppressive master narratives; two stories of co-operators who continue to embody an alternative social vision in the face of these socio-political and economic constraints. In spite of the constricted moral agency that those two co-operators experienced from the oppressive master narrative of neo-liberalism, they continued to resist and tell their counterstories. The co-operators seek to practice their forms of togetherness and varied forms of community work regardless of neo-liberalism. They seek to embody an alternative that can narratively repair the diminished counter-identities of co-operative and community development practices in distinct and unique ways.
It was suggested that the two co-operators did this because they are communicative body-self types. An ideal body-self type that Frank suggested embodies an ethical relation that exists for others. Whether the two counterstories emerged because the co-operators are communicative body-self types, or the counterstories they told shaped them into communicative body-self types is not possible to pin down. What is probable, however, is that it is because they embody Bauman’s ideal ethical relation of being-for that they care about others enough to embody and tell their counterstories as lived realities.

Not all of the six co-operator stories told successful counterstories though; two for example, remained counter narratives that offered opposition to dominant economic narratives, but did not replace any parts of the master narrative enough to facilitate narrative repair. There was little that contributed to re-identification and re-definition on their part that dominant groups could take up and motivate them to give up precious access to resources previously denied to them, as Nelson argued they would need to. The work that is expected of counterstories needs to be motivated by someone who embodies the ethical relation of being-for because in the relations of being-with the encounter is still an incomplete meeting of selves. This is particularly so for those counter narratives told from mirroring body-self types.

The choices made by mirroring body-self type co-operators appeared to be motivated by the defensive strategies of personal survival that neo-liberalism encourages. Yet, it did not mean that those co-operators did not embody desires for co-operative principles and a commitment to an alternative form of
togetherness; it reflected rather the constraints placed on their moral agency to embody an alternative social vision. Their forms of moral protest were paradoxically dependent on the continuing existence of master narratives for their vitality; hence, they were termed *counter narratives* to contrast them with Nelson’s (2001) notion of counterstories and alternative stories.

Another two co-operators appeared so heavily to mirror oppressive arrangements it was hard not to think they were not master narrativists themselves in disguise. Their stories too reflected offensive strategies of survival that indicated an infiltrated consciousness in how they understood themselves and others. These co-operators re-enforced dominant misconceptions, they drew on stereotypes and narratively positioned people as separate from them in spite of their expressed commitments to empowerment as community workers. This makes sense in so far as they represented dominating and disciplining body-self types.

The importance of these two accounts is how they further highlighted how co-operative practices as understood by co-operators differ significantly to the way in which community workers perceive it. For these master strategists, co-operative activity is an offensive and defensive strategy in a highly competitive community sector. The study found that in spite of this some co-operatives still offered completely opposite identities and values for people to identify with, however, and they continue the theme of moral protest long embedded in the history of the co-operative movement. Why and how they do so was explored using ethically-nuanced narrative analyses derived from the works of Hilde Lindeman Nelson (2001) and Arthur Frank (1995). The ways in which master narratives and
counterstories were identified in recent theoretical approaches to co-operatives and community development were understood within Terry Cooper’s (1997) moral and ethical community distinction. How co-operators could resist and whether they continued to contribute to their desired goals of ethical communities were also considered in this context of Cooper’s (1997) distinction.

For some community and co-operative groups, neo-liberalism is oppressive in its drive for competition, efficiency, productivity and diversification. Indeed, this study has certainly considered neo-liberalism from a perspective that sees it as oppressive to human flourishing. It is also oppressive in the identities it seeks to foster -- a kind-of homogenous, competitive-oriented and independent individual. If Bauman’s notion of the ethical relation of being-for is to left chance or coincidence as he proposed it need be, then, neo-liberal relations are unlikely to ever offer the probability of its embodiment. There must be practical application and discussion of the ethical relations that formulate ethical communities, this study has gone some way to beginning these.

The way that neo-liberalism curtails moral agency to enact social change can also be seen in how some co-operative practices lean toward exclusion to try and safeguard what is left of their principles; they turn to homogeneity and sometimes feel that forcefulness is the only expression of their frustrations at the economic constraints and tensions. The co-operators stories exhibited a variety of responses to dominant social and economic trends from social capture to moral protest. Those who illustrated most resistance to social capture exhibited strong moral-definition; that is, they could reflect and evaluate on a history of past
performances and use this to justify and ratify their present actions. Strong moral self-definition was also demonstrated by the embodiment of purposeful and substantive commitments to co-operative principles and an alternative social vision. It also seemed that strong moral self-definition characterised those communicative-body self types who embodied the ethical relation of being-for others. This allowed the co-operators who embodied a communicative body-self type to tell counterstories, whereas co-operators with weak moral self-definition did not have a presence of this and told instead, counter narratives. Certainly, those characters in the study with nonmoral self-definition struggled to embody a relation of being-with let alone embody being-for and often they re-told oppressive master narratives.

The findings of this aspect of the study are important for two more reasons. In the first instance they give flesh to Nelson’s master narrative and counterstory theory, which at times appears to treat oppression and resistance in a disembodied manner where these powerful actions are acting upon individuals, separate to them. Secondly, they provide the basis to consider questions of community and the forms of togetherness within them from an embodied perspective.

Not all forms of moral protest, however, can lead to genuine social transformation. Cooper’s (1997) distinction between moral communities and ethical communities was also used to explain why some co-operative responses would not lead to the kind of open-ended, inclusive, liberative engagements characteristic of ethical communities; instead, they could be seen to adopt
defensive and offensive strategies and adherence to ideologies or traditions that are characteristic of moral communities.

Co-operatives are something that people join and belong to, and the level of personal participation and commitment is usually high. Frank’s (1995) theories of body-self types was used to evaluate whether co-operators’ experiences were primarily defensive and self-regarding, or whether they were focused on the transformation of self and other through communicative social transformation. This study illustrated the complexity of the dynamics of co-operative engagement. In doing so, it identified the significance of that embodiment plays in co-operative forms of togetherness, oppression, resistance and transformation. Despite the move to co-opt co-operatives to neo-liberal agendas in government and business, some co-operatives survive and thrive precisely because they want to do things in a different way. Additionally, they flourish in their forms of togetherness because they begin in the relations of being-with.

What was established as a key determinant in the study was that the strong socially transformative possibilities of co-operatives depends not on ideology or economy, but on strong sense of moral self-definition combined with moral purpose. This promotes a sense of communicative body-self directly engaged in other–regarding activities which benefits concrete others both within and without. The self-awareness and self-understanding of the dialogical communicative body-self means that contestation to dominant injustices is always part of their identity. Additionally, because this communicative body-self desires and embodies the ethical relation it can do this without foreclosing inclusion in the future or the
alterity of the other. To co-opt this to government agendas risks killing it, should this succeed the neo-liberal bulwarks will have been successful tacticians of defence.

Further research needs to be done to identify how the transformation of identifications and identities can be translated to systemic and structural changes. The task for community development theorists is to examine the role that narrative researcher provides to facilitate these purposes of the practice. Nelson’s work has concentrated on the transformation of oppressive identity representations, however, this study has argued that these will need to be coupled with social and political structural changes for real narrative repair to occur. Co-operators will continue to embody an alternative social vision and commit to co-operative principles; without the necessary structural changes, however, counterstory repair remains at the representational level only.

The question can come full circle again, to ask, what agency is freed to do? Telling counterstories must be understood not just as act of liberal freedoms of expression, but that there is sometimes significant pain associated with telling these stories which needs to be explored. Other studies need to also consider the potential for co-operative principles to ossify, homogenise and be non-co-operative because it is very likely that neo-liberal arrangements will force co-operators to adopt exclusive enclaves that close-off inclusion to protect themselves. A greater understanding of the recursive nature of embodied oppression and resistance will assist in this task this study has sought to offer some beginning directions on this. Furthermore, the development of further
appreciation in research that being in opposition ought to have an ethical focus is needed in the foreground rather than background of analyses. The discussion that has been provided on embodiment goes someway, but by no means all the way, to contributing to the largely absent discussion of embodiment in communitarian and other debates.

These research considerations ought to specifically seek to: first understand; second appreciate; third appraise; and finally, establish the transformative questions that arise. An important finding of this research is that the role of moral protest and cooperation figures significantly in ethical communities, but we need communicative body-selves to participate in these acts of resistance for ethical social transformation to ensue. In many instances, co-operators come together to embody an alternative and commit to co-operative principles that enable them to resist the oppressive identifications and structures of neo-liberalism. But, the oppressive arrangements of neo-liberalism silence communicative body-selves from telling their stories -- perhaps co-operatives provide a spatial site of resistance where this telling can occur.

Those who currently practice these forms of moral protest do this most effectively because they have a distinctive means of being in togetherness that embodies moral purpose. The moral consequences of cooperation and moral protest exhibited through some co-operative practices are decisive for their ability to bring about ethical communities. Community development needs to hear these counterstories to reclaim its diminished counter-identity in the face of these neo-liberal oppressive master narratives.
This study has not proposed that a mere model of ethical community for transplantation onto to communities will resolve their ills, as other past approaches have done, but it has sought a manner of dialogical progression that renders community, permanently open, permanently contingent so that future claims of inclusion are not closed off. That permanency of contingency and openness requires the communicative body-self of co-operators as guides to begin ethical conversations. This study shows, for those strongly committed to such endeavours, what is required to sustain such commitments and it illustrates, also, why it is important to do so. It offers a message for counter-identities more broadly -- that resistance to the dominant institutional arrangements does not automatically foster ethical communities. The replacement of domination with force or imposition is not ethical resistance. It is likely that this response is the result of the embodiment of the narrative of despair that oppressive arrangements can bring into being. The counterstory to this is the embodiment of narrative repair that really frees moral agency to embody an alternative, and ethical, social vision.
EPILOGUE

Flashback: end of conceptual frames page 58

…Frank – who was looking at me strangely. He’d asked me a question and I’d been off in another world.
‘I said, are you one of those people who thinks that the fact that we die renders life meaningless?...’I believe it is only because we die that life has meaning.’
‘Eh?’...
‘OK, what do you think is the most important part of any story?’
I shrugged. ‘All of it.’
‘Sure,’ he said. ‘In a sense you’re completely right. But take these two scripts you just read: what’s wrong with them?
‘I put it in the reports.’
‘Remind me.’
I took a deep breath. ‘Plot holes, poor character development, clichéd dialogue, predictable narrative – or incoherent narrative, lack of tension. Want me to go on?’
Frank glanced at the reports. ‘You used one similar phrase for both scripts. You remember what it is?’
I shook my head.
Frank read. ‘“The ending doesn’t make sense.”’ And ‘“The ending seems simply tacked on.”’
…‘My conclusion is that it’s because we’re all living the story of our own lives – and we don’t know the ending…we want to know how other people’s stories turn out because we want to know how our story turns out. Someone once said that every story at some level asks the same basic question: what’s the best way to live?...Death is the end of our story,’ Frank said. ‘It’s the final curtain. It draws everything to a close, and so it gives meaning to the life just lived’…

‘How the ending fits may not be obvious at first, but with the passing of time people often come to understand.’

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