



Labour Market Dynamics
Research Programme

Innovative research in employment

VOLUNTEERING FOR A JOB:

Converting Social Capital into Paid Employment¹

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PART ONE: VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN WEST AUCKLAND

Introduction

‘It isn’t what you know, but who you know’. This truism encapsulates much of the meaning of the concept of social capital. Indeed, this paper inquires into how the labour market outcomes of volunteers might be affected through ‘getting to know’ others. The truism is a simplification of the concept, of course. Social capital is primarily concerned with the resources embedded in social relationships, and how individuals can access and use them. As noted by Field (2003:44), the greatest value of social capital analysis lies in its ‘interest in the pay-offs that arise from our relationships’.

One such ‘pay-off’ for an individual may occur through an ability to use their social capital to further their prospects in the labour market. A number of studies have shown that friends, acquaintances or relatives can offer important pathways to employment. Arthur, Inkson and Pringle (1999) note that a study in New Zealand found 55 percent of the participants had sourced their most recent job entirely through personal network mechanisms (as cited in Dupuis, Inkson, & McLaren, 2004). A recent study indicated that 40 to 50 percent of jobs are found in this way in the United States (Mouw, 2003).

Social relationships, developed in voluntary associations, may provide an individual with personal networks, and consequently social capital, that can influence their labour market outcomes. That local and/or central government may be able to facilitate this social capital development is of central interest to this study.

Objectives of the study

This paper builds on Working Paper No. 16, from the Labour Market Dynamics Research Programme (Davidson, 2005). The concept of social capital, and its application in this research project, is discussed in that working paper.

The study focuses on the experiences of volunteers who are affiliated to voluntary associations based in the region administered by Waitakere City Council (to be referred to as ‘West Auckland’).

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Explore the extent to which voluntary associations provide an environment conducive to the development of social capital;
2. Explore the extent to which an individual can convert the social capital they have developed in this environment into economic capital, via the labour market;
3. Consider how government can actively facilitate this process through policy mechanisms.

The research is limited to a small sample and it is restricted to participants who volunteer within one geographical region. The results cannot be considered indicative of the characteristics of the national

population of volunteers. Nevertheless, the thesis upon which this paper is based offers a modest contribution to knowledge about the relationships between social capital developed in the voluntary sector and the labour market, and the implications for policymakers of them.

The fieldwork comprised qualitative research involving face-to-face unstructured interviews, with six participants, which were carried out during April and May 2005. Its primary purpose was to explore how the participants' experiences as volunteers had influenced their labour market outcomes, and to identify the key themes arising from their experiences. These themes, together with those developed through the critical review of the literature, informed a questionnaire that was used in a telephone survey. That survey was carried out during July and August 2005.

Heterogeneity Within Voluntary Associations

An individual's social capital may be a valuable asset in assisting them to find paid employment. Further, the voluntary sector may be a fertile environment for an individual to develop social capital, due to its heterogeneous nature and the possibilities it offers for social interaction with a wide range of people. It is proposed that social capital can be heuristically useful for understanding the value of resources embedded in these social networks.

Central to the proposition that the social capital developed through voluntary activity may lead to paid employment is the notion of bridging social capital. A volunteer's employment outcomes are more likely to be positively affected through the connections they have with individuals from disparate groups in the community ('weak ties'), rather than through the solid connections they have with individuals within groups they are associated with ('strong ties') (see Granovetter, 1973). Further, Nan Lin (2001:68) draws a parallel between Granovetter's 'strength of weak ties' notion and the concept of bridging social capital. He notes especially that bridging social capital provides an individual with access to a wider variety of resources, as it relates to relations between groups in the wider society (exogenous relationships). The heterogeneous nature of these ties is more likely to provide labour market information. He notes that bonding social capital is less likely to provide such information, as it relates to socially exclusive ties within groups, which are likely to be more homogenous.

The research has enquired into the nature of the networks that participants might have developed through their voluntary activities. In particular, it has been concerned with establishing the extent to which the participants' networks enhanced either their bridging or bonding social capital.

Exogenous Relationships

Several examples emerged from the qualitative research that illustrated how volunteers were able to expand their social networks through their voluntary activities. For example, Beth, a Maori woman in her fifties who is actively involved with youth in her local community, indicated that her voluntary activities enabled her to develop social ties that now extend beyond the boundaries of the organisation she volunteers for:

I've met the mayor and talked with him quite happily, and the deputy mayor; I've met some Maori leaders that I've never met before ... lots of people.

Beth stated, further, that her voluntary work allowed her to do *'a lot of things that a lot of people don't get to do'*. She also noted that her voluntary work had opened up *'new horizons'* for her. Through her voluntary work, Beth has demonstrated that she has generated social ties exogenous to her normal social sphere. These may be considered weak ties that have the potential to benefit Beth at some time in the future; effectively, she has increased her bridging social capital through volunteering.

Dianne, who is training to be a social worker, expressed similar sentiments. Dianne is involved with a West Auckland community-building project as a volunteer. She noted the following in respect of her activities:

Because working with, with so many different groups in the community, I think you're more aware of different perspectives, and other peoples' understandings of their part in the community ... so it's bridging more, I suppose the word is networking.

Dianne plans to embark upon a new career as a social worker. She is aware that developing networks within the community can be of value to her future career. She has chosen to volunteer for an organisation that can provide her with new social ties within the community. These ties have potential value to her new career direction. While she may not consider it in these terms, Dianne has developed her bridging social capital through working as a volunteer.

A number of questions in the telephone survey further explored this theme. The survey enquired into two different aspects of heterogeneity and the breadth of relationships that the participants may have developed within the voluntary sector. It first asked about the relationships participants might have developed outside of the organisation they volunteered with, as a direct result of their voluntary activities. It then enquired into the heterogeneity found within the organisations in which the participants volunteered.

It was suggested to the participants that, through volunteering, sometimes people widen their social connections beyond the organisation they are volunteering with. It asked whether they had developed any friendships, contacts or networks outside of the association they volunteered for, through their voluntary activities with that association. More than half of the respondents (56 percent) indicated they had extended their social networks in this way. Participants who answered this question affirmatively were then asked how they would describe the nature of those contacts or networks. The following table presents a summary of their responses. The 'Percentage: Affirmative' column is concerned only with those respondents who indicated they had developed some form of social contact outside of the association they volunteered for. The 'Percentage: Total' column presents the results for all participants.

Table 1.1: Nature of Contacts or Networks

	Respondent s	Percentage: Affirmative	Percentage: Total
People with similar interests	8	27.6%	15.4%
Local body officials	5	17.2%	9.6%
Business / professional	3	10.3%	5.8%
Social / friendship	13	44.8%	25.0%
No external relationships	23		44.2%
Total	52	100.0%	100.0%

These results support the notion that voluntary associations may be an important site for an individual to develop weak ties, and thus bridging social capital. Each of the external relationships represent potential assets to the respondent, that they may not have had were they not involved in voluntary activity. The categories listed in the table were developed from qualitative responses in the telephone survey. The following is a ‘snapshot’ of comments from some of the responses:

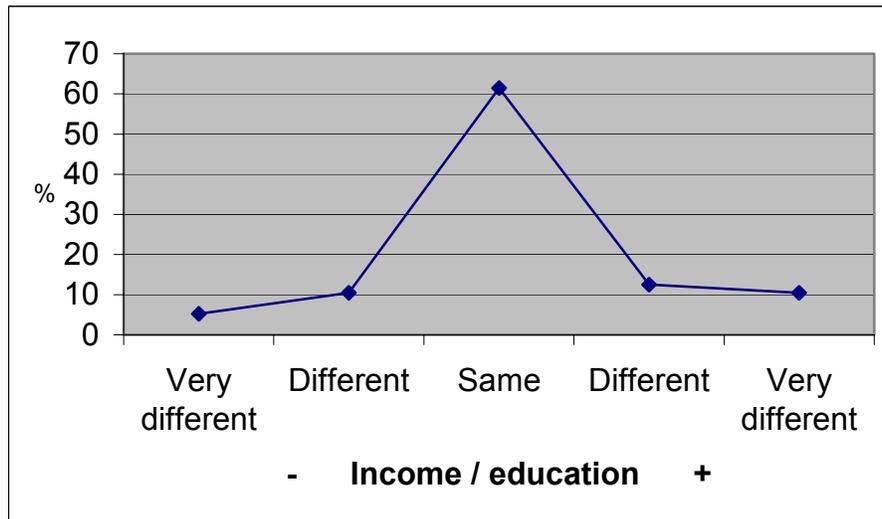
- Met other groups in the social services.
- Met volunteers in other similar voluntary groups.
- Friendships and sharing of information.
- Widened business networks through voluntary contacts.
- Networking in the community, emails with other similar organisations.
- Professional relationships at a local body level.

In particular, the table shows that 15.4 percent of the total participants had indicated they developed new business or professional relationships, or new contacts with local body officials, as a direct result of their voluntary activities. While not negating the potential value of the other external relationships developed by volunteers, it could be argued that ‘professional’ ties would be particularly important in enhancing an individual’s employment prospects. However, it is acknowledged that further research is required to substantiate this view.

Endogenous Relationships

The previous sub-section considers the networks an individual may develop outside of the association they volunteer with. However, the telephone survey was also concerned with the heterogeneity within any given voluntary association. The variety of socio-economic factors found amongst volunteers in an association is a further indication of the variety of social networks (and consequently bridging social capital) potentially available to its members. Two further questions asked respondents to contrast, against themselves, the education and income levels of the people they volunteer with. Responses to both questions were recorded on a five-point Likert scale. The results from both questions were combined into a single unit of measurement. For instance, the total score for those who answered that they were ‘significantly less educated’ than other volunteers, was combined with the total score for those who answered that they ‘earn significantly less’ than other volunteers. Collectively, they were classified as ‘very different’. The results are presented in Figure 1.1.

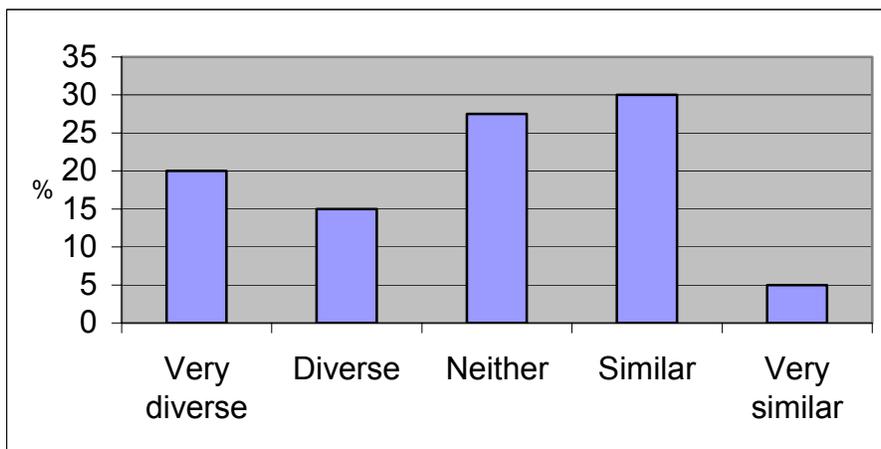
Figure 1.1: Heterogeneity within Voluntary Associations



The left-hand side of the graph represents responses that indicate a participant believed they were less educated or earned less than other volunteers, to some degree. The right-hand side of the graph represents those responses that indicate a participant believed they were more educated or earned more than other volunteers, to some degree. When accounting for the combined results of differences in both the levels of education and income, 15.6 percent of respondents believed that their fellow volunteers were ‘very different’ from themselves. A further 22.9 percent believed that their fellow volunteers were ‘different’.

These questions raised some concerns early in the survey. It was felt that participants seemed reluctant to rank themselves as more or less educated, or to earn more or less than the people they volunteered with. Nevertheless, by completion of the survey it transpired that 38.5 percent believed they were either ‘different’ or ‘very different’ in this respect. Due to this concern, however, an additional question was added to the survey after twelve interviews had been completed. The additional question asked participants to consider how diverse they felt the association they volunteered for was. They were asked to use criteria such as age, occupation, ethnicity and education. Figure 1.2 presents the results from this question. The figure accounts for the results from the forty participants who responded to the question.

Figure 1.2: Diversity within Voluntary Associations



An interesting result from the figures presented in this graph is that 35 percent of respondents answered that they believed the organisation they volunteered for was either ‘very diverse’ or ‘diverse’. This result is similar to the findings from the initial two questions that enquired into heterogeneity within voluntary associations. These questions found that 38.5 percent of respondents believed they were either ‘very different’ or ‘different’ to the other people they volunteer with. This does seem to suggest that roughly a third of all participants surveyed felt that they were interacting with people they viewed as different from themselves, to some degree, through their voluntary activities.

The findings presented thus far do seem to indicate that voluntary associations can provide an environment that provides individuals with the opportunity to develop bridging social capital. This is due to the heterogeneous nature of the sector, and the possibilities volunteers are presented with to meet a range of other people through their voluntary activities. However, a concern that arose from the research relates to the demographic data of the participants surveyed. The majority of participants were over the age of fifty (57.7 percent), and identified themselves as New Zealand Europeans (88.5 percent). In this respect at least, these statistics infer that a relatively homogenous group of people was surveyed. The following two figures illustrate this demographic data.

Figure 1.3: Age of Participants

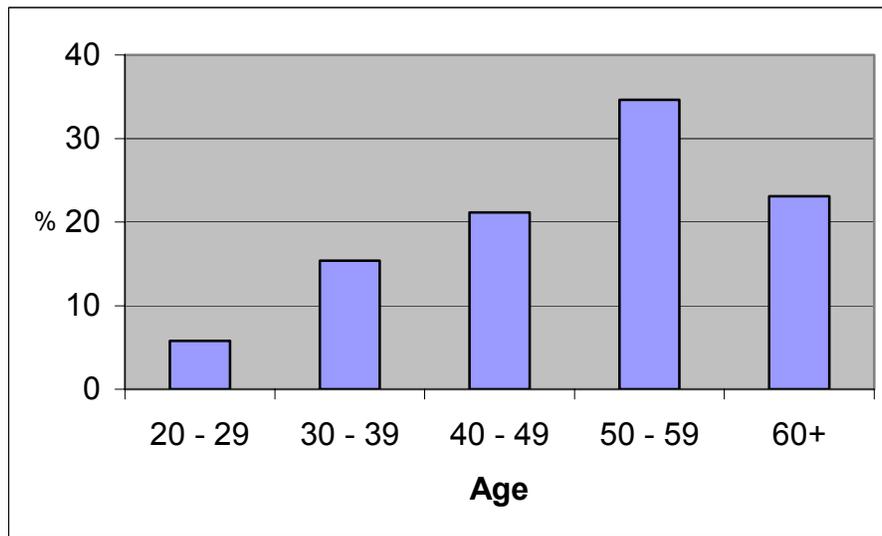
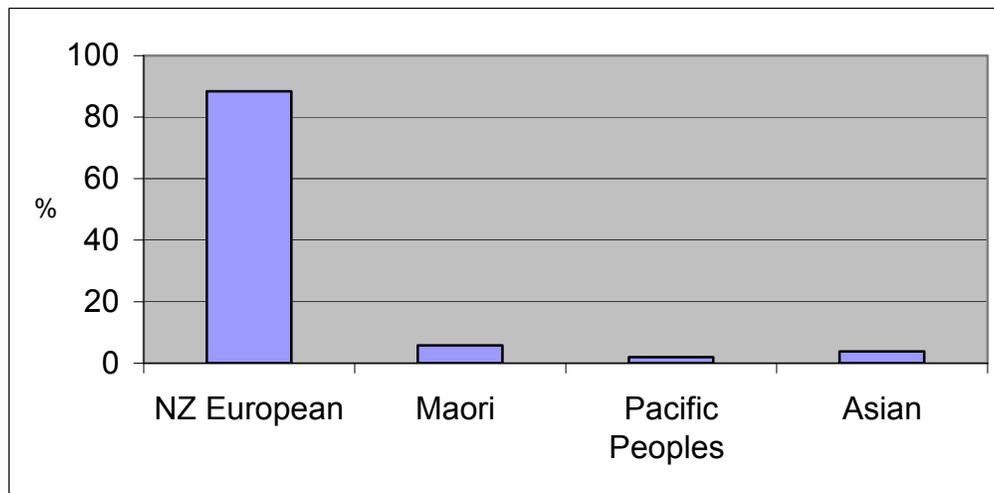


Figure 1.4: Ethnicity of Participants²



These statistics indicate the heterogeneity of the associations surveyed may be limited, as there is not an equal spread in the participants' ages, and there is not a wide range of ethnicities. However, age and ethnicity are just two factors that can be used to define heterogeneity. Further, the survey does not enquire into the demographics of the people that the participants developed relationships with outside of their voluntary associations. In addition, the participants in the survey were self-selecting from the voluntary associations that took part in it. The demographics of the entire membership of each of the associations that took part are unknown. It is possible that younger people, or people of different ethnicities, did not respond proportionately.

² Note: The survey collected data for the categories of Maori and Maori/Pakeha, and East Asian and South Asian. These categories have been combined respectively into Maori and Asian for ease of presentation.

The response rate from the Ranui Action Project (RAP) demonstrates this point. The rate was much lower than for Friends of Whatipu (FOW), 19.4 percent versus 40.5 percent respectively. Further, of the respondents, 50 percent from RAP were Pakeha/New Zealand European. At FOW, 93.3 percent were Pakeha/New Zealand European (the proportion of respondents over the age of fifty was similar). The Ranui Action Project is a community initiative designed to support a low socio-economic and multi-cultural community, so it would appear that self-selection could be a problem.

The types of relationships that have emerged from this research may still provide each of the individuals with valuable bridging social capital, irrespective of the age and ethnicity of those they have developed the relationships with. Nevertheless, the findings indicate there may be a degree of incongruity between the participants' perceptions of diversity, and that indicated by the age and ethnicity statistics. It is recommended that future research address this. For example, 'diversity' could be more clearly defined and methods could be considered to resolve problems with self-selection.

Quality of Social Capital

The 'quality' of the relationships a volunteer may develop through their activities is of further interest to the research. The paper has noted that Lin (2001) believes further work is required to understand how the quality of an individual's networks can affect the value of their social capital. Nevertheless, a number of factors that may influence the quality and, consequently, the potential value of an individual's relationships have been identified.

For instance, Aguilera (2002:856) notes that 'networks can provide only the resources they possess'. It follows that access to a greater variety of networks widens the resources potentially available to an individual. Aguilera goes on to argue that an individual's ability to connect with a number of different networks will enhance their chances of finding paid employment. The previous section indicates that voluntary associations provide an environment for people of varying socio-economic status to interact. Thus, the heterogeneity of relationships available within a voluntary environment could positively affect the value and quality of the social capital available to volunteers, through introducing them to networks they may otherwise not have access to. In addition to heterogeneity, this section presents the results from the fieldwork that explored other aspects of the quality of relationships developed by the participants.

Sharpe (2003) notes that as an association becomes more formalised, the development of social capital may be inhibited. Thus the structure of an association can influence the quality of the social capital an individual may develop within it. Dianne's experiences echo Sharpe's view. In her case, the informal nature of the association she is involved with provides her with possibilities to develop social capital. Dianne volunteers for a grassroots community initiative where she has been provided with a range of leadership and personal development opportunities. She notes:

I think you learn to, you've got to learn to communicate better. I think not to be judgemental of people, everybody brings something with them, no matter how big or how little it is.

This comment indicates that through volunteering, Dianne was able to develop her social and communication skills. This has allowed her to form closer relationships with a variety of other people. She expressed that she had met *'a whole new group of people'*, some of whom she felt she could *'take it on to a personal level'*.

Dianne was asked how the environment within the voluntary association that she worked for contributed to her developing substantive relationships with other volunteers. She referred to the *'openness'* and *'willingness'* of the volunteers *'who are all working for the same purpose'*, and *'that makes you appreciate people no matter what they put in'*. Further, she stated that voluntary work: *'helps you to grow, and you get those networks as well'*. Dianne's experience is an example of the type of relationship building that Sharpe (2003:448) believes is encouraged in an *'informal, accessible, and leisurely style of grassroots association'*, of the type that Dianne is involved in. He believes it is these types of association that have the greatest potential for generating both bridging and bonding social capital.

Other participants interviewed in the qualitative phase of the research also indicated that their experiences as volunteers had led to close and varied relationships. Jane has volunteered for a number of community projects in the past, such as Meals on Wheels and Age Concern, in addition to her current community work. She was asked about her reasons for volunteering. Jane noted that developing close personal relationships was a key motivation for her, she states: *'I enjoy the companionship that comes with it'*. In addition, Beth indicated that she had strengthened the skills required to connect with others through her voluntary work:

I wasn't able to always speak as fluently or as clearly, or as knowledgeably as I do now, and that has really been through my involvement as a volunteer. And it is (through) having such a varied contact with varied people.

The quality of relationships volunteers developed with others was further investigated in the telephone survey. It began by enquiring into how the participants rated the quality of the relationships they had developed with the people they volunteer with. They were asked to respond on a scale of one to five, where one meant they have developed some *'very close friendships'*, and five meant they were *'not at all close'* to the people they volunteered with. The results from this question are presented in Figure 1.5:

Figure 1.5: Quality of Relationships with Other Volunteers



Almost two-thirds (61.2 percent) of the respondents indicated they had developed either ‘very close’ or ‘close’ friendships. These results seem to offer further evidence to support the notion that voluntary associations provide an environment conducive to the development of social ties.

One further question was asked that explored the quality of the relationships developed by the participants in their voluntary work. They were asked what words they might use to describe the nature of the relationships they had developed with the people they work with in a voluntary capacity. The responses to this question were classified into nine categories, following the completion of the telephone survey. The results are presented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Nature of Relationships with Other Volunteers

	Respondents:		
	1st response	2nd response	3rd response
Friendly	15	4	
Shared knowledge & interests	7	5	3
Respectful & supportive	11	11	
Honest & trusting	2	3	1
Fun	3	1	
Casual	4		
Close	4		
Challenging or difficult	1	1	1
Professional	1		
No comments	4		
Total	52	25	5

The vast majority of participants indicated, as a first response, that to some degree they had favourable relationships with their fellow volunteers. Just five respondents made no comment, or indicated that their relationships were either challenging or difficult.

The findings from the telephone survey indicate that the associations this group of West Auckland volunteers belong to provide an environment where the volunteers have the opportunity to increase their social capital. Bonding social capital could be increased through the relationships developed within the voluntary association each individual is connected to. Bridging social capital could be increased from the networks accessible to them through these relationships.

However, this paper cautions against drawing simple causal relationships between membership of voluntary associations and levels of social capital. For instance, as noted earlier in the paper, Rotolo and Wilson (2003:604) consider that 'careers cause membership' (of voluntary associations) rather than the membership of voluntary associations leading to careers. They suggest that membership of voluntary associations will not significantly affect an individual's stocks of social capital.

The degree to which an individual's voluntary activity influences their stocks of social capital was explored in the telephone survey. The participants were asked how often during a typical week they talked on the telephone with friends, neighbours or relatives. The question was modified from research carried out by Wilson and Musick (1997); its purpose was to provide an elementary indication of the level of social capital that each participant had in their daily lives, outside of their voluntary work. A bivariate analysis was run between this question and the question (which was presented earlier in this section) that asked about the quality of relationships the participants had developed as volunteers. Both questions were constructed using a five point Likert scale.

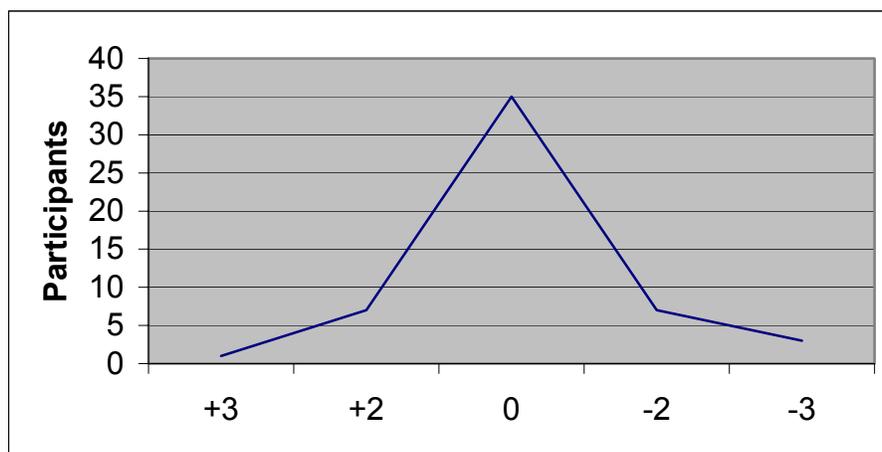
An assumption was made that a score of one for each question indicated a relatively high degree of either bridging or bonding social capital. A score of five indicated a relatively low degree of either bridging or bonding social capital. It follows from this assumption that if an individual achieved the same score for both questions, then volunteering did not necessarily improve their potential to further develop their social capital. For instance, if a participant scored five for the first question ('not at all close' to other volunteers), and five for the second question (phoned other people 'rarely or never'), it was assumed that it would be unlikely volunteering was proving a useful strategy for that individual to generate further social capital. That is, they indicated they had low stocks of social capital in their 'everyday' lives, and joining a voluntary association did not seem to have improved their ability to generate social capital.

Alternatively, if a volunteer scored two for the first question (developed 'close friendships' as a volunteer), and scored four for the second question (phoned other people 'once or twice a month'), this would be taken to indicate they were able to generate more social capital through volunteering than they were able to generate in their everyday lives.

The participants were allocated a number derived from the variation between their score for each question. For instance, if a participant answered three for both questions they were allocated a score of zero. A score of zero indicates little difference in an individual's abilities to generate social capital in their voluntary lives, as compared to their everyday lives. If the variation between each question was two or more, this indicated there was a notable difference in an individual's abilities to generate social capital in their voluntary lives, as compared to their everyday lives.

The analysis found that most of the participants gave a similar response to both of these questions. If they scored two for the first question, they were likely to score two for the second question, and so on. This indicates that for most of the participants, their abilities to generate social capital were independent of their voluntary activities. The results from this analysis fitted a normal distribution. The standard deviation equalled 1.045. Of the participants, 69.2 percent fell within plus or minus one of zero, and 92.3 percent fell within plus or minus two of zero. That said, it must be remembered that the sample size for this analysis was relatively small and the indicators are only derived from two questions. The results should thus be considered as indicative only, and further research is recommended. Figure 1.6 graphically represents the results of the analysis.

Figure 1.6: Variances in Social Capital Generation



The results indicate that if an individual is generating sufficient social capital in their daily lives, then joining a voluntary association is unlikely to improve their abilities to generate further social capital, and vice versa. Nevertheless, 15.4 percent of participants rated the quality of their relationships with other volunteers two or more points higher than the rating they gave for the general social capital indicator question.

This finding supports the notion that for some people, voluntary activity can materially improve their stocks of social capital. The result is consistent with the position noted by Davidson (2005) (see also Aguilera, 2002; Judge, 2004; Seyfang, 2004) that volunteer work can provide some people, particularly those from marginalised groups and minorities, with social capital otherwise inaccessible to them. This social capital can make a large difference in outcomes for them. For instance, access to social networks through which they can gain information about the labour market. That said, the research for this study does not specifically investigate outcomes for individuals from these groups. Further research is recommended.

It should also be noted that these results pertain to an individual's abilities to generate social capital. While a participant who scored highly for both questions may not *need* to volunteer to be able to generate sufficient social capital, this does not mean that the social capital they generate through their voluntary activities is not useful to them.

Trust

Social capital was introduced as offering an umbrella under which a variety of social practices can be brought together such as reciprocity, associational life and trust (see Das, 2004). Coleman (Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000) cited trustworthiness as central to his social capital framework. Further, Lin (2001) referred to the central role that trust has in collective forms of social capital, such as that proposed by Robert Putnam. However, it was noted that tautological issues arise from these conceptions of trust. For Putnam, trust both produces social capital and develops as a by-product of the mechanisms of social capital (Falk, 2001).

For this reason, trust was excluded from the definition of social capital used in this research. However, it can still be seen as a consequence, if not a source, of social capital. Accordingly, trust remained an important consideration in the fieldwork. In particular, the degree to which trust was either present or absent was used as an indicator of social capital.

Trust can be considered a measure of the confidence or faith individuals may have in one another. In this sense Beth, who was introduced earlier in this part of the working paper, talked about the trust between the volunteers she works with:

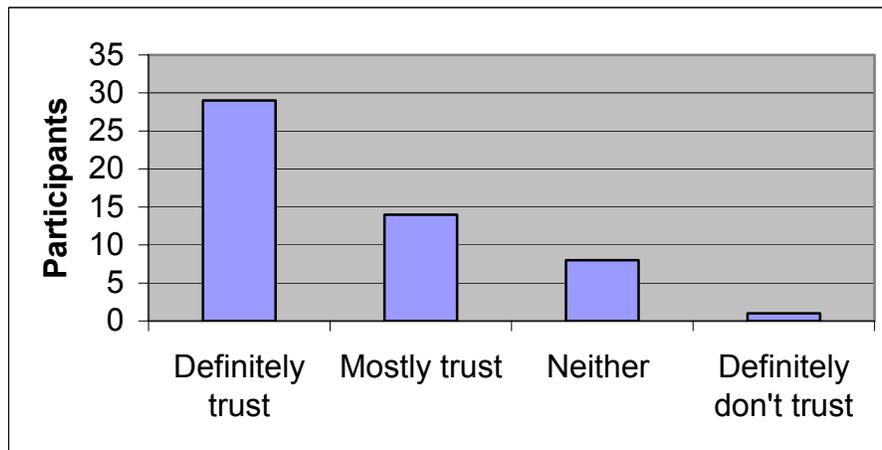
In the volunteer network ... you have respect for each person's point of view, you have to, if you're intolerant of them and their points of view, I think you have a problem yourself in being a volunteer. Because as a volunteer it's not your way, it's all your ways as a community worker, it's the community that has to work together. With the other volunteers, there is a hell of a lot of trust there and a lot of respect, because we're all different individuals but we all want the same thing.

This quote emphasises Beth's view that trust is an important factor in enabling people to work together, towards common goals, in the voluntary association she is involved with. Dianne expressed similar sentiments:

I think you have to trust that person if you're all working for the same thing, and (if) somebody's dividing off at another angle, then you're not all working for the same purpose, so you do have to trust.

Further, the levels of trust held by participants in the telephone survey were assessed. The respondents were asked how trusting they were of the people they work with in a volunteer capacity. They were asked to give a response on a five point scale, where one meant they 'definitely do trust' other volunteers, and five meant they 'definitely do not trust' other volunteers. The results from this question are presented in Figure 1.7.

Figure 1.7: Levels of Trust with Other Volunteers



The results from the telephone survey indicate that for the organisations surveyed, a reasonably high level of trust exists between the volunteers. Of the participants, 82.7 percent ‘definitely do trust’, or ‘mostly trust’, the other people they volunteer with. This finding supports the results from the qualitative interviews, which indicated a relatively high level of trust amongst the members of the voluntary associations that took part in the study.

The research also enquired into the degree to which membership in a voluntary association can influence how trusting an individual is. Moreover, it explored whether volunteers are any more trusting of their fellow volunteers than they are of the people they relate with in their everyday lives. The participants were asked how trusting they are of the people they have regular contact with in daily life, outside of their homes, such as friends, neighbours or the people they work with. They were asked to respond using the same scale as the question that enquired into how trusting they were of other volunteers. Table 1.3 presents the cross-tabulation for both questions.

Table 1.3: Comparison of Trust Between Regular Contacts and Volunteers

	Regular contacts	%	Volunteers	%
Definitely do trust	24	46.2%	29	55.8%
Mostly trust	21	40.4%	14	26.9%
Neither trust nor do not trust	6	11.5%	8	15.4%
Definitely do not trust	1	1.9%	1	1.9%
Total	52	100.0%	52	100.0%

These results indicate that the participants ‘definitely do trust’ other volunteers somewhat more than their regular contacts. However, the combining of the categories ‘definitely do trust’ and ‘mostly trust’ shows that 86.6 percent of respondents (to some degree) trust their regular contacts. This compares

with 82.7 percent of respondents (to some degree) trusting other volunteers. Given the data is derived from a small sample, these results do not indicate a material difference between the level of trust the participants held for either their fellow volunteers or other regular contacts they may have.

The finding holds even when the results are analysed further. The participants were allocated a number derived from the variation between their score for each question. For instance, if a participant answered two for both questions, they were allocated a score of zero. Any variation between questions indicated that the participant trusted their fellow volunteers either more or less than the people they have regular contact with in their daily lives. Figure 1.8 presents the results of this analysis.

Figure 1.8: Variations in Trust

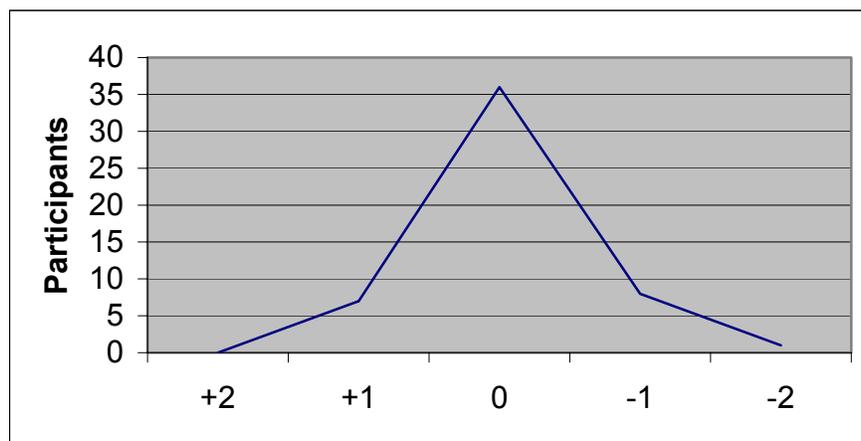


Figure 1.8 suggests that the participants are, generally, no more or less trusting of the people they volunteer with than they are of the people they have regular contact with in their daily lives. One standard deviation equalled 0.5084. The same rating was given for both questions by 69.2 percent of the respondents, and 98.1 percent had no more than a one-point variation in their answer to either question.

Although individuals may not trust their fellow volunteers any more or less than the people they have regular contact with in their everyday lives, there was nevertheless a high degree of trust found amongst the volunteers who took part in this research. Given high levels of trust amongst a population is indicative of high levels of social capital, the findings thus support the notion that voluntary associations can provide an individual with an environment within which to develop social capital.

In general, the research indicates that the voluntary associations surveyed were relatively heterogeneous, and they provided the participants with an environment conducive to developing bridging social capital. However, this finding is partially qualified. For most respondents, the ability to generate social capital appears to be independent of their participation in voluntary activities. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that voluntary associations can provide some people with access to social networks otherwise not open to them.

PART TWO: THE LABOUR MARKET AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN WEST AUCKLAND

The previous part of this working paper suggested that voluntary associations could provide an environment, for individuals, which is conducive to the development of social capital. This part considers the extent to which social capital thus developed can influence labour market outcomes for them. Further, the part of the working paper considers how the environment in the voluntary sector may influence the social skills and attitudes, and consequently the social capital, of the participants. It enquires into how social capital developed in this way has influenced the labour market outcomes of the participants.

Consideration is given also to how local and/or central government can engage with the voluntary sector, to facilitate the development of social capital. The views of the participants are canvassed, to ascertain how they believe government is currently engaging with the voluntary sector in West Auckland, and how they would prefer to see government engaging with the sector.

The Role of Contacts and Networks in Finding Employment

A key insight from Pierre Bourdieu's work is that each form of capital is interchangeable. This notion is central to the idea that the social capital developed within voluntary associations can be converted, via the labour market, into economic capital. That voluntary associations may provide an important site for the development of social capital is strongly represented in the literature. For instance, Leonard and Onyx (2003:190) state that 'it could well be argued that the non-profit or voluntary sector is the predominant locus for the generation of social capital' (see also Robinson, 1997; Stolle, 1998; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Propelled by this idea, the fieldwork explored the relationship between social capital that was generated through the voluntary activities of the participants and the labour market experiences of those individuals.

Perceptions Held by Volunteers

This section first considers how volunteers view the relation between their voluntary activities and paid employment. Several of the participants in the qualitative research had indicated they were aware of the benefits volunteering could have on their labour market outcomes. Joyce, a manager for a non-profit organisation, made the following comment:

I have always attributed my current role ... to the learning and my participation in voluntary work. In fact (it is) because I recognised how voluntarism opens doors for me, or provides me with new opportunities, that I got this job.

This statement from Joyce illustrates that she recognised she might be able to improve her employment prospects through involving herself in voluntary activity. Other examples emerged from the qualitative research. For instance, Dianne performed voluntary work that was arranged through a work placement scheme. This work was a component of her study requirements. She recognised, through undertaking

this work, the value of her voluntary activities to her future career. In addition, Sue has been a healthcare worker for many years. She notes that a key reason for involving herself in voluntary activity was to develop community connections, commenting that she *'felt it was important that I learnt about community'* to be more effective in her paid employment.

These examples demonstrate awareness amongst the participants in the qualitative study that their voluntary activities could benefit their labour market outcomes. The participants in the telephone survey were asked whether they had become volunteers, at least in part, to make new contacts that might help their business or careers. Eight respondents (15.6 percent) answered this question affirmatively. Recent research in the United States found almost 25 percent of volunteers, at least in part, volunteered to make new contacts that might help their business or careers (Wilson, 2000). The remainder of this part of the working paper considers the extent to which volunteering has influenced the labour market outcomes of the participants and identifies the policy implications of those findings.

Converting Social Capital into Paid Employment

The research for this study considered how the social capital of the participants has influenced their paid employment in the labour market. It enquired into the influence of social capital from all sources, as well as social capital developed specifically through voluntary activities, on their employment outcomes.

Participants were asked about the method through which they found both their first job, and their current job. This question, and the analysis of the results, was modelled on work done by Dupuis et al (2004). The participants' responses to each question were recorded, and later classified, by the researcher into the categories presented in the 'Method of finding employment' column in Table 2.1. Each category was classified further, to distinguish whether the participant had found the job through their social capital, or in other ways, such as from their own initiative or from a formal job application.

Table 2.1: Method of Finding Employment

Method of finding employment	Code	First job		Current job	
		No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Through friends or other contacts	SC	3	5.8%	7	13.5%
Through job advertisements	OTH	18	34.6%	5	9.6%
Wrote, phoned or applied in person to an employer	OTH	3	5.8%	0	0.0%
Through relatives	SC	10	19.2%	4	7.7%
Through an employment agency	OTH	2	3.8%	2	3.8%
Invited to apply	SC	3	5.8%	4	7.7%
Self-employed	OTH	0	0.0%	10	19.2%
Internet search	OTH	0	0.0%	1	1.9%
Worked there previously or on a temporary job	SC	2	3.8%	1	1.9%
Started on a placement or training scheme	SC	6	11.5%	1	1.9%
Through WINZ	OTH	2	3.8%	0	0.0%
Through school	SC	1	1.9%	0	0.0%
Recruitment drives	OTH	2	3.8%	0	0.0%
Other		0	0.0%	3	5.8%
Not currently employed (e.g. retired, beneficiary)		0	0.0%	14	26.9%
Total		52	100.0%	52	100.0%

Key: SC = Social Capital, OTH = Other.

The majority of participants found their first job through job advertisements. However, the results from this analysis suggest that social capital has played a significant role in the pathways to employment for the participants in this study. Twenty-five (48.1 percent) of the participants found their first job through using their social capital (refer to the methods marked ‘SC’ in Table 2.1). The proportion of volunteers who found their current job, through their social capital, is 44.7 percent. Note that some of the volunteers were either retired, or they were beneficiaries. This figure only accounts for those 38 participants who are currently in paid employment. These results are consistent with Dupuis et al’s (2004) findings of 45 percent and 48 percent respectively.

A number of examples demonstrating linkages between the voluntary activities of the participants and their labour market experiences emerged from the qualitative research. Joyce, who was quoted earlier in this section, was invited to apply for her current job after a period of time volunteering for the organisation with which she is now in paid employment. Dupuis et al (2004) note that should an individual find paid employment through their social contacts, they have effectively converted social capital into economic capital. This is consistent with Bourdieu’s notion of the convertibility of capitals, which was reiterated at the beginning of this section. Joyce, who was employed in her current position as a result of the networks she had developed through volunteering, provides an example of social capital being converted into economic capital in this way.

Dianne provided a similar example. She had spent some time assisting an organisation with childcare duties, on a voluntary basis. This voluntary work then led to paid employment. Dianne stated:

I was doing childcare in there, they just had an area for children to go and play while their parents were doing courses, and from there I went into teacher aiding. So it was from working with the children there, that's what put me into the role of teacher aiding.

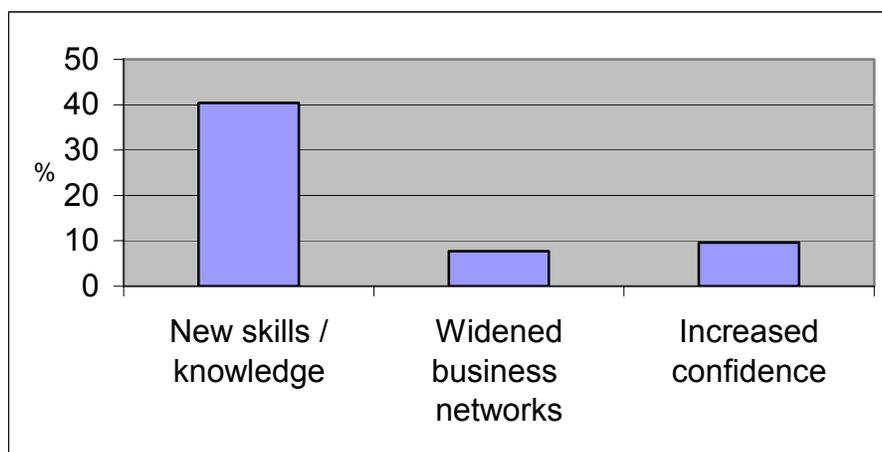
Beth, who is currently self-employed, provided an example of another context through which voluntary activities can be linked to the labour market. Beth had been volunteering for a fundraising initiative at a local institution. She notes:

We couldn't get enough volunteers, I was virtually doing it (the work) mostly on my own ... so the Board of Trustees made a proposition, would I be interested in actually taking it on as a business for myself, and just paying them a minimal token rental.

Beth accepted the proposal. As a direct result of her voluntary activities, she moved into self-employment. As a consequence of that business, Beth subsequently set up a similar operation at a different institution. Additionally, her new venture is on a larger scale and she now employs staff to assist her.

The participants in the telephone survey were asked to make any brief comments about how their voluntary activity had helped them with their work (if at all). The responses broadly fitted within three key categories. They were coded, on completion of the fieldwork, as follows: volunteer work that had helped them develop new skills and knowledge; volunteer work that had widened their business and/or professional networks; or that they had increased their confidence through volunteering, which had then had positive flow-on effects into their working lives. In total, 57.7 percent reported that their voluntary activity had, in some way, benefited them in their paid employment. Figure 2.1 presents the results from this question.

Figure 2.1: Effect of Voluntary Activity on Paid Employment



The participants in the telephone survey were also asked whether anyone they knew from their activities as a volunteer had ever directly played a role in their finding a job. Fourteen (26.9 percent) of the participants answered that, at some stage in their lives, someone they knew from their voluntary work had played a role in their finding paid employment. For those participants who answered affirmatively, they were asked two further questions. First, they were asked about the nature of the

involvement of the person who had assisted them into paid employment. Secondly, they were asked whether the work was casual, part-time, or full-time in nature. The results from these questions are presented in Figures 2.2 and 2.3.

Figure 2.2: Type of Assistance from Other Volunteers

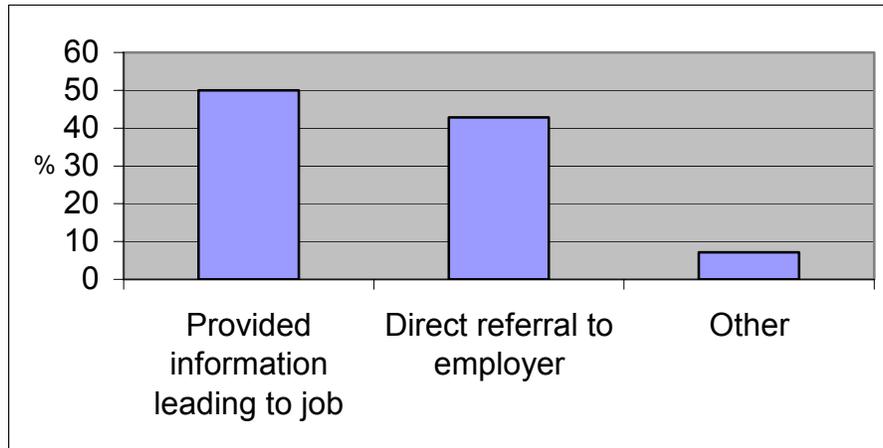
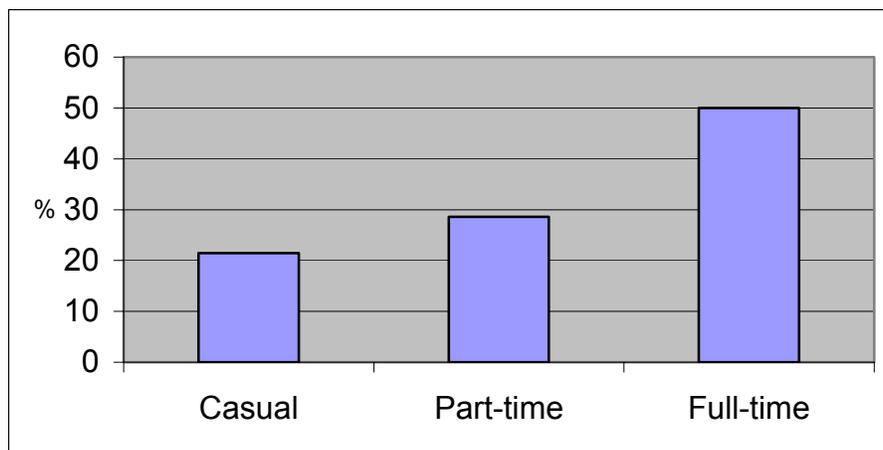


Figure 2.3: Type of Paid Employment Found



Further to these results, it was noted in the previous subsection that eight participants had indicated that one reason they had volunteered was to make new contacts that might help their business or career. Of those eight, six (75 percent) of those who had purposely volunteered to help their business or career had actually found some type of paid employment through the social connections they had developed as volunteers.

The findings from the telephone survey indicate a strong relationship between the social capital the participants developed through their voluntary activities, and their labour market outcomes. More than half of the participants indicated that their experiences as volunteers had in some way positively influenced their working lives. Just over a quarter of participants had found some type of paid

employment with assistance from, to some degree, people they knew through their voluntary activities. The findings again support Bourdieu's notion that social capital can be converted into economic capital, in this case through the labour market.

Social and Cultural Skills

This section explores a more oblique way in which an individual, through involvement in voluntary activity, can develop social capital that may assist their labour market outcomes. An individual's social networks are the direct mechanism through which they are able to convert their social capital into economic capital, as discussed in the previous section. However, this paper has also proposed that the culture of voluntary associations may provide individuals with an environment that can enable the development of the social skills necessary to build their social capital.

Indeed, Seyfang (2004:56) notes that volunteering (and other forms of self-help) can be seen as 'appropriate responses to exclusion from employment'. She refers to the confidence, skills and networks that volunteering can bring, leading to 'the social capital which can be drawn upon in order to reinsert oneself into society' (Seyfang, 2004:57). Davidson (2005) drew on the work of Witten-Hannah (1999:25-26), who noted that voluntary associations can provide individuals with opportunities to interact and develop co-operative skills; stating further that: 'community initiatives act as a catalyst in the formation of social capital ... they create opportunities for the development of social relationships and ... empower individuals and groups, giving them hope and self-confidence'.

Jane, who was introduced in the previous part of this working paper, has volunteered in the past for Age Concern. She made the following comment:

I suppose working with the elderly; I gained a lot of experience working with the elderly ... we talked quite well together ... their experiences leave me to further develop more for myself, for relationships.

Jane noted that she had '*missed out*' on her grandparents, and her parents had passed on while she was in her twenties. She felt that through her voluntary work, she was given an opportunity to meet people, in this case the elderly, whom she would otherwise not engage with. She believed this contact helped with her social development, in a manner that her family environment had been unable to provide her with. As she notes above, this improved her capacity to build on other relationships in her life. Further, Jane commented that the people skills she has developed through volunteering help her in her current job.

Voluntary associations can also provide an environment that encourages the work culture, through the supportive networks they provide. Dickson (2004:8) notes that 'social capital is thought to affect individual employment prospects in several ways', including the way in which 'the social norms that exist within networks of friends, family and acquaintances ... influence the value that individuals place on paid work'.

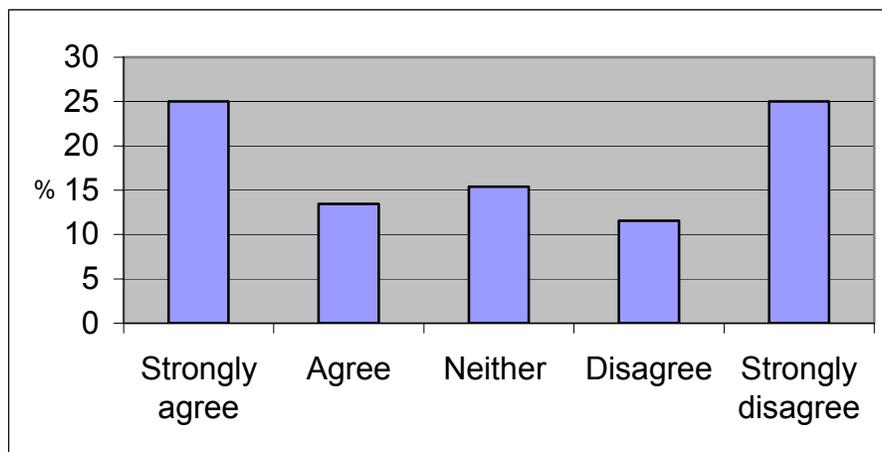
The research supports this notion. Joyce, a volunteer for one of the community initiatives that took part in the survey, commented how members of her community have realised that they ‘*can work as volunteers and get an opportunity to move into employment*’. Moreover, she stated the following:

We just bring them up to speed; for example, the work culture. For some of these people, they’ve never worked. They’ve left school, had their families, their families have grown up, and now they’re at a stage where they’re saying, ‘Well, what can I do?’

The voluntary association that Joyce is involved with is able to offer networks in the community, and social support, to people in this situation. This support can assist people to immerse themselves into the wider community and, ultimately, the labour market. As noted by Seyfang (2004), this function of voluntary associations can be particularly useful for individuals from marginalised groups or minorities.

In addition to the qualitative study, participants in the telephone survey were asked to provide a response to the following statement: ‘You developed the confidence to explore new career possibilities through working as a volunteer’. They were asked to respond on a five point Likert scale, ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’. The results are presented in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: Confidence to Explore New Career Possibilities



The analysis shows that 38.5 percent of the participants either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with the statement. This finding, alongside the comments from the qualitative study, support the notion that voluntary associations can provide their members with an environment conducive to developing the social skills and confidence necessary for an individual to build their stocks of social capital.

Policy Considerations

Working Paper No. 16 (Davidson, 2005) showed that social capital could be heuristically useful in guiding the development of social policy. In particular, it built on a broadly Bourdieuan notion of social capital that suggests the networks which individuals create through their voluntary activities can be converted, via the labour market, into economic capital. Further, through drawing on Jurgen Habermas' notion of communicative competences, it suggested that government could facilitate this dynamic through developing partnerships in the voluntary sector. This section extends these ideas by specifically considering how the voluntary and government sectors can work together. It draws on both the literature, and the comments of the participants who took part in the fieldwork for this paper.

At local government level, the Local Government Act 2002 lays a foundation for the approach advocated in this paper. Section 10 of the Act places the onus on local authorities 'to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities'. Section 14 requires local authorities to consider 'the views of all its communities' when making decisions. Additionally, section 52 requires community boards to 'communicate with community organisations and special interest groups' on community matters. For instance, Robinson and Williams (2001) provide practical examples of what this may mean when considering policy implications for Maori. In particular, they note the need for the recognition of customary forms of association within Maori communities, and recognition of the aspirations and concerns of Maori communities in local and central government policy decision-making processes.

Robinson (1999:13) argues that 'collaborative community dialogue' is required at the policy development stage. Also writing about New Zealand, Wallis and Dollery (2002) offer a number of suggestions as to how local government can engage with voluntary associations to build social capital:

They can provide opportunities for citizens and communities to influence the outcomes of local issues and decisions, facilities and types of infrastructure that allow voluntary associations to develop and flourish, and assistance through grants, advice and training to people involved in developing local service delivery networks. They can undertake monitoring, research and data collection on the strength of the local voluntary sector. They can also facilitate the delivery of services and funding between agencies, voluntary associations and firms to ensure local needs are being addressed (Wallis & Dollery, 2002:82-83).

This study was conducted in West Auckland. Witten-Hannah (1999) comments that Waitakere City Council's 'West Coast Plan' project for this region may have encouraged the growth of social capital. She notes it has brought together diverse groups of people focused on common interests (the future of their region), providing them with opportunities to interact and develop cooperative skills, and opportunities for participants to build pride and self-esteem in themselves, their community and their 'place'. She observes that prior to embarking on such a project, 'councils need to ensure that policies are in place to enable communities to be fairly resourced ... and that enable and encourage the formation of partnerships and power-sharing with stakeholder groups' (Witten-Hannah, 1999:40). Further, the Waitakere City Council currently has a partnership and advocacy team, whose role is to work with the community to develop partnerships and to encourage community self-empowerment and social enterprise.

At central government level, the Department of Child Youth and Family Services have launched the Stronger Communities Action Fund that has an explicit objective of developing social capital. Taylor (2004:67) notes the initiative has led to measurably increased social capital, as indicated by 'increased participation, the creation of new networks and associations, and greater proactivity' within communities that have taken part. Importantly, increased community participation and networking gives rise to bridging social capital. As this paper has noted, bridging social capital is likely to lead to greater community cohesion in terms of the linkages developed between disparate groups and individuals. As a consequence, it has more potential to enhance an individual's employment outcomes than bonding social capital (which refers to connections within groups). Volunteers from the Ranui Action Project, which receives funding through the Stronger Communities Action Fund, along with support from the Waitakere City Council, took part in the fieldwork for this paper.

Further, a working paper from the Strategic Social Policy Group of the Ministry of Social Development (Dickson, 2004:37) notes that by international standards New Zealand 'may be relatively social capital rich'. It emphasises that:

Government has an interest in the development of social capital due to the benefits that arise from socially connected and inclusive communities ... people are more likely to undertake voluntary work, get involved in school boards of trustees, perform jury service and pay their taxes when they feel that they have a stake in these institutions and trust that they operate fairly. In other words, social capital makes it easier for government to govern (Dickson, 2004:38).

Examples of local or central government interventions that can lead to social capital development within the community can also be found in the international literature. Halpern (2005:285) notes that 'the case for active intervention in social capital is very strong'. He discusses a number of ways in which government could promote social capital, including (and not limited to): setting up mentoring schemes (for example, between at risk youth and community leaders), initiating programmes to develop positive networks in the community for young offenders, building networks between firms, employees and the community, and supporting people (particularly youth) into voluntary work. He suggests that a key policy conclusion is that 'policymakers need to consider social capital, along with many other factors, when drawing up and implementing policy' (Halpern, 2005:288). At a minimum, he suggests efforts should be made to ensure policy will not harm social capital.

A number of further examples can be found in the international literature. For instance, Worthington and Dollery (2000) argue that appropriately targeted housing and associated community services policies can help develop a 'sense of place' that can support social capital growth. Kilpatrick et al (2002) include an eight-step strategy manual within their paper to enable communities to build social capital that has partnerships with government agencies central to it. Narayan (1999) outlines seven 'sensitively designed' areas where government interventions can assist social capital building. The potential for time bank programmes to create pathways to employment through developing social capital within communities was noted in Working Paper No. 16 (Davidson, 2005) (refer also to Halpern, 2005; Seyfang, 2001, 2004).

The participants in the qualitative study were asked what they believed the role of local and/or central government was in the voluntary sector. There was a general feeling amongst participants that government undervalued the voluntary sector, and that the support that was offered came with too

many ‘strings attached’. Most of the participants indicated they were grateful for any support they did get. However, the comments indicated that the participants, in this study, did not *perceive* that there was a partnership between their organisations and any government bodies.

For example, Dianne notes that ‘*the different groups that I’ve been working with in the community, they all rely heavily on central, or governmental, funding*’. She then commented on what she thought this might mean for a particular voluntary association that she is associated with. This organisation has recently been awarded a government contract:

The government is going to have their way of doing things, and want it their way. So all their hard work, over the last ten or twenty years, is out the window. I don’t see government working with them, or alongside them. I think they’ll take over.

This comment is salient when considered alongside Susan Arai’s (2000) analysis of the effects of increased government intervention in the Canadian voluntary sector, discussed earlier in this paper. Arai suggests that directive government intervention, in this case, has discouraged many volunteers, thus countering the development of social capital.

Beth echoed similar concerns. She noted the following in respect of the voluntary association she is currently involved with:

I do feel sometimes we’re being asked for too much for their (government) funding. That is part of the price we pay, I guess, for being funded by them ... the perception is even now for us, is that we have big brother watching us with a big stick. If we don’t do what big brother wants, then we won’t get the money.

The findings from the telephone survey do indicate, however, that the participants desire a partnership with government. During the telephone survey interviews, the participants were told that there are a number of possible types of support for voluntary associations that could be provided by either local or central government. They were read a list, and were asked to indicate which type of government support, from the list, they believed was the most important for developing voluntary activity in West Auckland. They were then asked which type of support they felt was second most important. Table 2.2 summarises the results.

Table 2.2: Most Important Type of Government Support

	First most important		Second most important	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Financial support	25	48.1%	11	21.2%
Knowledge and expertise	12	23.1%	12	23.1%
Physical resources	7	13.5%	19	36.5%
Meeting spaces	5	9.6%	3	5.8%
Promotion or publicity	2	3.8%	6	11.5%
No support at all	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Refused	1	1.9%	1	1.9%
Total	52	100.0%	52	100.0%

Just over half of the participants indicated, as their first response, a category other than financial support. Moreover, just under a quarter of participants indicated, as their first response, that knowledge and expertise was the most important support that government agencies could provide to the voluntary sector. These results suggest that many of the volunteers who took part in this research did want to see active involvement (and not just financial assistance) from government bodies, in the voluntary sector. Further, the participants were given the option of answering ‘no support at all’ from government. No participants chose this option for either their first or second response.

The participants were also asked if they would like to make any comments on what government involvement they would like to see in the voluntary sector, or any concerns they had around current involvement in the sector from government. A diverse array of responses was recorded. The comments were classed into seven general categories upon completion of the fieldwork; the results are presented in table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Preferred Government Involvement

	First comment		Second comment	
	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Financial support	15	28.8%	3	14.3%
Public acknowledgement/publicity	10	19.2%	0	0.0%
Less interference and bureaucracy	10	19.2%	2	9.5%
No comments	6	11.5%	0	0.0%
Resources, expertise and/or partnership	8	15.4%	8	38.1%
Tax incentives or government assistance	2	3.8%	6	28.6%
Recognition of role of Treaty of Waitangi	1	1.9%	0	0.0%
Monitoring and accountability	0	0.0%	2	9.5%
Total	52	100.0%	21	100.0%

The respondents considered financial support to be the most preferred form of government involvement. However, the responses indicate a desire on the part of the participants to receive support from government in a variety of ways, other than simply receiving financial assistance. In particular, a number of participants indicated through their first comment that they wanted more resources and expertise (15.4 percent) and more public acknowledgement and publicity (19.2 percent). These types of support can only come through partnership, as they require understanding and dialogue between sectors. For those ten participants whose first response was that they would prefer less interference and bureaucracy, three of them indicated, as a second response, that they would like to see more resources, expertise, and/or partnership. This suggests that for them, active government involvement is welcome, so long as it is not directorial. The suggestions noted earlier in this section regarding how government could work more closely in partnership with the voluntary sector, help build networks in the community, and support more people into voluntary activities would go some way towards meeting the needs that have been expressed by participants in this research.

Working Paper No. 16 (Davidson, 2005) identified that marginalised groups, in particular, could benefit from government interest in social capital (refer to Aguilera, 2002; Judge, 2004; Seyfang, 2004). King and Waldegrave (2003) consider how social capital can be mobilised to impact upon the

capacity for marginalised groups to find employment, through policy initiatives that are focused on the structure of their social networks. They caution that policy should be ‘based upon an accurate understanding of the ways in which the cultural (in the broadest sense) characteristics of a particular population influence the relationships that its members have with other fields or domains within the wider society’ (King & Waldegrave, 2003:241). In practice, Aguilera (2002:853) notes that ‘programs that attempt to bring valuable labor market information to individuals and communities lacking employment-related information are likely to be effective in reducing inequality’.

Portes and Mooney (2002:326) endorse the notion that social capital can be usefully employed in developing social policy. However, they make the following point: ‘bureaucratic top-down formulas that posit social capital as a magic wand for local ills will consistently fail ... future successful experiences of community development will be achieved one at a time by combining existing community networks with careful nurturing of local skills and the provision of strategic external support’. This paper does not suggest that social capital is a ‘magic wand’. It does support, however, local and/or central government engaging with voluntary associations in the community, in partnership. One outcome of understanding the needs of the community, and the needs of specific voluntary associations, is that social capital, developed through voluntary activity, has the potential to assist a reasonable number of individuals into paid employment.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has explored the relationship between social capital developed through voluntary associations and economic forms of capital via the labour market. It found that individuals can develop social capital through working as volunteers, and that this social capital can influence their labour market outcomes. Moreover, social capital can be heuristically useful in guiding the development of social policy aimed at facilitating this process.

These findings rest on several key propositions, each of which has been explored in this paper. The first proposition is that voluntary associations provide an environment, for individuals, conducive to the development of social capital. The second proposition is that an individual can convert the social capital they have generated from their voluntary activities into economic capital. An individual converts social capital into economic capital when their social networks positively affect their labour market outcomes. The final proposition is that government can actively facilitate this process through policy mechanisms.

The Social Capital Concept

Social capital, as applied in this paper, is defined as the ‘resources embedded in social networks accessed and used by actors for actions’ (Lin, 2001:25). Through focusing on the individual, issues associated with collective notions of social capital are mitigated. Social capital at the collective level does not allow a distinction to be made between the collectively owned resources of the group, and the abilities of individual actors to obtain them. This is a position that can easily lead to tautological statements where a positive or negative outcome can be seen as indicative of either the presence or absence of social capital.

The strength of the concept of social capital lies in its heuristic rather than theoretical value. To this end, Bourdieu’s notion that each of the capitals are interchangeable is key to understanding how social capital developed by an individual in a voluntary association can be converted into economic capital via their labour market outcomes.

The distinction between bridging and bonding social capital is also critical to this analysis. Bridging social capital refers to socially inclusive relations, and encapsulates relationships between groups in the wider society. Bonding social capital, alternatively, refers to socially exclusive relations, and is concerned with social relationships within groups. Bridging social capital is more likely to benefit an individual’s labour market opportunities than bonding social capital, as it is concerned with that individual’s social networks in the wider society.

Social Capital and Voluntary Associations

Voluntary associations are an important site for the development of social capital (Leonard & Onyx, 2003; Robinson, 1997; Stolle, 1998; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Further, the concept of social capital is heuristically useful for understanding the value of resources embedded in social networks, such as those developed within voluntary associations.

There is no simple causal relationship between an individual's voluntary activities, and the level and value of the social capital they might accrue from these activities. There are a number of factors that can influence the quality of the social capital obtained in that environment. For instance, the resources available to an individual from their social capital will be determined by the variety of networks they have access to, and the resources that already exist within those networks (Aguilera, 2002). Research also indicates that as an association becomes more formal and/or hierarchical, its capacity for developing social capital lowers (Arai, 2000; Halpern, 2005; Sharpe, 2003). Further, the quality of social capital an individual may generate is related to the social acceptability of the associations within which that social capital is developed (Wilson, 2000). An individual's own desires, motivations and socio-economic status to begin with, also have some bearing on the social capital they are likely to generate through involving themselves in voluntary activities (Arai, 2000; King & Waldegrave, 2003).

Six volunteers were interviewed, in some depth, during the qualitative fieldwork undertaken for this research. The (primarily quantitative) telephone survey enquired into the experiences of fifty-two volunteers. The participants were drawn from nine different voluntary associations in West Auckland. The research asked about the extent to which bridging and bonding social capital was found in these associations, and how relevant it may be to an individual's labour market outcomes.

The heterogeneity of the relationships an individual can develop through their voluntary activities indicate the extent to which an individual may be able to generate bridging social capital through those activities. The fieldwork considered the heterogeneity of both the participants' exogenous and endogenous relationships, which they developed through volunteering.

Examples emerged from the qualitative fieldwork of participants developing contacts outside of the association they volunteered for, through their voluntary activities. Further, it was found that just over half of participants in the telephone survey had developed friendships, contacts or networks outside of the association with which they volunteered. The telephone survey also asked about the levels of heterogeneity within each of the voluntary associations. It was found that just over one-third of participants thought other people they volunteered with were different to themselves, and that the association within which they volunteered was diverse. Thus, the research indicates that voluntary associations can provide individuals with an opportunity to develop bridging social capital.

The research also asked about the quality of the social capital that might have been available to the volunteers in the study. Examples emerged from the qualitative study of grassroots/informal associations encouraging the development of social capital that can be useful to individuals' labour market outcomes. The telephone survey found that nearly two-thirds of participants believed they had relationships with other volunteers that they considered, to some degree, 'close'.

The literature suggests that voluntary associations can provide an environment conducive to developing social capital. However, the fieldwork has indicated that for most participants, their abilities to generate social capital were independent of their voluntary activities. Further, trust is one indicator of the presence (or absence) of social capital. No material difference was found between the levels of trust the participants had with other volunteers, and the levels of trust they had with other people with whom they interacted with on a regular basis. Nevertheless, around one in six respondents did appear to generate considerably more social capital from their voluntary activities than they did from their 'everyday lives'.

This finding is significant given that research suggests some groups of people, such as those in marginalised groups and minorities, are able to generate, through their voluntary activities, social capital otherwise inaccessible to them (Aguilera, 2002; Judge, 2004; Seyfang, 2004). The implications of this will be canvassed further on in this paper.

Social Capital and the Labour Market

Pierre Bourdieu's idea that each of the capitals are interchangeable is central to the notion that social capital developed in the voluntary sector can be converted, via the labour market, into economic capital. Further, the social capital notion suggests that individual actors can purposively draw on the resources embedded in their social relations to improve their chances of personal profit, such as finding paid employment.

Research in the United States indicates that nearly a quarter of volunteers became involved in voluntary activity, at least in part, to help their business or careers (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1996). Amongst the West Auckland volunteers who took part in this study, around one in six indicated that this was, at least in part, a reason for their volunteering.

However, researchers such as Norwood (2001), Rotolo and Wilson (2003) and Wilson (2000) argue that the impact of social capital on an individual's employment outcomes is minimal and/or largely unsubstantiated by empirical evidence. Dupuis et al (2004) argue that as the labour market becomes more fragmented, and as recruitment systems become more professionalised, the role of social capital in job search may diminish. Consequently, a simple causal relationship between volunteering and labour market outcomes is improbable. However, for some individuals, particularly those from marginalised or minority groups, social capital developed through volunteering can improve their labour market outcomes.

This position is supported by King and Waldegrave (2003), Lin (2001) and Portes (1998), who suggest that social capital can explain variations in access that different groups have to employment. They each draw on the work of Burt (1992) and Granovetter (1974). Granovetter's notion of the 'strength of weak ties' highlights the role that disparate social ties (or bridging social capital) can have in improving an individual's employment outcomes. Their work accords with Bourdieu's instrumental approach to social capital, that focuses on the benefits that can accrue to an individual.

The qualitative research showed participants finding paid employment, and entering into self-employment, as a direct consequence of their voluntary activities. While the majority of participants in

the telephone survey found their first job through job advertisements, just under half used some form of social capital to find their first job. Volunteering was found to have helped over half of the participants in their careers, in some way. Further, just over a quarter of the participants reported they had received some form of direct assistance into paid employment from people with whom they had volunteered. Of the eight participants who had indicated they volunteered, at least in part, to further their business or careers, six reported that they had been assisted into paid employment through the social connections they had developed as volunteers. These findings support Bourdieu's notion that social capital can be converted into economic capital; in this instance, through the labour market.

Labour market outcomes can also depend upon the quality of the networks available to a volunteer (Aguilera, 2002; Bourdieu, 1997; Dickson, 2004; Healy, 2001). In particular, within the search for employment, the range and nature of an individual's connections can be more important than the number of them. Further, a voluntary environment that supports the work culture and/or provides individuals with the opportunity to develop their confidence and social skills, can lead to social capital that can assist people in other facets of their lives, such as furthering their outcomes in the labour market (Seyfang, 2004; Witten-Hannah, 1999).

The qualitative research identified participants who had improved their capacity to develop social connections, through their experiences as volunteers. It also found an example of an organisation that was able to provide avenues for people, who had been out of the labour market for some time, to develop the skills required to reinsert themselves back into paid employment. Further, just over a third of the participants in the telephone survey indicated that they had developed the confidence to explore new career possibilities as a consequence of working as a volunteer.

The notion that social capital can influence an individual's employment outcomes has its critics. The research found that if an individual already has well-developed social networks, it is less likely they will benefit in the labour market from the social capital they develop through their voluntary activities. This may also apply to those already in high status (or at least secure) employment. However, voluntary activity can generate social capital for an individual that can lead to paid employment. To this end, voluntary associations can be useful for individuals from marginalised or minority groups (Seyfang, 2004).

Developing Social Policy

Bourdieu's notion that social capital can be converted into economic capital links social interaction to the economy. This idea has been explored by a number of researchers (see Falk, 2001; Francois, 2002; Midgley & Livermore, 1998; Paldam & Svendsen, 2004; Robinson, 1997). This notion raises the question of the role of social capital in the political economy. The policy implications of the concept centre, first, around whether or not government 'has any business' creating policy that influences how an individual invests their social capital. Secondly, it must be asked whether or not policies that account for social capital can actually be effective, even if they are implemented.

Government policy inescapably influences connections between people, and thus how they invest their social capital (Judge, 2004). Therefore, it can be argued that deliberate use of social capital might better

shape social policy outcomes than if the potential implications of it are ignored. Further, this paper refutes the neo-liberal claim that state intervention (i.e. the welfare state) crowds out voluntary associations and thus diminishes social capital. Countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden have extensive welfare states, yet have social capital indicator scores amongst the highest in the world (Healy, 2001). Conversely, neo-conservative social policies in Canada were shown to impact negatively on the development of social capital (Arai, 2000).

This paper supports an active role for local and/or central government, and indicates that social capital can be heuristically useful in guiding social policy. It builds on Bourdieu's (1997) position that investment, through government policy aimed at developing social capital, is required to create and maintain social capital. Additionally, Szreter (2000) and Falk (2002), using Habermas' notion of 'communicative competences', emphasise the importance of a policy environment that promotes fair and equitable communication between stakeholders in the community and government, and that this is required within civil society for the development of social capital.

Furthermore, a coordinated policy response would seem appropriate, to ensure pre-existing economic limitations are accounted for, and to minimise the chance of contradictory policy being developed (Das, 2004; Halpern, 2005). 'Volunteering' encompasses a variety of activities, and policy should be flexible enough to take into consideration both the disparities that exist within the voluntary sector and the varying needs, motivations, and desires of people who volunteer.

It was noted earlier in this section that bridging social capital is more likely to benefit an individual's labour market opportunities than bonding social capital; to this end it is suggested that policy should focus on developing this form of social capital. At a minimum, it is suggested that both positive and negative impacts of social capital be considered, alongside other factors, when drafting and implementing social policy. In particular, policymakers should consider whether a policy might be harmful to social capital. For instance, it may not be beneficial to build bridging social capital within at-risk communities, if it is at the expense of the bonding social capital that holds those communities together (Leonard & Onyx, 2003).

Government should work in partnership with the community, particularly in view of Habermas' ideas. Working in partnership means understanding the social needs of the community. The Local Government Act 2002 requires local authorities to engage with community organisations and special interest groups on community matters. Understanding the needs of communities requires government to understand the different organisational structures, aspirations and concerns of voluntary associations. This is particularly the case when those associations represent different cultural interests. The Treaty of Waitangi makes this an imperative in respect of Maori interests. The cultural differences of other groups, such as Asian and Pacific peoples, should also be taken into consideration.

The qualitative research identified a general feeling amongst the participants that government undervalued their voluntary work. They appreciated the support they received from local (and in some cases central) government, but felt it often came with too many 'strings attached'. They did not, generally, perceive themselves to be working in partnership with government. However, the telephone survey indicated that the participants in this study did wish to work in partnership with government. Half of the participants indicated, from a series of options, that non-financial forms of support, such as the provision of knowledge and expertise, or of physical resources, were the most important forms of government assistance for developing voluntary activity in West Auckland. When asked to comment

on their preferred form of support, just over one third alluded to a type of assistance that would require understanding and dialogue, or partnership, between the voluntary and government sectors. This would entail support such as more resources, expertise, public acknowledgement of the work undertaken, and/or publicity for that work.

The literature canvassed for this research indicates that local and/or central government in New Zealand can assist the development of social capital in voluntary associations in a variety of ways. Wallis and Dollery (2002) outlined how local bodies can work with the voluntary sector to build social capital, including the following possibilities: community involvement in decision making, targeted assistance such as grants and training, research and monitoring of the voluntary sector, and coordination of both public and private assistance. At local government level, the West Coast Plan provides an example of Waitakere City Council promoting social capital development, through its bringing together of diverse groups of people, and its engendering of cooperation amongst them (Witten-Hannah, 1999).

At the level of central government, the Stronger Communities Action Fund seeks to develop social capital through encouraging increased levels of participation within communities (Taylor, 2004). Such policies reflect international opinion about the value of centralised initiatives to promote social capital in local communities (refer Halpern, 2005; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Narayan, 1999; Seyfang, 2004; Worthington & Dollery, 2000).

New Zealand policymakers have recognised the contribution social capital can make to the analysis of policy options, and have expressed interest in measuring the outcomes of policy orientated at the development of social capital (Spellerberg, 2001). Most available measures of social capital use quantitative assessments of trust, and other aspects of civic involvement (Healy, 2001). It is acknowledged that these methods can provide valid information, though it is suggested that qualitative measures also be employed. Statistics New Zealand has produced a 'Framework for the Measurement of Social Capital in New Zealand' (Spellerberg, 2001). It draws on quantitative techniques, but cautions that quantitative measures can only indicate the existence of social capital, and that qualitative measures are required to understand the quality of the networks and relationships being studied. Community benchmark surveys, that combine a range of methodologies, are one possibility for measuring policy initiatives that aim to develop social capital (Healy, 2004).

The labour market information an individual can obtain through the social capital they generate from their voluntary activities can improve their labour market outcomes. Labour market information is a valuable resource, yet the literature surveyed for this project indicates that it is not equitably distributed through society. Moreover, it suggests that targeted government support of the voluntary sector, that provides opportunities for marginalised or minority groups to develop social capital, is one option available to government to assist people into paid employment.

Voluntary associations are an important part of the fabric of our society. De Tocqueville's observation that they formed the 'social glue' of nineteenth-century America may be just as pertinent in twenty-first century New Zealand. This study has highlighted the relationships between the social networks an individual can develop through volunteering and their economic outcomes via the labour market. Through contributing to an understanding of the role that voluntary associations have in society, it is hoped that this, and future research, will contribute positively to developments in the voluntary sector, and to the realisation of some of the policy suggestions made in this paper.

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