

BUILDING INDIGENOUS SOCIAL CAPITAL IN AN ONLINE WORLD

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Abstract: This paper examines the nexus between social relations of mutual benefit, information communication technology (ICT) access and social inclusion. More specifically, a case study methodology is used to examine the role of ICT in facilitating the social capital of Indigenous communities. A remote Indigenous community in the Northern Territory (NT) is the focus of the paper. Whilst the potential of social capital to affect positive outcomes across a diverse range of areas is well researched, Indigenous disadvantage is well documented and the role of ICT in facilitating social and economic development is well established, although little is known about the ICT social capital nexus in an Indigenous context. The paper commences with a review of the social capital literature. A description of the methodology employed in the data collection phase of the project is followed by the case study. The paper concludes with a summary of the findings and recommendations for further research.

INTRODUCTION: THE CASE STUDY

Social capital and social inclusion are two separate concepts that are used to describe the implications of social interaction. In the context of this paper, the concepts can be understood as a framework that explores the benefits of access to information communication technology (ICT). The potential of ICT to disseminate information quickly, to reach vast numbers of people simultaneously and to include the previously excluded is immense. Consequently, this paper examines the nexus between social relations of mutual benefit, ICT access and social inclusion. More specifically, a case study methodology is used to examine the role of information communication technology (ICT) in facilitating the social capital of Indigenous communities. A remote Indigenous community in the Northern Territory (NT) is the focus of the paper.

Social capital is an elusive concept and there is considerable debate as to what is actually meant by the term. According to Stone (2000) the essence of social capital is quality social relations. Winter (2000a), suggests that social capital encompasses "...social relations of mutual benefit characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity" (p.1). Social capital is, according to Grootaert (1998), "... the glue that holds societies together and without which there can be no

economic growth or human well-being” (p.1). The ABS and the OECD define social capital as “... networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups” (ABS, 2004a, p.5; OECD, 2001, p.1). According to the ABS (2004a:5) the OECD definition of social capital is emerging as a common basis for international comparability. Consequently, this paper has also adopted the ABS and OECD definition.

The positive benefits of the quality social relations that constitute social capital are reported to have implications for a range of areas including education, social and economic development and social and civic stability (ABS, 2002b; Cox, 1996; Fukuyama, 1999; Putnam, 1993). Social capital, the ABS (2004a) claims, may also help mitigate the effects of social and economic disadvantage and “... assist in supporting the development of sustainable local communities, including rural and remote areas ...” (p.1).

Whilst the potential for social capital to affect positive outcomes across a diverse range of areas is well researched; Indigenous disadvantage is well documented (Banks, 2003, 2005; Productivity Commission, 2003a); and the role of ICT in facilitating social and economic development is well established (Clarke, Durand, & Pilat, 2001; Colecchia & Schreyer, 2002; DCITA, 2005a), little is known about the ICT social capital nexus in an Indigenous context. Consequently, this paper examines the relationship between social capital and ICT access in a remote Indigenous community in the Northern Territory¹.

The paper commences with a review of the social capital literature. A description of the methodology employed in the data collection phase of the project is followed by the case study. The paper concludes with a summary of the findings and recommendations for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature revealed a substantial body of research on the topic of social capital. The concept of social capital is, according to Farr (2003), relatively new and still evolving. The origin of the term has been widely attributed to Lydia Hanifan, a rural educator from West Virginia, who first articulated his concept of the civic ideal in 1916 (Farr, 2003; Putnam, 2000; M Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). In the latter half of the twentieth century the conceptual framework of social capital was informed by a number of theorists. Early influential writers were from a range of disciplines including sociology (Coleman, 1988), politics (Putnam, 1995), education (Coleman, 1988) and economics (Fukuyama, 1995).

Contemporary social capital researchers and theorists have expanded on the concept of social capital and have generated “... [a] multitude of perspectives, definitions, theoretical propositions, and emphasis” (Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001:iiv). In recent years Woolcock (1999, 2001) has explored the link between social capital and economic development; Narayan (1999) has researched the role of networks in the alleviation of poverty and Grootaert (1998; 2003; 2001) has examined the role of social capital in sustainable development. The Worldbank (1998, 2001, 2002, 2004a, 2004b), the OECD (2001, 2002), Australia’s Productivity Commission (2003b) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2003b, 2004a) have also taken an active interest in the concept of social capital and its potential implication for civic engagement and sustainable development.

In the Australian context there are also a number of influential social capital researchers and theorists. Cox (1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1995d, 1995e, 1995f) has written extensively on the role of social capital in building civil society; Winter (1998, 1999, 2000a, 2000b) has researched social capital and public policy; Stone and Hughes (2000a, 2000b, 2001) have examined the role of social capital in family and community life; and Falk (2001; 2000) has examined the nexus between

social capital and educational outcomes. However, as Brough et al (2006) has acknowledged, there is "...limited research that has specifically examined social capital in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities"(p.3).

Whilst the literature that does exist in regard to Indigenous social capital is limited, it covers a range of areas. Hunter (2000a, 2000b, 2003) has researched the area of social capital, Indigenous unemployment and Indigenous poverty; Gerritsen, Crosby and Fletcher (2000) have examined social capital and Aboriginal community capacity building; Christie and Greatorex (2004) have explored social capital in regard to the Homeland Movement of the Yolngu people in Arnhem Land; Bell and Heathcote (1999) have researched social capital and Indigenous youth; and Brough et al (2006), have examined social capital in an urban Aboriginal context.

The potential of ICT to support the development of social capital in Indigenous communities is acknowledged in a discussion paper prepared by the Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA, 2005b). However, to date there has been no research that specifically examines the nexus between Indigenous access to ICT and social capital. The lack of literature in regard to ICT and social capital in an Indigenous context indicates that research in this area is clearly warranted.

METHODOLOGY

Sensitivity to the needs and experiences of Indigenous participants was an overriding concern throughout this study. Low levels of literacy and numeracy amongst Indigenous participants were also significant issues that were taken into consideration with regard to the data collection instruments and research methods employed in the research. Consequently, it was deemed inappropriate to survey the Indigenous community members and a case study approach was adopted. According to Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991), a case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed. A participant observer approach was the main methodology employed in the case study. The data collected via observation was triangulated through information gathered in interviews and through a verbally administered questionnaire.

In the course of the data collection phase approximately 10 Indigenous community members were interviewed and consulted. Three interviewees (approximately one per cent of the population) were identified by the community as suitable spokes-people. These three interviewees subsequently consented to participate in a detailed semi-structured interview. These interviews explored in depth the social processes, the social capital indicators present in the community as well as community access to telecommunications services. The multi-perspective analysis enabled a range of experience and knowledge to contribute to the study. Multiple perspectives is, according to Tellis (1997), one of the most salient characteristics of a case study approach:

This means that the researcher considers not just the voice and perspective of the actors, but also of the relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them....They give a voice to the powerless and voiceless. (p.1)

The interviews were structured around a questionnaire which incorporated the core concepts from a survey developed by Narayan and Cassidy (2001). The questionnaire employed statistically validated questions for measuring social capital in developing countries. This questionnaire was administered verbally. The three participants all held a significant role in the community: they were employed full time and were recognised by the community as representative of the views of the community. All three participants were traditional land owners, and all three were women.

Permission from the Tiwi Land Council to undertake research was obtained prior to conducting the study. The project also had the full support and cooperation of the participating community.

NORTHERN TERRITORY CONTEXT

The NT is geographically isolated from all the major population centres in Australia. The physical isolation of the Territory is also compounded by a relatively young, widely dispersed, very multicultural and often highly mobile population (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2003). Of the 202,793 people who inhabit the Territory, the majority of the population reside in the major urban areas of the NT (ABS, 2006b:53). More than 50 per cent of the population reside in Darwin, the capital city. As of June 2003, approximately 25 per cent of the total Territory population lived in the remotes area of the NT (ABS, 2006a). According to the NT Government (2003:11) there are over 700 small communities located in the remote regions of the Territory. The communities range in size from less than 50 inhabitants to a population of more than 250 people.

The estimated resident Indigenous population in the NT at June 2001 was 56,875 – approximately 29 per cent of the total Territory population (ABS, 2006b). This is significantly higher than the national average where the Indigenous population represents approximately 2 per cent of the total Australian population. As of June 2003, the majority of the population who lived in the remote regions of the Territory were of Indigenous descent (ABS, 2006b).

CASE STUDY – THE CONTEXT

Bathurst and Melville Island constitute the Tiwi islands. Both islands are located approximately 70 km north of Darwin. The islands, which are freehold Aboriginal land², are separated by the Aspley Strait. The total land mass of the islands is approximately 7492 sq km. Melville Island is the largest of the two and it is the largest island, apart from Tasmania, off mainland Australia.

The Tiwi population of Melville and Bathurst Island form a homogeneous cultural and linguistic group. The majority of the Tiwi population are of Indigenous descent, Catholicism is the predominant religion on the islands, and the vast majority of the population speak an Indigenous language. With a median age of 24.8 years, the Tiwi population is relatively young. As of 2001, 84.6 per cent of the population was aged 45 years or less, and approximately 33.6 per cent of the population were under 15 years of age (ABS, 2003a).

The community of Milikapiti which is located on the northern coast of Melville Island was the focus of the case study. Apart from the three main communities of Milikapiti, Nguuiu and Pirlingimpi, the Tiwi islands are largely uninhabited (TILG, 2004). At the time of the case study the Indigenous population of Milikapiti was, according to the Milikapiti Community Development Officer, approximately 385. Approximately 30 non-Indigenous people were also resident in the community.

The population of all three Tiwi communities fluctuates. The mobility of the population is due to attendance at ceremonies, visits to the mainland, admissions to the Darwin hospital and general migration to and from other Indigenous communities. A significant number of the adolescent population are also sent to Darwin to attend boarding school. The students return home to attend ceremonies and for school holidays.

Despite their relative proximity to Darwin, the Tiwi people of Milikapiti have managed to retain many traditional customs and practices. Although early mission contact entrenched Catholicism on the islands, ceremonial life is still an important aspect of the social and cultural traditions of the Tiwi people. At Milikapiti, there appears to be little difficulty reconciling western

religion with traditional culture and, as recently as 2005, the Tiwi of Milikapiti were observed conducting a traditional Pukumani ceremony in order to mourn the death of a relative.

Milikapiti is located 105 kilometres North East of Darwin. Access to the community, from the mainland, is by air only. A barge service brings freight to the community on a regular basis. A network of dirt roads connects Milikapiti with the two other communities located on the Tiwi Islands. During the Wet Season the roads are often impassable and movement between communities is restricted. However, a sealed, all-weather airstrip and a regular air service between Darwin, Nguiu and Pirlingimpi does ensure that the community is not totally isolated during the monsoonal downpours that occur during the wet season. Telecommunications access is vital to the community especially at times when precarious weather conditions inhibit travel between communities as well as travel to and from the mainland.

The unemployment rate on the Tiwi islands is high. The ABS (2005) estimates that in 2003 the unemployment rate on both Melville and Bathurst Island was 17.2 per cent. This was significantly higher than the national average of 6.2 per cent for the same period (ABS, 2004b). The community is heavily reliant on government services although there are a number of enterprises currently being undertaken on Melville Island. A forestry project, sand mining and tourism have assisted in boosting employment. On Bathurst Island fish farming is a recent endeavour and has also provided employment opportunities for a number of Tiwi (Tiwi Land Council, 2004).

The majority of the employment at Milikapiti is provided through the Department of Workplace Relations Employment (DEWR) Scheme *Community Development Employment Project* (CDEP). However, a health centre, the local council, a shop, the Housing Association, a school, the Art Centre, a club and a garage also provide a source of non-subsidized employment for Tiwi community members. The non-Indigenous community members are employed as teachers, nurses, council members and housing administration personnel. The Art Centre Coordinator, community store Manager and Housing Coordinator are also non-Indigenous. A number of 'itinerant' non-Indigenous people are also in the community and working, on a contract basis, on the building projects that are being undertaken. These non-Tiwi individuals also reside in the community on a temporary/semi-permanent basis. All non-Tiwi people must apply to the Land Council for a permit to visit the islands.

In 2003, the community of Milikapiti participated in The Electronic Outback Project (EOP). The EOP was a trial program conducted by the communication carrier, Optus. The program aimed to supply satellite access "...into fourteen remote communities and provide public access to payphones, videoconferencing, internet access and fax facilities (Northern Territory Government, 2003:33). Prior to the EOP the community of Milikapiti struggled to function with redundant telecommunications infrastructure, inadequate and insufficient phone lines and a system ill-equipped to handle the transmission of data. The community's telecommunications infrastructure, a microwave digital radio concentrator system (DRCS), which had been installed in the late 1980s had long outlived its usefulness and was inadequate for the needs of the community.

At the time of the case study, the school, the Health Centre, the local council office, the Housing Association, the recreation centre, the Art Centre and the garage were all equipped with a range of telecommunications facilities which included telephone, fax and internet access. However, despite the EOP, public access to phones, faxes and the internet remained limited. Apart from television and radio there were very few telecommunications services available for public access in the community. There was one public phone at Milikapiti, one Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale (EFTPOS) outlet, and no public internet facility.

The community is highly reliant on government services and consequently telecommunications initiatives have been directed at improving infrastructure in the areas of health and education and to support the provision of local government administration. With high unemployment and a significant proportion of the workforce on CDEP, the demand for improved telecommunications services is, in the immediate future, unlikely to come from local industry. For the general population, access to communication facilities was problematic.

THE COMMUNITY

According to the interviewees, the kinship system is, to the Tiwi people, the most significant group to which they belong. All interviewees identified their "family", their "tribe" and their "skin group" as the group that was the most important to their household³. The interviewees also identified their family as the group that is the most homogeneous in terms of language, culture and religion and as the group with whom they interact the most frequently.

Whilst all interviewees acknowledge membership of a number of groups, such as the church group and the community women's group, these groups were predominantly found within the community and were constituted mainly by family members. One interviewee, who worked as a teacher's aide at the local school, acknowledged that six of her co-workers were members of her immediate family.

All three expert witnesses were employed in roles that necessitated contact with individuals, groups and organisations beyond the confines of the community. Consequently, they were able to identify eight or more close friends, other than family members, whom they could call on for help or to talk about private matters. The interviewees were also "definitely" able to identify people, other than family members, that they could call on for financial assistance if the need arose. However, close family members were acknowledged by all interviewees as people they would most likely call upon if they had to borrow money.

All three interviewees expressed a general sense of satisfaction and control over their lives. Whilst the interviewees were either "very happy" or "moderately happy" with their life, they also felt they had the power to make important decisions that could change the course of their life. However, when questioned about Local, Territory and Federal Government their responses indicated ambivalence about placing their trust in these authorities. As the interviewees were employed in Education, the Health Service and Police, Fire and Emergency Services, and were highly regarded by the community, there was, at the very least, a degree of trust in these services at the local level. But in general, interviewees thought that "...you could not be too careful when dealing with [some] people". However, they unanimously agreed that most people in the community would willingly help you if needed.

All interviewees claimed that they frequently socialised with others over food or drink, either in private or in a public place. The socialisation, according to interviewees, was with people from different tribes, different cultures and different linguistic backgrounds. A licensed club operates at Milikapiti. The club is the focal venue for the majority of the social interaction that takes place in the community. This club is open on weekdays for four hours a day and half a day on Saturday. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people frequent the club. During the football season almost all community members can be found at the club on Saturday afternoons supporting their local team in the Tiwi Island Football League.

Whilst it was acknowledged that tensions existed in the community, the interviewees regarded the community as friendly. Interviewees cited the cause of the tensions in the community as disputes over landholdings, disputes between tribes, disputes between men and women, and between the older and younger generations. According to all three interviewees, these

disputes had occasionally led to violence. Despite the tensions in the community, interviewees felt moderately safe to very safe when home alone.

The main sources of information that were identified by the three expert witnesses included relatives, friends and neighbours. Two interviewees also identified newspapers, television and the internet. One interviewee identified “community leaders” as one of the main sources of information.

The number of community groups that the three interviewees were involved in ranged from two to “many”. The interviewee who worked as a teacher’s aide at the local school claimed membership of eight significant groups. The groups included tribe, skin group, two school groups, the Aboriginal School Parents Association, the Church, the Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services and the community Women’s Group. This interviewee, in particular, was very involved in community events and frequently volunteered her time and skills to local community groups. She was highly literate in both English and Tiwi and was also frequently called upon to assist visitors. Consequently, her networks were extensive and extended beyond the community. During the case study she was observed with an address book which contained contact detail and phone numbers of her friends, associates and the Tiwi organisation located on the islands.

All three interviewees had a strong sense of commitment to their community. They all worked in an area that provided a service to community members such as the school, the health clinic and in law enforcement. All participants acknowledged that they would willingly donate time to a project that would benefit the community. Two interviewees stated that they would also donate money to such a project.

The interviewees identified recent community activities that they, or their family, had been involved in. These activities were undertaken for the benefit of the community. The activities cited included a “clean-up” after Cyclone Ingrid, a category three cyclone which swept through the community in March 2005. A re-enactment of 300 years of white contact was also given as an example of a recent event where the community came together for the benefit of others.

Whilst cooperation by community members to solve a problem that would affect the whole community was considered to be “very likely”, interviewees did not consider the community to be very proactive in organising or petitioning officials/politicians for new services. A petition for a community swimming pool was cited as an example of one of the few times the community had actively sought a new service.

All three interviewees had voted in the last election and all had participated in community activities. Only two of the three interviewees reported that they had been actively involved in community issues, but all three acknowledged that they would willingly support local issues if they were perceived to be of benefit to the whole community.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS

At the time of the case study, telecommunications access was a point of contention in the community and the cause of considerable tension. Interviews conducted with community members revealed that whilst most non-Indigenous residents had a telephone and internet access in their home, very few Indigenous community members had access to these services. Approximately 10 Indigenous households were identified as having a landline and home phone. However, it was also acknowledged that many of these phones were, for a variety of reasons, not always operational. Home internet access was not a priority and, as of 2005, no Tiwi people at Milikapiti were identified as having a home computer. There was one public phone in the

community and no public internet access.

The lack of access to phones and the internet caused both social and organisational problems for the community as a whole. Community members with access to phones, faxes and the internet were often expected to share the facility or are asked to undertake administration tasks on behalf of others. One interviewee admitted that until recently she had a phone installed in her home. The continual pressure from family members wanting to use the phone eventually led to her having the service disconnected. Council Administration workers reported that they had frequently undertaken internet banking on behalf of family members. However, the council staff discontinued this service when it began to interfere with the work they were employed to carry out. A sign prominently displayed in the Health centre which stated: *Telephones in the clinic are not for private use by the community or staff* provided an indication of the social and administrative tension that surround the provision of telephone and internet access in the community.

All three interviewees had access to a telephone and the internet through their work location. The Police Aide did not have a dedicated phone and internet connection but could obtain access through the Council office if necessary. All interviewees used the telephone daily for work related transactions. Whilst the internet was used less frequently, it was accessible.

In September 2005, mobile phone coverage was not available at Milikapiti. However, it was anticipated that a mobile phone tower would be erected before the end of 2005. The installation of a phone tower was part of a project by Telstra to provide the whole of the Tiwi Islands with Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) phone coverage. According to DCITA (2004), Milikapiti would receive CDMA access through the Towns Under 500 Program.

A mobile phone tower had been installed in the community of Nguuiu on Bathurst Island just prior to the commencement of the case study. Phone coverage extended to the mainland and, when towers were erected at Milikapiti and the community of Pirlingimpi, coverage would include the three communities on the Tiwi islands.

In anticipation of the impending availability of mobile phone coverage, a number of Milikapiti community members had purchased a handset. The youth of the community were also very keen to have access to mobile telephony. On a recent school excursion into Darwin, mobile phones were, according to a local school teacher, purchased by most students. Secondary school students who had returned from boarding school on the mainland to attend a mourning ceremony were also observed with mobile phones. Whilst the phones were unable to transmit voice or text data they were used to take digital images of the ceremony.

SUMMARY

Indigenous kinship is a complex set of interconnected relationships with well defined obligations and responsibilities that fulfil certain economic and civic virtues. According to Bell and Heathcote (1999) Indigenous kinship and family structures are cohesive forces which bind Aboriginal people together and provide psychological and emotional support:

In all aspects of life, kinship determines rights and obligations and much of a person's behaviour in a variety of circumstances. Kinship is a social grid that defines people's identity in relation to one another and to outsiders, and can be interpreted as a web of community groups. (p.3)

Consequently, social relations of mutual benefit characterised by the norms of trust and reciprocity, which are the core of social capital, is also a fundamental aspect of Indigenous cultural identity. As indicated in the case study, networks, together with shared norms, values

and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or amongst groups are also integral to the Indigenous kinship system.

Although all interviewees identified their family as the most homogeneous and the most important group to which they belonged, they also frequently socialised with other clans, cultures and linguistic groups. However, the socialising occurred mainly within the confines of community. Although their networks were on the whole restricted to community and family groups, all interviewees did identify friends they could all upon for assistance. However, these relationships were only observed amongst those community members who had the capacity to sustain them either through face-to-face contact or via access to a telephone or the internet.

Throughout the case study a strong sense of community identity and belonging emerged. The cultural, linguistic and religious homogeneity of the community contributed to a collective Tiwi identity that manifested itself in ceremonies, a shared sense of community and a willingness to contribute and to engage in events for the benefit of the common good. The interviewees all expressed a general sense of satisfaction with their life and felt relatively safe in the community. However, they were wary of placing their trust in local, Territory and Federal Government and they were cautious of some people.

Access to ICT was a contentious issue in the community and was the cause of considerable tension amongst community members. The ICT services that were available were mainly used to support local and NT government administrative services. Whilst public access to ICT was severely restricted, there was a significant ongoing demand for improved access to telephones and the internet. Family obligations and an expectation that community members with access to phones, faxes and the internet would share the services and undertake tasks on behalf of others exacerbated the tension surrounding access to ICT services. In an Indigenous context the sharing of resources is an important source of family support that not only cushions the impact of financial constraints, but also acted as an important form of social control (Hunter, 2000b). The act of ignoring kinship obligations is, according to Schwab and Sutherland (2001), offensive to the whole community and the social reverberations of such an act are long lasting.

The youth of the community were early adopters of ICT. They had exposure and access to mobile telephone at boarding school and were adept in its use. They will, more than likely, drive the adoption of mobile telephony once the CDMA network is operational across the Tiwi Islands.

CONCLUSION

Social capital is an inherent aspect of the complex set of interconnected relationships that constitute the Tiwi kinship system. Within this system are well defined obligations and responsibilities governed by the behavioural norms of reciprocity and trust. The kinship system is overtly expressed and publically reinforced through the act of sharing. At Milikapiti, the social capital accrued through kinship relationships had a number of positive benefits. Employment prospects were enhanced through skin group connections; the tribe was a source of access to information and advice; and financial, social and emotional support was reciprocated family norms.

As evidenced by the case study there was considerable bonding social capital at Milikapiti. The community had a strong sense of identity which was reinforced by the kinship system and their common cultural identity, language and religion. However, the physical and social isolation of the community may have also contributed to the bonding social capital that was evident in the community.

At the time of the case study there was considerable pent up demand for improved ICT access at Milikapiti. Limited access to telephones, to faxes and the internet were the main ICT issues identified by the community. The lack of access to ICT was a cause of frustration and tension. Whilst there were no immediate plans to install public internet access in the community, the proposed CDMA network may alleviate some of these issues. There were indications that the take up of mobile telephony would be prolific.

Improved access to telephones, the internet and ICT services has the potential to mitigate the negative effects of the geographic and social isolation experienced by the community. Access and effective use of ICT has the potential to provide individuals and the community with the increased access to information; the opportunity to network with family members, other significant groups and friends; and provide increased access to services such as banking and government agencies. According to the DCITA (2005b) discussion paper, in an online world Indigenous access to ICT may facilitate generalised and individual trust (p.16); help create and sustain bridging and linking relationships (p.41,53); build and sustain Indigenous networks; as well as assist in promoting Indigenous values such as the importance of country, family traditional law, culture, community and relationships (p.48).

The role of ICT building the social capital of Indigenous communities is an area that needs further research. As DCITA (2005b) has acknowledged, "...for ICT use to move beyond bonding – to harness its power for bridging and linking to resources that enhance economic and social development ...more attention [needs to be given] to the type of social capital being developed (p.4). The impact of mobile telephony on Indigenous communities, Indigenous use of the internet, and telecommunications policy in regard to remote Indigenous communities, are some of the areas that also warrant further research.

ENDNOTES

1. This paper is part of an in-depth analysis of telecommunications access in four communities in the Northern Territory. A synopsis of the research project was published in November 2009 in the Telecommunications Journal of Australia. Vol 59,3.
2. Freehold land is land over which the Crown has granted an interest. Freehold gives the owner of that interest the exclusive right to the land for an indefinite period of time.
3. Through out the course of the data collection phase of the study the interviewees frequently referred to the Tiwi kinship subsections of family, tribe and skin group. These terms, are used interchangeably in this paper and, when referred to, imply the complex interrelated network of relationships that constitute the Tiwi kinship system.

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