THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON INFORMATION FLOW IN FIRE-RISK COMMUNITIES

Sondra Dickinson[1]

[1] School of Social and Political Sciences (Anthropology), University Of Melbourne, Victoria

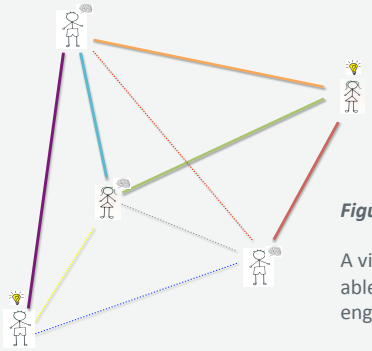


Figure 1 (Concept Only):

A visualization of how people may be able to obtain relevant information by engaging connections in a network.

This research project will analyse the use of social networks within fire-risk communities, to better understand how information about bushfires and relevant risk is transferred and utilized.

Theoretical Framework

During crisis situations, we recognize the critical importance of receiving feedback and support from a social community. [1]

Social interaction is the essential bonding component of effective knowledge exchange, where those individuals who engage with others, often display better levels of control, confidence and self-sufficiency during crises. [2]

Relationships can thus be viewed as assets, which can be leveraged to assist in many types of circumstances for many types of outcomes. [3]

Research Questions/Objectives

1. What do the social networks (nodes) established within the selected fieldwork communities look like?

2. How does bushfire information flow throughout these networks?

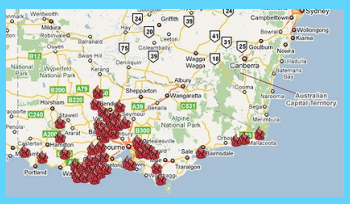
3. Is there data that supports/refutes the idea that social networks can facilitate the flow of information outside the scope of the immediate function/role of the connections?

4. How may social networks be further recognized and harnessed to aid in risk awareness and fire prevention?

Methodology

Conduct a 12-month comparative ethnographic case study that uses bushfire as the framework for analysis.

Undertaken in two Victorian fire-Risk regions, identified and selected from the *52 Victorian towns most at-risk of bushfire (2009)*



Fieldsite 1 (Aug. 2010 – Feb. 2011): Otway Coast Region (Semi-Rural) - Kennett River, Wye River, Separation Creek

Fieldsite 2: (Mar. 2011 – Sep. 2011): Dandenong Ranges (Urban-Fringe) - Sassafras, Kallista, The Patch

[1] Bonanno et al. 2001; Smit and Wandel 2006; see also Tompkins and Adger 2004
[2] Bonanno et al. 2001; see also Thompson et al. 1990; Knox et al. 2006
[3] Mitchell 1974; Putnam and Goss 2002; Woolcock 2001; 2009; see also Freeman et al. 1989