HEARTBEATS

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Editorial

The Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme (CTPCLP) in National University of Singapore aims to develop Singapore's next generation of community leaders and change makers. Each year, the CTPCLP admits a small number of undergraduate fellows who major in various disciplines.

The CTPCLP places emphasis on developing the fellows' critical thinking and applied research skills in examining local social and community issues. The fellows are encouraged to go beyond table-top research by engaging in on-the-ground fieldwork. While analysing the results of their fieldwork with relevant theoretical perspectives, the fellows are challenged to propose, and possibly also execute, innovative ideas and solutions that can address various social and community issues. This inaugural issue of our journal, Heartbeats, presents the research efforts of some of our CTPCLP fellows.

Law Zhe Wen's case study of Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan, as an example of Chinese clan associations or huiguans, questions the relevance and role of huiguans in contemporary Singapore. In particular, the case study highlights the challenges that Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan and other huiguans face in balancing their dual objectives of promoting both generic Chinese culture and specific dialect subcultures.

The article by Talia Seet et al. argues that community trails can serve as effective pedagogical tools in instructing community development. Specifically, the article discusses how the rapid ethnographic approach can be adopted to build up the contents for the community trails, and how these trails can highlight the importance of harnessing community-based assets in development and intervention efforts.

Charmian Goh's article chronicles the common themes that occur in the shared vision of youth (and their parents) within the Ang Mo Kio community. The article also examines how Beyond Social Services, a social services organization that operates in Ang Mo Kio, can effectively partner the community in striving towards that vision.

With the salience of gerontological issues in Singapore, Tan Weilie et al. propose an alternative, innovative approach to delivering food rations to disadvantaged elderly. This alternative approach not only reduces food wastage, but also empowers the elderly with more choices and provides the elderly with opportunities for social interactions.

Muhammad Nadjad examines the bed crunch challenge faced by Ren Ci Community Hospital as a consequence of overstayers (i.e., patients who are fit for discharge, but remain in the hospital as they await the arrival of their foreign domestic workers). His article also suggests that interim home care may be a possible solution to the problem of overstayers and wasted bed space.

Finally, Chia Shu Xuan reviews the literature and the evolution of academic thought and research on autism spectrum disorder. His article also examines the case of Specialisterne, a social enterprise headquartered in Denmark. The Specialisterne model offers hope for Specialist individuals with autism spectrum disorder to be gainfully employed and engaged in high-functioning work tasks.

These articles reflect the fellows' desire to see community development efforts in Singapore taken to a higher and more sustainable level. And as editors, we hope that the articles can add value to the literature on local community development efforts. More importantly, we also hope that the fellows' research work can result in sustained positive impact on various community groups in Singapore, either directly or otherwise.

A/P Albert Teo and Ng Yong Hao
Editors

The Role of Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan in the Promotion of Chinese Culture

LAW ZHE WEN

Clan associations, or huiguans, are community builders that have provided support to the Chinese community or smaller groups in the Chinese community since the 19th century. Their importance in providing a platform for agency and solidarity to be cultivated along ethnic-based lines has been well documented. However, since Singapore's independence, the focus on building a civic-based national identity has arguably placed huiguans in a difficult position. Using the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan as a case study, this paper examines the current direction that huiguans are undertaking in order to remain relevant to the ethnic Chinese while contributing to the nation-building process.

Introduction

In their work, 'The Politics of Nation Building and Citizenship in Singapore', Michael Hill and Lian Kwen Fee state the importance of 'cultural-symbolic capital' and 'civic instruments' in the construction of Singapore's national identity. They go on to explain the importance of public institutions with ethnic association in building 'cultural symbolic capital' as 'individuals [in a society] expect to recognize themselves with [such] public institutions' (Hill and Lian, 1995). As such, it is no surprise that public institutions in Singapore are supported by the government for their ability to contribute to fostering a stronger national identity. However, as ethnic-based public institutions align themselves with the goal of building national identity, they might find themselves in a predicament as their operations might not be directly relevant to nation building. Yet, there still remains a need for them to remain relevant in the daily lives of individuals for their continual existence. In this respect, it seems that certain ethnic-based institutions in Singapore have taken up the role of community development while aligning themselves with Singapore's aim of developing 'cultural symbolic capital', which have in turn ensured their continual survival. This paper will attempt to study how a clan-based organisation (i.e. huiguan) - the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan (SHHK) - has managed to achieve this feat, and the ramifications associated with this adaptation. In this case study, I contend that this successful adaptation of *huiguan*s is a major reason for their ability to remain relevant in modern-day Singapore. I will examine how *huiguan*s can potentially retain their original function of promoting dialect-group culture despite this adaptation.

Definition of Community Development and its Relevance

There exist multiple definitions of community development but in this essay, I employ the definition advanced by Jnanabatra Bhattacharyya for it is relevant to the clan-based associations. In his work 'Theorizing Community Development', Bhattacharyya (2004) defines community development as the promotion of solidarity and agency. Solidarity is defined as the 'shared identities and norms' in a community. In the context of ethnic-based organisations, these 'shared identities and norms' include the culture that is practiced by an ethnic group in the context of Singapore, which is different from that practiced by the ethnic group in their place of origin. Meanwhile, agency is defined as the 'access to resources that makes affirmation of the human will possible'. These are crucial as we see that ethnic-based associations operate on these premises to begin to support the ethnic Chinese community in Singapore.

According to Anthony Smith, the national identity of modern nations can be either ethnic- or civic-based. An ethnic identity is based on a 'named group of people' who share a 'common ancestry' and 'common customs and vernacular' while a civic identity is based on a share territory and common ideologies (Smith, 1988). Given the diverse background of the population in Singapore, a civic-based national identity would certainly have to take precedence in its course of nation building and the government has practiced it to a large extent. Consequently, this leaves a gap for the people in Singapore who still find the need to associate themselves with an ethnic identity. The Singapore leaders realise the importance of maintaining an ethnic-based identity due to the values and traditions that come along with such ethnic lines (Lee, 1991). But this ethnic identity, be it based on race or dialect group, is not one that the government can be directly involved in as the government can ill-afford to associate itself with race-based politics.

Given these considerations, the *huiguan*s, together with other ethnic-based associations, fit nicely into the picture. The *huiguan*s serve the role of protecting traditions for continuity and providing opportunities for Chinese Singaporeans to participate in cultural stewardship. It is also noteworthy that such opportunities to embrace one's culture are not forced upon by the government, but are choices created for the Chinese in Singapore. In this sense, Chinese Singaporeans who want to retain their ethnic links, be it to Chinese or dialect culture can choose to continue to do so with the platforms provided by the *huiguan*s. Meanwhile, the

government's desire to retain ethnic-based vritues and traditions can be maintained.

Brief History of *Huiguans* in Singapore

The origins of *huiguan*s in Singapore can be traced back to the arrival of Chinese immigrants to Singapore in the 1800s. According to 'History of Chinese *Huiguan*s in Singapore', the unfavourable living conditions due to wars and extreme poverty in mainland China drove large-scale migration as 'many [left] their homeland to seek a better life elsewhere' (National Archives, 1986). Singapore became a popular destination with ample opportunities, as an 'eight fold increase in trade in Singapore between 1824 and 1872' made it a major trading port under the British (National Archives, 1986). To cope with the influx of Chinese immigrants, the colonial government divided up the immigrants based on their dialect groups and created settlement patterns based on these divisions (National Archives, 1986). As most of the Chinese immigrants came to Singapore alone, the immediate social support was likely to come from the dialect group members. At the very least, those from the same dialect group shared the same tongue and had more similar religious and traditional practices. Entrepreneurs from specific dialect groups were also known to monopolize certain trades and occupations. These had resulted in the birth of *bang(帮)*, or groupings which were based on dialect, locality or even surnames. The *bangs* would in turn grow into the *huiguan*s that we know today (National Archives, 1986).

The *huiguan*s were arguably the most important organisations to the Chinese in Singapore between the 1800s and the 1940s. During this period, the *huiguan*s permeated almost every aspect of the lives of the Chinese immigrants and the onus to provide support to the Chinese immigrants was placed in the hands of the *huiguan*s. The major domains in which the *huiguans* were involved in included religion, business, social services and cultural activities.

The function of providing religious services was one of the first needs addressed by the *huiguan*s. Thian Hock Keng (Hokkien), Yueh Hai Cheng Temple (Teochew) and Tin Hou Kong (Hainanese) were some of the temples founded by clan-based associations as Chinese immigrants settled down in Singapore (National Archives, 1986). These temples were presumably hubs of activities as worshipping deities was considered an important practice by most Chinese immigrants. The *huiguan*s also provided Chinese-based education to the

Chinese, as opportunities to pursue a colonial government-supported education were limited to the Straits-born or select few who were more privileged until the early 1900s (Hill and Lian, 1995). The schools set up by the *huiguan*s only provided primary education to students until 1919, when the first Chinese-medium secondary school- the Chinese High School - was set up through the collaboration of various *huiguan* leaders led by Tan Kah Kee. The setting up of tertiary institutions such as the Ngee Ann College (now Ngee Ann Polytechnic) and the Nanyang University (now Nanyang Technological University) was also made possible by the *huiguan*s in the mid-1950s (National Archives, 1986). Besides these, the *huiguan*s were also actively involved in providing social support to the people. The *huiguan*s' efforts to organise various forms of social activities are well documented (Kuah, 2006). Hospitals such Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Tong Chai Medical Institution were also set up by *huiguan* leaders to meet the demand for healthcare. All in all, the *huiguan*s played a crucial role in addressing the needs of the Chinese community in Singapore.

Additionally, the *huiguan*s were active in promoting and preserving the Chinese culture and traditions. Celebrations of festivities such as the Mid-Autumn Festival and Chinese New Year were organised by the *huiguan*s. Various traditional Chinese performing arts, particularly Chinese opera, were also organised by these *huiguan*s (National Archives, 1986). The continual maintenance of the temples and public monuments also aided in this domain.

The role of the *huiguan*s changed significantly after Singapore gained independence, on practical and ideological grounds. According to Zeng Ling, 'the government took over the Chinese *huiguan*s' previous functions' of 'providing education, medical care, public graveyards… and [the provision of] other public facilities to all people including the Chinese' (Zeng, 2006). The removal of these core functions from the *huiguan*s effectively curtailed the tremendous influence they once wielded. Furthermore, in a quest to promote a Singapore identity through bilingualism, dialects were rendered obsolete by the government. Lee Kuan Yew famously proclaimed, 'without making Mandarin the mother tongue in place of the dialects, our policy of bilingualism will not succeed' (Lee, 1991). This was problematic for the *huiguan*s, which were built upon the foundation of providing support to members of the same dialect groups. This stance, together with the loss of core functions of the *huiguan*s contributed to an existential crisis

for the *huiguan*s. They had to redefine their functions to match the country's direction in order for them to continue to exist in post-independence Singapore.

The *huiguan*s in Singapore realized the grave danger that they were in and decided to take action. They convened in 1984 to determine the future direction of *huiguan*s and far-reaching recommendations were made (SHHK, 2006). One of the major recommendations was to 'actively preserve and promote Chinese tradition and culture'. This also paved way for the setup of the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations (SFCCA) in 1986. The SFCCA now serves as the umbrella organisation for the cause of promoting the Chinese language and culture (SHHK, 2006). This is a major milestone for *huiguan*s in Singapore as they now have a definite cause which can allow them to be relevant and continue to contribute to Singapore's nation-building process. At the same time, this may prove to be a worrying decision as it is convenient for the *huiguan*s to forgo their function of promoting the cultures of their respective dialect groups in favour of the more generic Chinese culture. Ultimately, while the Chinese culture and the dialect groups' cultures are similar, there are sufficient nuanced differences that distinguish dialect groups' relevance to different groups of Chinese. The language spoken by each dialect group contributes significantly to these differences.

Fortunately, while the vision for the various *huiguan*s has converged to serve the general Chinese populace in Singapore, they have also maintained some form of delineation in terms of promoting the cultures of their respective dialect groups. *Huiguan*s such as The Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan epitomizes this successful adaptation of focusing on the promotion of Chinese culture, while retaining its previous functions as it continues to thrive in present day.

The Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan

The SHHK is the largest Min (Hokkien) *huiguan* and also the de facto leader among these associations. The SHHK had its origins tied to the Thian Hock Keng, which was the nexus for early Chinese immigrants from the Fujian province. Interestingly, the leader of the Thian Hock Keng was also the de facto leader of the entire Chinese community in Singapore (SHHK, 2009). Prominent Chinese leaders such as Tan Kah Kee, Tan Lark Sye, and more recently, Wee Cho Yaw, served as chairmen of the SHHK. The SHHK was the epitome of a *huiguan* which served as a key provider of social welfare, education, economic opportunities and

cultural activities. Over the years, as the role of *huiguan*s evolved, the SHHK has also ensured that it remained at the forefront of change. Even as the *huiguan*s faced the question of survival in the 1980s, SHHK, under the guidance of Wee Cho Yaw, sharpened its focus to further its participation in the preservation of the Chinese culture and language, and has done so quite remarkably. While the SHHK has retained the functions of providing education through its six schools (Tao Nan, Ai Tong, Chongfu, Kong Hwa, Nan Chiao Primary and Secondary), serving the needs of its members, and providing social welfare to the society at large, the sharpened focus on promoting the Chinese culture in Singapore is perhaps the defining function that allows the SHHK to continue to thrive.

The Thian Hock Keng remains an integral part of this function of the SHHK. However, besides the Thian Hock Keng, many new initiatives have been introduced since the 1980s. The most notable initiative by the SHHK was perhaps the setup of the Arts and Cultural Troupe (ACT) in 1986 (SHHK Arts and Cultural Troupe, 2006). The ACT now boasts an enrolment of thousands of students, and is supported by over 50 staff to meet the ever increasing demand. Also, the SHHK has taken up the role of developing awareness of the Hokkien culture by holding flagship events such as the Singapore Hokkien Festival. Chinese in Singapore are also encouraged to better appreciate the Chinese culture and tradition through nationwide competitions and grants offered by the SHHK. All in all, the SHHK has immersed itself in the mission of the promotion of culture. The activities carried out by the SHHK target all age groups and seem to cater to a wide range of cultural interests. In the next section, I attempt a classification of SHHK's activities, and discuss how the activities contribute to community development of the Chinese in Singapore.

Cultural Activities Organised by the SHHK

While the diverse range of cultural activities organised by the SHHK contributes to the single overarching aim of promoting the Chinese language and culture, the level of impact and the targeted outcomes do vary across activities. On top of that, even within the domain of promoting the Chinese language and culture, there exist differences between activities that promote the generic Chinese culture and those that promote the Hokkien sub-culture. The classification of activities undertaken by the SHHK can be seen in Table 1. In the table, short descriptions of the activities that are organised by the SHHK are provided. Furthermore, the activities are specified as promoting either the Chinese culture or the Hokkien

subculture. All of the activities listed in Table 1 are still actively being pursued by the SHHK.

Organisation/ Activity	Year Founded	Aim	Category of Culture
Arts and Cultural Troupe (ACT)	1986	The ACT was founded in 1986 in response to the government's call for a 'graceful' society, and with the aim of contributing to Singapore's performing arts scene. The ACT hopes to achieve these by increasing the interest of youth and children in Singapore towards Chinese culture. The fees charged by the ACT have been kept low in order to make the programmes affordable to the public.	The ACT was set up to promote the Chinese culture and language.
The SHHK Literacy Awards	2003	The awards aim to promote the interest of young Singaporeans in the Chinese language and literature. Past winning entries have been compiled and published as three volumes of books by the SHHK. These books are distributed freely to schools around Singapore	The awards were set up to encourage children and youth to be in touch with the Chinese language and culture through writing.
Singapore Hokkien Festival	2006	The Singapore Hokkien Festival is organised each year to improve Singaporean's understanding of the Hokkien culture. The annual festivals have themes such as 'Education for the Hokkien Community' and 'Hokkien Traditions'. The past three cycles of the Singapore Hokkien Festival have attracted over ten thousand participants.	This festival was introduced to promote the Hokkien culture, and it involves all the other Min-related *huiguan*s in Singapore.
Members' Networking Sessions and Interest Groups	NA	SHHK's members can sign up for monthly gatherings or interest groups organised by the SHHK.	These sessions and interest groups have elements of either Hokkien or

			Chinese culture, depending on the themes.
Publications	NA	The SHHK produces publications for various purposes. Its quarterly newsletter allows its members and the public to stay abreast of the latest happenings in the SHHK. The SHHK typically publishes books to commemorate special events such as the Singapore Hokkien Festival or major anniversaries.	The publications have a distinct predilection for the Hokkien subculture, in terms of the contents covered. They are written in Mandarin.
Thian Hock Keng	1840	The Thian Hock Keng remains as an important site for prayer and worship. It continues to celebrate every traditional or religious festival. Also, it serves as a site for learning journeys, especially for the six schools under the SHHK.	The Thian Hock Keng worships deities which are either unique to the Hokkiens, or are common to the Chinese community.

Table 1 Culture-related Activities Organised by the SHHK

Chinese or Hokkien Culture?

The need for distinction between the Chinese culture and Hokkien subculture is crucial to our understanding of the adaptations made by the SHHK post 1986. Given the need to realign its aim to promote the Chinese language and culture so as to ensure that it remains relevant, one would find it rather natural for the SHHK to focus on the promotion and preservation of the Chinese language and culture. While we can see that the ACT and the SHHK Literacy Award have been created for this purpose, we also notice that the SHHK has not neglected to develop the Hokkien subculture through the Singapore Hokkien Festival and its recent publications. This is important as the SHHK should be the main steward to preserve the Hokkien tradition. There was a great risk that the SHHK would forgo this goal entirely and focus on the preservation of the Chinese culture. It would have been easy for the SHHK to do so. Fortunately, the SHHK still views the Hokkien culture with high importance.

The importance of this balancing act lies in the ability for community development to continue to take place among those who identify themselves with either the Chinese culture or the Hokkien subculture. While the SHHK does not explicitly say so, it continues to contribute to both groups of people, and its activities have enabled the promotion of solidarity and agency for both these groups. While adapting to new demands in the Singapore context, the SHHK continues to remain relevant in serving the needs of the Hokkien community. This is certainly an achievement for the SHHK as it is a difficult task balancing the activities on both fronts.

The ability of SHHK to strike a balance is also of paramount importance, given SHHK's position among the Min-related *huiguan*s. While the SHHK is not officially the leading organisation among the *huiguan*s in Singapore, it remains as the de facto leader among the Min-related *huiguan*s in Singapore. It may be coincidental, but the past chairmen of the SFCCA were also chairmen of the SHHK. This de facto leadership position of the SHHK is crucial in enabling the SHHK to set an example for the other Min-related *huiguans* in promoting both the Chinese and Hokkien cultures.

Impact of the Cultural Activities

The activities undertaken by the SHHK seem to have been rather successful in terms of outreach to all levels of society. Table 2 shows the breakdown by the target audience of the activities. Public outreach refers to activities that cater to anyone who has an interest to participate and that do not have barriers to entry. Meanwhile, targeted outreach refers to events that have some barriers to entry, such as skills and cost, and cater to those who bypass meet these barriers. From the table, we can see that the SHHK has events which cater to niche groups as well as the general public. This is important as the demand for cultural exposure may vary across different individuals, and the SHHK has to cater to every level. Also, as mentioned in the previous section, the activities prioritise both the Chinese and Hokkien cultures.
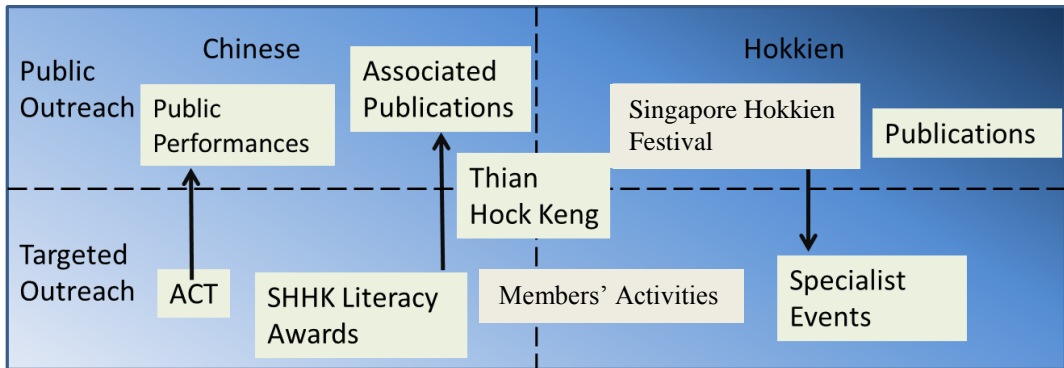
Table 2

Upcoming SHHK Activities

While the SHHK's involvement in the cultural domain has been significant, there are areas in which the SHHK can certainly aspire to scale greater heights. Two recent events marked important milestones for the SHHK. The first event was the 7th World Fuijian Convention (WFC). The WFC, which was held in conjunction with the Singapore Hokkien Festival, took place in November 2012. This event brought Hokkiens from across eighteen countries around the world to Singapore. It was the first event of such scale that was organised by the SHHK, with over four thousand delegates attending the convention. The convention included an economic forum, an exhibition in the Arts Science Museum, among others, and offered opportunities for the people in the Hokkien community to network and develop greater understanding of and interest in the Hokkien culture. This event represented a milestone as it was the first time that SHHK organised a large-scale international event. Perhaps, the positive outcome of this event can determine whether a long-term goal for the SHHK is to have a global outlook and to link the local Hokkien community with others in the world.

The second milestone was the opening of the SHHK Cultural Academy. In his 2012 national day speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced that the SHHK would open a cultural academy to promote the use of the Chinese language and to preserve the Chinese language. Again, this venture is perhaps the first of its kind in Singapore. With government backing, as well as the SSHK's wealth of experience in handling educational and cultural activities, the cultural academy seems to be a promising venture.

Conclusion

This case study of SHHK has demonstrated that there remains a need for *huiguan*s in Singapore's modern-day context. While the role of SHHK has evolved over time, and the promotion of culture now involves that of Chinese culture, the SHHK continues to serve the role of community developer through promoting both Chinese and Hokkien cultures in Singapore. Even as *huiguan*s are perceived as declining organisations, it may be the case that they are redefining themselves and identifying new niches to better serve the community. There remains a need for *huiguan*s and it will be important for Singaporeans, especially youth, to appreciate these entities for their continual existence. These *huiguan*s not only hold relevance to our daily lives, but also play an important part in Singapore's history and what we take for granted today may not have been possible without the hard work of our forefathers in the *huiguan*s.

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Walking The Talk
Trails as an Effective Community Development Pedagogical Tool

TALIA SEET SHWEN LEE, GOH JIA MIN CHARMIAN, LAW ZHE WEN, JOEL KEN Q CHOW

Trails have become an increasingly popular medium for a variety of educational purposes. Simultaneously, participatory models of community development are garnering more local and global attention, but there have been limited avenues for public engagement with these models. In view of these two trends, our team set out to explore the pedagogical potential of trails in effectively educating people on community development skills and knowledge. This paper first provides a genealogy of trails in Singapore, followed by the ideological motivation for our trails. The paper then analyses the rapid ethnographic method, which we employed in conceptualising the trail, and its strengths and weaknesses. The paper subsequently discusses the participants' reception of the trail, and possible areas for further expansion.

Introduction

Trails have become an increasingly popular medium for government agencies, private organisations, and civic groups in Singapore, employed for a variety of purposes: from promoting knowledge about local heritage, to spreading the message of resilience and national education, or even sharing knowledge about local fauna and flora. At the same time, increasing attention has been paid to applying participatory models of community development in Singapore, such as the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and social capital models. However, there have been limited avenues for the public to find out about and engage with such models. In view of these two trends, our team has set out to explore if trails are an ideal pedagogical tool to facilitate community development skills and knowledge acquisition. This paper will first provide a genealogy of trails in Singapore, followed by the motivation for our trails, which seek to combine participatory community development with experiential learning. We will then detail how we conceptualized and developed the trails through a rapid ethnographic approach, and how we filtered the data gleaned through the lenses of community development models such as ABCD and social capital. Finally, this paper will consider the limitations of the community trails our team has developed, and explore how these trails can be further strengthened as pedagogical tools.

A Local Genealogy of Trails

Trails have been a part of the local social and educational landscape for some time now. Multiple organisations are involved in forming and providing these trails, for a variety of purposes.

The Learning Journeys (LJs) programme, conceptualized by the Ministry of Education (MOE), is one main platform on which trails are run for a mass audience. All primary and secondary school students are made to go for mandatory national heritage tours under this programme. These trails take students on walks through certain planned sites, such as Little India and Chinatown (for primary school students), or Fort Canning Park and World War II sites (for secondary school students). Students are led to selected points by their teachers or trained licensed heritage tour guides, and are educated on Singapore's "rich cultural and historical heritage" (MOE, 2013a).

The explicit intent of these trails is twofold. Firstly, the trails seek to complement classroom learning through "reinforce[ing] and consolidate[ing]" what students have already learned in class (MOE, 2013a). Founded upon the "pedagogical concept of experiential learning" (MOE, 2013b), LJs are envisioned as providing actual, useful sites upon which taught lessons from the classroom can be reified and concretized in a multidisciplinary fashion. Each trail is conceptualized as part of the ten-year LJ programme that runs from Primary 1 to Secondary 4, rather than as an independent excursion. In so doing, MOE demonstrates an attempt to be more purposeful and structured about the LJ sites chosen, so as to better integrate outdoor learning and formal curricula. Secondly, and more importantly, the LJs have a clear National Education purpose. MOE wants students to "experientially [understand] the Singapore Story" (MOE, 2008). MOE recognizes that Singapore's students inhabit a rapidly globalizing world, and strives to cultivate their sense of belonging to the nation; it publicly articulates its hope to "strengthen [students'] feelings for and attachments to Singapore" (MOE, 2013c).

LJs and students aside, other organisations also actively plan and run trails for other audiences as well. The National Heritage Board (NHB), for one, runs a whole range of heritage trails for members of the public, which seek to tell lesser known stories about places in Singapore. Their trails are developed in collaboration with individuals, schools, and private sector organisations. NHB is

still in the process of developing more trails in other parts of Singapore. Another group, the Singapore History Consultants, offers five Resilience Trails – endorsed by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth – to both students and members of the public, aimed at increasing understanding and appreciation of Singapore's history and heritage. Additionally, a private organisation called Kranji Countryside Association developed the Kranji Heritage Trail, which showcases Kranji's heritage and role in the development of Singapore's agricultural sector. The development of Kranji Heritage Trail was supported by the NHB under its Heritage Industry Incentive Programme, which supports private sector initiatives to develop the heritage industry. More recently, Thinkscape joined the local community trails scene, focusing on LJs with a civic education bent. After iterated prototyping, they moved from topic-based trails that present information about a site, to issue-based trails that raise issues relevant to the site, to skill-based trails that teach a certain skill through the site. Nonetheless, the vast majority of local community trails have had a distinct heritage bent, serving primarily as an experiential medium of learning about the past and forging national narratives.

New Ideas about Community Development

Alongside the increasing popularity and diversification of trails, there has been a parallel increase in research into new models of community development, such as the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, the social capital model, and the strengths-based approach. Contemporary approaches to community development emphasize ground-up participation, in contrast to traditional ones which view communities as more distant, dependent entities.

An increasing number of social service organisations have begun to adopt community-based and participatory approaches. Organisations such as the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre and the Community Development Councils have set up departments specifically to "[bond] the community" (CDC 2013). They have also created programmes to guide students to "examine community assets," the strengths that individuals or groups have to offer, in order to "improve" the community (NVPC 2013). Beyond Social Services' (BSS) strengths-based approach also aims to bring out the strengths and abilities that are latent in communities and individuals, in the belief that "people have the ability to help themselves" (BSS, 2013). These contemporary perspectives stand in contrast

to more traditional ones, which usually focus on needs and problems within the community.

These changes actually reflect a broader shift at the national level. Singapore's recent social policies reflect a move towards more participatory community development efforts. In his 2013 National Day Rally speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong stressed that the government cannot independently solve all Singapore's problems, and made a call for the community to "take more initiative, organising and mobilising ourselves, solving problems, getting things done" (Lee, 2013). The recent Our Singapore Conversation initiative also reveals the government's changing approach towards more consultative and participatory modes of governance and community development (Our Singapore Conversation 2013). These national-level changes in turn mirror a global shift in the way community development is being conceived. Since the 1960s, deep, sustained communal involvement and engagement have been increasingly emphasized because they are seen to confer greater legitimacy. New models of community development which stress ground-up participation have emerged, such as ABCD and the strengths-based approach (McQuarrie, 2013; McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993).

Moreover, the increasing popularity of more participatory models of community development comes at a time when pressing issues of income inequality and perceived societal divides are perhaps more widely discussed than ever before (Saad, 2013). More attention has been given to the social sector, which is seen as crucial to bringing an increasingly divided community together (Spykerman, 2013). Singapore in particular has been attempting to create a larger and more qualified talent pool of social and community workers (Tan, 2013; Kok 2013). For instance, the Social Service Institute opened in 2013 as a learning hub to facilitate development of the social service profession in Singapore (Ministry of Finance, 2013). The increased expenditure and professionalization of personnel has revitalized the sector, seen in the development of new entities like the Youth Volunteer Corps (Toh, 2013), and innovative social sector research and methods in both tertiary institutions and government agencies (Civil Service College Singapore, 2013). Altogether, the increased pool of talent and financial resources, combined with a broad shift towards more participatory models of community development, signal a potential sea-change in Singapore's social sector.

However, despite the growing interest in the community development literature and the application of these models, Singapore's public platforms for learning about community development are very limited. The Masters of Community Leadership and Social Development programme at UniSIM, as well as the Advanced Certificate in Community Leadership offered jointly by the National Community Leadership Institute and Republic Polytechnic are the only two tertiary-level courses related to community development in Singapore. Not only are such courses more targeted at grassroots leaders or the academically-inclined, but teaching community development in a classroom removed from the local community seems to run inherently against the grain of community development.

Hence, in light of the lack of trails focusing on community development despite the increasing number of trails being put forward, and also given the dearth of educational platforms for members of the public to be acquainted with community development models, our team set out to explore if trails are an ideal pedagogical tool to facilitate the skills and knowledge associated with community development. We decided to design a social innovation trail that would capitalize on them. While there has been a proliferation of the trail model in bringing attention to various causes and topics of interest through recent years in Singapore, no trail – nor many (if at all) publicly available platforms for that matter – has focused specifically on community development and the emerging participatory models. Our team thus sought to conceptualize a community trail that would expose Singaporeans to societal and communal issues in a particular local site, with the hope of engaging participants on both emotive and intellectual levels, and encouraging them to innovate and be involved in initiatives that would benefit the communities they visit.

Immersion and Empathy – The Rapid Ethnographic Method

Our team conceptualized and developed the trails using a methodology that emphasized thorough immersion in the community: the rapid ethnographic method. This method enables community developers to gain a more thorough understanding of the community through the application of various ethnographic techniques (Beebe, 2001; Scrimshaw & Gleason, 1992). Rapid ethnography emerged when academics in the field of public health realized the importance and utility of ethnographic tools. Since then, many have applied it to a wide diversity

of theoretical and empirical concerns, such as ABCD or business studies (Westphal and Hirsch, 2010; Scrimshaw and Hurtado, 1987).

We used ethnographic techniques such as interviews, participant observations, and other activities such as home visits and directed drawing exercises. Immersing ourselves in the community was essential to us discovering and better understanding the assets, networks, and nodes within the community. This attempt at on-the-ground discovery aligned well with the participatory community development models we were exploring. Immersion also meant seeking to empathise with and understand the community on its own terms, rather than from a distant, third-party perspective.

Rapid ethnography differs largely from traditional ethnography in terms of three main factors in particular (Beebe, 2001; Westphal & Hirsch, 2010). Firstly, rapid ethnography is primarily employed as a participatory research methodology that seeks a better understanding of a community to the end of bettering community action, whereas traditional ethnography does not usually begin with such an end in mind. Secondly, rapid ethnography requires a significantly shorter timespan for both the collection and analysis of data from the community. Thirdly, a rapid ethnography research team is generally much larger-sized. While traditional ethnographers tend to prefer to conduct studies alone or in smaller teams, rapid ethnography teams usually have several researchers, which allow for more data to be collected over a shorter period of time.

Admittedly, the rapid ethnographic approach has several drawbacks, such as limitations to the breadth and depth of issues covered due to the relatively short time spent in the community. Nevertheless, rapid ethnography has proven to be fairly successful within time constraints so as to arrive at a more thorough and balanced understanding of communities (Westphal & Hirsch, 2010).

We applied the rapid ethnographic approach in the three sites in which we developed community trails: first in North Bridge Road, and subsequently in Casa Clementi and Toa Payoh West.

Zeroing In – The Key Role of Informants

While the techniques for rapid ethnography and traditional ethnography are quite similar, rapid ethnography places much more emphasis on the quick collection of

data. Interviews with key informants are thus critical to the success of the study (Millen, 2000). As such, we spent a lot of time identifying which individuals and groups would make key informants, and formulated specific questions so that we could obtain as much information as possible about the various communities we were studying.

A key informant in rapid ethnography is the 'field guide' who is able to give the team "access to a broad range of people and activities" and point out spaces where "interesting behaviours are most likely to be observed" (Millen 2000). In the case of our team's community trail for North Bridge Road, we approached the centre manager of the main Seniors Activity Centre (SAC) in the area, Peace Connect SAC, to be our first field guide. She was able to tell us more about the various micro-communities there: the elderly residents and their daily activities and routines; the Thai migrant workers and their gathering points in the neighbourhood; the low-income individuals and families staying in the rental flats and their increasing numbers. Importantly, she also suggested other residents, grassroots leaders, and shopkeepers whom we could speak to.

Besides the field guide, liminal informants are another key source of insights, though they may often be at the fringes of action in the community. Our team studied liminal informants who would typically frequent the geographical space but as non-residents. Shopkeepers, for example, were important liminal informants. In all three communities, shops were one of the few physical spaces in which different micro-communities met and sometimes interacted. At the North Bridge Road site, we were able to talk to a number of the shopkeepers who owned shops at the foot of rental flats; most of them sold products relatively cheaply and had signs in both English and Thai, reflecting their frequent interactions with both the lower-income and Thai-speaking migrant workers. In Toa Payoh West, one of the minimarts had a trust-based system of allowing needy individuals to take items and pay for items at a later date, revealing the relative embeddedness of the minimart in the community despite it being run by an external stakeholder. Shopkeepers, as non-resident stakeholders with unique vantage points, were thus valuable sources of information.

The last type of informant we had was perhaps the most useful: the long-term informant. Long-term informants make up for the lack of depth in the rapid ethnographic approach because they can offer deep insights into the community

without the ethnographers having to spend large amounts of time studying the community themselves. When developing the Casa Clementi trail, for example, we cultivated a deep relationship with an elderly lady who was a resident there. Through various conversations, we were able to gain a fairly complex sense of how the neighbourhood had evolved over the years, as well as the elderly residents' networks, assets (in terms of skills, experiences and memories), and attitudes towards life and adversity. This long-term informant relationship proved vital in helping us appreciate the strengths of the elderly community in that neighbourhood, and how the community adapted to various developments over the years.

To Understand, First Do – Participant Observation

Another ethnographic technique employed was participant observation. We participated in various activities with the elderly community, such as karaoke, mahjong, and bingo, enabling us to observe the seniors' interpersonal interactions, languages used, and their relationships with caregivers (whether professional social workers, domestic helpers, siblings or spouses). We also participated in several activities, like football, with the youths in the community. Through these activities, we were able to better understand their friendships, familial relationships, dispute resolution approaches, and attitudes towards school. Other engagements included sports, dances, and festivals with various migrant workers in the neighbourhood to understand their views of local residents, their reasons for coming to Singapore, and the ties within the migrant community.

As mentioned earlier, rapid ethnography faces the challenge of having to obtain a lot of data within a comparatively short period. Through interactive observation, we were able to glean substantial amounts of information, and build up trust-based relationships which allowed us greater access to various people and activities in the community. Thus, participant observation complemented informant interviews in giving us a deeper understanding of the communities in question.

A Holistic Study – Analysing Available Information

Besides relying on traditional ethnographic methods, the team also looked into publicly-available data for a more holistic and macro-level understanding of the community. Surrounding institutions, amenities, external organisations, and

government policies both directly and indirectly shape the community, and it was important to understand the influence these external factors had.

For the North Bridge Road neighbourhood, for example, the team looked into demographical data provided by the Central Singapore Community Development Council (CSCDC), and discovered that more than half of the residents in the neighbourhood were over 65 years old. We also found out that one-room rental units in the area cost $26 to $33 a month. A quick online search also revealed that Golden Mile Complex across the road was becoming commonly known as 'Little Thailand'. Such information gave us a better overall picture of the neighbourhood, and helped us identify three main micro-communities there: the elderly, lower-income individuals and families, and Thai migrant workers. We were then able to source for key informants from each micro-community.

We also examined the history of the neighbourhoods to better understand their evolution over the years. Delving into the history of the space and noting changes in spatial configuration enabled us to ask more incisive questions and to therefore glean more meaningful information from our informants. Tracing historical developments was especially relevant for the North Bridge Road and Toa Payoh West sites, being fairly old neighbourhoods. As for Casa Clementi, a relatively new housing development which won the Distinguished Construction Award, we were able to look into some of the publicly-available explanations for its architectural design and layout, affording us a better understanding of the place. Thus, utilizing multiple sources of information complemented the rapid ethnographic approach's emphasis on qualitative research, enabling us to gain a more holistic understanding of the community.

The Struggle: Presenting the Data

Our team started out with data from the North Bridge Road site. Given the wealth of information we had collected there, we faced the difficulty of presenting the information in a useful, readily digestible format. The team considered mediums such as academic papers, photographs, and video documentaries. Although these mediums are relatively accessible platforms, we realized that none of them adequately communicated and represented the rich data present in the community. Given the plethora of narratives and perspectives in the community and the ever-changing nature of social dynamics, it became apparent that we needed a more multifaceted platform that could be regularly developed and refined. With these

considerations in mind, we embarked on a journey to seek out a more interactive, dynamic, and coherent means of presenting the information on hand.

Social Innovation as a Beginning – The Fujitsu Trail

The idea of a trail first arose when a group of Fujitsu business executives from Japan visited Singapore as part of a Masters programme. They wanted to understand some of the societal problems Singapore faces, and the social innovations designed to tackle them. Our team thus crafted a pilot 'social innovation trail' in the North Bridge Road neighbourhood for the Fujitsu executives.

Two major learning points emerged from this pilot trail. Firstly, we found that the participants were engaged throughout due to the immersive nature of the experience: rather than discussing abstract theoretical concepts, they talked about sensory observations that were somewhat concretized in reality. We realized that the wealth of information concerning North Bridge Road was perhaps best represented on site, and that trails presented much potential as pedagogical tools. Secondly, viewing the trail through the lens of social innovation helped participants to contextualize and scope their observations and insights during the trail, which made the trail more impactful. From this, we realized that the trail had much untapped potential to be fitted with a variety of community development lenses. Consequently, we began experimenting with other community development models. Exploring the field of community development sparked off a long-run collaboration with the Vertical Kampong (VK) team in National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC). The VK team in NVPC seeks to promote neighbourhood-based volunteerism and ground-up initiatives, and has been actively involved in conceptualizing neighbourhood walks as platforms for residents to better understand their community.

Bringing in ABCD – And Beyond

The VK team, in partnership with the Housing Development Board, co-organised the Community Building Seminar (CBS) in May 2013, a two-day seminar centred on a model of participatory community development, ABCD. Our team was tasked with running an ABCD-centric workshop involving a community trail to engage participants, who were professionals working in the public and social services sector. We built on the trail points and content used in the social innovation trail conducted for Fujitsu.

CBS 2013 was a considerably successful collaboration. NVPC subsequently invited us to conduct a trail with a 'social capital' framework in June 2013 for almost 50 participants in the Social Leadership Singapore (SLS) programme. These participants were directors, chairpersons and board members of various non-profit organisations, government organisations and socially responsible companies. Many of the participants shared that the trail made them more eager to be critically engaged in the difficult issue of community building. Our team was heartened to know that these individuals of significant influence gleaned useful insights from the trail. SLS 2013 affirmed that trails possessed much promise as pedagogical tools.

CBS 2013 also revealed the ease with which we were able to work different models of participatory community development into the trail content. It took us only two weeks to develop a trail that incorporated an ABCD framework and curriculum. We thus realized that trails could serve as pedagogical tools that were not just engaging and effective, but also flexible and adaptable. This realization contributed to our abovementioned willingness to explore combining the trail with a social capital framework. We would subsequently experiment with a variety of other community development models as lenses, such as design thinking, and even Futures thinking, adding to the richness of observations made and insights gleaned.

Additionally, CBS 2013 challenged the team to expand its trail repertoire to include Bishan and Toa Payoh, as the North Bridge Road site could not sufficiently host the more-than 150 participants at the same time. The VK team had an existing repository of information on those two sites, similarly acquired through rapid ethnographic research. After CBS 2013, we continued to carry out substantial rapid ethnographic research in Toa Payoh to develop the trail further, and in September 2013, ran a well-received trail in Toa Payoh West for 25 CSCDC staff. We also began to carry out rapid ethnographic research in Casa Clementi, which later became another trail site.

Overall, after CBS 2013, our team realized the significant potential trails presented as pedagogical tools for community development models. We began to collaborate with a wide variety of organisations and groups from various professions. Apart from SLS and CSCDC, we were also approached by the NUS Department of Architecture to run trails in August 2013 that could challenge 80

Architecture undergraduates to explore complex interrelations between concepts like space, design, memory, and community. The National Arts Council also approached us to run a workshop in August 2013 that would bring 70 arts practitioners on a virtual trail of North Bridge Road, and challenge them to consider the role of Arts in community development. NVPC's VK team has also engaged us to develop a curriculum incorporating trails and workshops on community development models to educate secondary- and tertiary-level students.

Taking a Step Back

While participant feedback on the various trails has been largely positive, the team regularly carried out after-action reviews to improve the trails further, both in terms of the breadth and depth of ideas conveyed, and the pedagogical effectiveness of the trail as a means of promoting participatory community development in Singapore.

Whose Narratives? – The Ethnographic Dilemma

The ethnographic approach endeavours to tell outsiders about a particular community from, as far as possible, the perspective of a member of the community. Early pioneers of the ethnographic method assumed that long-term immersion would enable the ethnographer to eventually assimilate into the community she/he is studying (Schuetz, 1944). However, this view was later criticized as not only naive, but potentially dangerous (Clifford and Marcus 1986). While ethnographers can try their best to remain free from "contaminating conditions" (Ladner, 2012), these conditions are in many senses unavoidable. For one, the ethnographer still tends to assume a position of "relative privilege," which influences how the ethnographer presents and understands the phenomenon observed (Erickson & Murphy, 2008). Secondly, a major contaminating condition in rapid ethnography is the relatively short amount of time spent in the field. Nevertheless, as Lander has pointed out, adopting a "strong, rigorous systematic practice" can mitigate these contaminants and still give us meaningful insights into empirical phenomena. Our team tried to circumvent this problem by relying especially on informants and other available information. Participant feedback also suggested that we were able to glean and convey meaningful and balanced insights into the communities.

Yet we remain mindful that we can never entirely understand and therefore never fully portray a community from the perspective of a member of that

community. Our different frames of reference, experiences, cognitive states, prejudices, and biases mean that we can never fully place ourselves in another's shoes. We are thus faced with a dilemma: given this inevitable limitation, how are we to proceed? Our team is thus exploring the possibility of a collaborative ethnography, in which conceptualization and development of trails will be done in collaboration with members of the community. While this does not resolve the dilemma completely, it will at least enable us to better represent the community, and is moreover in line with the participatory models of community development we hope to promote with our trails.

Who Benefits? – Assessing Social Impact

Any community development initiative has to answer the question of what impact it has on the community. Indeed, this question has weighed down on our team, and is worth careful scrutiny. In terms of promoting the participatory models of community development, the trail has largely been a success, evidenced by the extent of follow-up interest from engaged participants. For example, the community trails we conducted for the NUS Department of Architecture and the National Arts Council were the result of a successful trail that we ran during HDB's Community Building Seminar earlier in the year. Members of the management of these organisations had their curiosity piqued, and then asked our team to share more about the various models of community development with their colleagues and with people that these organisations often reach out to. The trail has thus been very successful in enabling wider publicity and advocacy for new emerging participatory models of community development.

However, the trail has not yet translated into much direct benefit for the various neighbourhoods where the trails have been carried out. While many participants in various trails have been inspired to start various projects in other neighbourhoods or challenged to re-think policymaking processes, no sustainable and innovative projects have been started in the neighbourhoods we have conducted the trails in. For future trails, the team is keen on ensuring that future partners are committed to working within these neighbourhoods, and will seek to strengthen relationships with various community stakeholders so that participants can tap into local resources and knowledge in conceptualizing projects.

Conclusion

Trails have become an increasingly popular part of the educational and social sector landscape in Singapore, both as a means of introducing students to national heritage, and the wider public to social issues concerning local neighbourhoods and communities. Alongside the increasing popularity of trails, the social sector has moved towards more participatory models of community development with an emphasis on understanding local communal assets and needs as key to sustainable and successful community development. Our team decided to put these two trends together and develop, mainly through a rapid ethnographic approach, community trails in North Bridge Road, Casa Clementi, and Toa Payoh West. While these trails have been well-received by participants, our team still feels that much more has to be done in the way of educating people on participatory models of community development, and that we need to find ways to more directly benefit the communities we have been visiting.

As we continue to refine and expand our trails, issues of representation and social impact will be critical. Having a diverse team has helped us to better reach out to and gain insights into the various communities we have been visiting. The next challenge will be to see if trails can do more than just help participants learn about participatory community development, by challenging them to take active steps to initiate projects that would directly benefit the communities they are involved in. The ability to develop our trails to address this challenge will probably be the litmus test of whether trails are a viable model for engaging the wider public in sustainable community development.

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Beyond Beyond
Building a Community Vision for Youth in Ang Mo Kio

GOH JIA MIN CHARMIAN

A key aim of Beyond Social Services in Ang Mo Kio (AMK) is to promote a high level of community participation amongst children, youth, and caregivers. In light of Beyond Social Services' past engagement with the AMK community as well as recent trends, there is a compelling need to prioritize community efforts, mobilize resources in the community, and encourage greater ownership in the community through the process of building a community vision. In a series of qualitative interviews with youth and caregivers from the AMK community, this paper chronicles the common themes in their respective visions for the AMK community, and examines how Beyond Social Services can partner the community in striving towards a common vision.

Introduction

Beyond Social Services (BSS) is a non-profit organisation whose mission is to "curb delinquency among disadvantaged young people and their families and to move them beyond their problems" (BSS, 2012). As stated on its website, BSS espouses a core belief that "people have the ability to help themselves and can successfully reach their goals despite their disadvantages". This belief in an individual's resilience also extends to a belief in the resilience of the community, which is the hallmark of BSS' strengths-based approach to community development.

In practice, BSS facilitates the Community Life Competence Process as a mode of engagement with the community. The Community Life Competence Process emphasises a strengths-based approach as a means of community development—as facilitators look for strengths instead of weaknesses, the community's inherent capacity to "build a vision for the future, to assess, to act, to adapt and to learn" (Community Life Competence, 2012) is revealed. Building a community vision is thus a vital first step towards the longer-term goal of resilience. When members of the community express their individual desires, hopes, dreams, aspirations and fears, they create a common picture of what their community could look like. It is against the backdrop of such a vision that the community assesses where it currently is, and acts to progress toward such a goal. Finally, after making significant progress, the community can adapt to new changes and challenges, having learnt from its previous experiences, and actualizes its potential to be resilient.

The community involved in this vision-building exercise consists of the youth and families in contact with the BSS Youth United Ang Mo Kio (AMK) team. Most of these youth and families live in Blocks 641, 645 and 647 in AMK Avenue 4, where the community workers have focused on since the beginning of 2012. Two community workers from BSS have been present in AMK since twenty years ago, but given the vast area of AMK, BSS made an executive decision to focus their efforts on these three rental blocks of flats. After streamlining their efforts, the Youth United team constitutes one of the smallest teams in BSS. There is thus a need to create a community vision in order to prioritize community efforts, mobilise resources, and encourage greater ownership within the community. This paper documents such a process.

Methodology

Sampling

This study is a preliminary effort to kick start future vision-building collaborations. As such, we started with 6 youth in contact with the community workers and perceived as hubs within the community. To compensate for the small sample size, we included an additional youth only tangentially involved in BSS' activities and networks to add breadth of perspective. The youth were also distributed across three distinct age groups; the youngest youth were still actively engaged in BSS' events, while the oldest ones were in touch with the community workers in a more personal capacity. Talking to a spectrum of age groups thus brought to the fore developmental and cohort patterns in their experiences and attitudes. Benson, Leffert, Scales and Blyth (2012) note the importance of parents' participation in building a common vision as a "shared commitment" to the youth with the rest of the community. The parents of youth were thus involved in the process of community building.

Building a community vision through conversations

We adopted a dialogical approach to building a community vision. The conversations varied in size, ranging from two to six people, and took place at various locations within AMK. Jackson (2012) elaborates on the power of storytelling:

> [By] enabling dialogues that encompass different points of view, the act of sharing stories helps us create a world that is more than the sum of its parts. My interest here is in the ways in which storytelling involves not the

assertion of power over others, but the vital capacity of people to work together to create, share, affirm, and celebrate something that is held in common.

That the "act of sharing stories helps [the community] create a world" makes plain that the quest to build a community vision opens up a space for people to participate in building a narrative about their own community. Furthermore, the act of storytelling affirms the "vital capacity of people to work together" and aligns with the strengths-based approach of BSS. Since the community is heterogeneous, there will inevitably be points of divergence in the community vision. Yet the act of storytelling does not impose a dominant narrative on the community, but enables dialogues that surface and "encompass [these] different points of view." Eventually, the world that is collectively imagined is "more than the sum of its parts."

Data

Conversations were recorded with the permission of participants and then transcribed. Excerpts of the conversations presented below were edited for clarity. Out of the 5 male and 2 female youth, there were 5 older youth (aged 18 and above) and 2 younger youth. Amongst the 4 parents, there were 3 mothers and 1 father.

Discussion

Role Model

Both the youth and parents alike recognized the need for youth in the community to have role models while growing up. The positive effects of mentoring, "a caring and supportive relationship between a youth and a non-parental adult" (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006), are well documented in the literature. A father of three, Parent 3, agreed that youth tended to listen to their friends rather than parents during this developmental period. Hence, it was important for the youths to have adult role models other than their parents. Parent 1 lamented it was inevitable that as her kids grew older, she would not always be at home, and her kids would have more friends around. Besides parents, Youth 1, 2, 4, and 5 also recognized that their relationships with a community worker they respected were instrumental to their growth. According to the youth, he motivated them, prompted them to consider how to become a better person, taught them to differentiate right from wrong, and urged them to spend their time productively.

The youth could not emphasize enough the importance of the particular community worker to how they had developed. In Youth 5's words, "[Community Worker A] came at the right time la, [otherwise we would go down] the path that brings us to jail or prison".

The experience of having a community worker invest in the older youth's lives has set off a ripple effect in the community, as the older youth in turn help out with the younger youth in the community. With some prompting from the community workers, Youth 4 and 5 took it upon themselves to ensure that the younger kids in the community would attend BSS' tuition classes. The measure of the community's trust in the older youth is apparent in how mothers of these younger children came to confide in the older youth whenever their children ran into trouble. Having lived through similar developmental stages only recently, the older youth are well positioned to understand and advise their juniors, and have expressed willingness to do so.

Despite these positive emerging trends, there are challenges to ensuring the continued presence of role models within the community. Firstly, there is a lack of interaction between youth of different age groups. Perhaps as a natural corollary of becoming more occupied with other activities, the older youth are not as engaged in the BSS' current activities, and therefore do not know the younger youth in the community well. As Youth 1 and 2 pointed out, even though they interact with some younger kids, they by-and-large do not recognize the youth younger than 14. This inter-batch disconnect contributes to a sense of unfamiliarity when the older youth participate in BSS activities, since most activities organised cater to the younger demographic. While there might be perceived differences between different groups of youth, this lack of interaction between the older and younger arguably magnifies these differences and lends to a sense of cohort exceptionalism that hampers mentoring relationships. Youth 1 voiced this sentiment when he made distinctions between his own batch and the younger batches:

> As in right now you don't see younger boys go together. You don't have a neighborhood clique much. My time like [we] used to go out every time. We don't have much work, even though we have studies and stuff, we still managed to make time… Nowadays I don't know how to get like youths

to come out. Now it's more like Internet and everybody stay at home in their rooms.

Such sentiments may cause the older youth to underestimate shared experiences that undergird empathetic mentoring relationships. The alternative that the older youth proposed, inserting community workers as professional role models, will be examined in closer detail later in the paper.

Another barrier to the proliferation of organic role models within the community is a keen awareness amongst the older youth that their priorities at present have changed. The current National Servicemen recognize that joining the military takes up most of their time and hinder them from volunteering much with BSS. Yet when pressed about whether they would be able to volunteer more as civilians, there was a sober recognition amongst these youth that they would never have more time in future, given their more pressing concerns about studies, work, and supporting a family. According to Life Course Theory (LCT), where "lives are viewed most appropriately as a sequence of roles and transitions embedded in larger context" (Crosnoe, 2000), the older cohort of youth has reached a transition where their previous trajectory of greater involvement in the community has been disrupted. The oldest youth who are effectively out of army confirm that it is much harder to meet up with their friends, much less the younger ones, given that most of their batch mates are working. It is hence understandable that the older youth are somewhat reluctant to take on the mantle of a role model. As Youth 2 suggested, BSS could consider organizing an event to rally the older batch that are currently out of touch, and subsequently connect them with the younger youth. Returning to LCT, where friendships "tie individuals to larger social forces" as part of a "network of linked lives" (Crosnoe, 2000), how friends respond to this particular transition would shape how the youth respond.

(Gendered) Youth Activities
Youth 6 and 7 verbalised a hope for BSS to conduct engaging activities within the neighborhood, which coincided with the parents' desire to see their children involved in healthy and constructive activities. Across the different age groups of youth, there was agreement that a common activity, where they get in touch with BSS, is crucial to bringing friends together. The oldest youth, Youth 1 and 2, repeatedly emphasised that soccer is the key activity that brings all the boys together. That BSS has been running two soccer clinics for the boys in AMK

concurrently testifies to soccer's importance in banding together boys across the different age groups. In fact, soccer is a possible career trajectory that many young boys in the community aspire to, now that the stellar performance of Youth 2 has gained him a spot on the national team. Some of the older youth volunteer to coach the younger youth when the external coach is busy, which demonstrates the potential of soccer to connect youth across the different age groups. BSS should thus continue to run soccer trainings, not only to connect youth of the same age group, but also the older and younger youth.

As is now apparent, soccer is chiefly for the boys, and a disproportionate focus on it risks neglecting the girls in the community. If soccer appeals more to guys, then the ratio of guys to girls who come in contact with BSS will inevitably be skewed. Hence, in the past two years, BSS has been facilitating weekly gatherings for the girls, including Youth 6 and 7, in the community to play captain's ball at an open space. The teenage girls and the community workers both appreciate how captain's ball trainings have been a platform for the older ones to exercise their leadership qualities whilst having fun and keeping healthy. Unfortunately, while the girls may enjoy and excel at captain's ball, their assets are not valued equally like the boys' soccer skills are. There is a slim to negligible possibility of captain's ball becoming a career for the girls who play in AMK. This raises the question: how can we continue to engage the youth in creative and inclusive ways, while recognizing that it might be difficult to change perceptions about a sport? BSS has made good progress in partnering external organisations to organise hip-hop classes and performances, which have inspired interest from both genders, and can continue to explore new ways of engaging the youth.

While the youth and parents clearly prefer for BSS to conduct engaging developmental activities, there is more ambivalence when it comes to *hanging out*, or in the Malay language, *lepak-ing*. The youth almost uniformly expressed that they enjoy talking to and spending time with each other at void decks and this seems to have been integral to growing up in AMK. However, Parent 1 expressed reservations about creating such spaces, because she believes her child got involved in "unhealthy activities" from accessing such settings. Parent 4 revealed she never let her young children out of sight in the community for fear that they would be exposed to such activity. Perhaps there can be a compromise when the BSS community workers enter such spaces and befriend the youth as adult role models, as we will elaborate on later.

Spaces and Places

Naturally, the use of space in AMK is pivotal in engaging the youth, especially in light of Parent 1's observation that many youth hang out below the block because their private spaces at home are often occupied. The desire for space, both for youth-centered activities as well as *hanging out*, was a recurring trope in our conversations with the youth, and was accentuated by the absence of a youth drop-in center in AMK. Predictably, the activities that can be conducted in the community are closely intertwined with the spaces available. For instance, the sustainability of using soccer to rally boys has been partly contingent on the availability of a street soccer court a few blocks away as well as an agreement to use the soccer field at Yio Chu Kang Secondary School on weekends. However, the stakeholders in AMK have not always been receptive to the youth's use of common spaces. The older boys, Youth 1 and 2, recounted incidents of the police coming when they played soccer at the void decks, while the girls have had water bags thrown at them while they were playing captain's ball. Community Worker A recounted:

> We used to play void deck soccer and anywhere la. You know the place across the basketball court they call Circle? They used to do that. Now, no, the present youth don't do much of that. Even the playground used to be a field and they used to be there. But they converted it to a playground because they didn't want the boys to play…

While the playground has become a valuable asset for the families in AMK, and while the youth have recognized the rationale of the community's response, the space crunch in AMK is undeniable and perceptible. Given that this problem is of concern to the entire community, it is important for community workers to bring various groups together to understand each other's view on spatial arrangements and for community workers and youth to continue to find creative ways of overcoming the space crunch.

A significant asset that has emerged is the pride that many youth take in living in AMK. Two of the older youth, Youth 4 and 5, spoke fondly of AMK as their territory and home ground, because this was where they grew up, "hung out" at the void decks, and played soccer everywhere. Most of them would choose to live in AMK next time if given a choice, partly because of its convenient location. A young parent, Parent 2, who currently lives with her in-laws, even went to the

meet-the-people session to expressly appeal for a rental flat in AMK, indicating her predilection for AMK. Just as Manzo and Perkins (2006) argue that place attachment is a significant asset that can be mobilized to drive community participation, BSS can consider how to use space as an asset to strengthen the members' ties to the community.

Involvement in the Community

Hubs, in the social networks literature, are actors with many connections within the community. The community workers are not the only hubs in the community; there are also other active, well-connected adults in the community who transform and open up spaces. Parent 1, who felt apprehensive about youth *hanging out* at the void decks, responded rather creatively:

> Because I have children who come and *lepak* at my place, meaning they got problem, or maybe they don't want to go back home. I also have a carpet outside, they sometimes wanna be with my children, they are outside, then we say take the carpet. Then end up they will sleep until the next morning, they don't go back you know.

Not only is this parent a hub whom children in the community turn to when they have problems, she also uses the carpet as a designated safe space for the children. Such a space is close enough to be under her surveillance, but distinct enough to be unimposing for the children.

Both organic and external hubs are crucial to the functioning of the community. Gossip, for instance, is an important resource through which concerns as well as assets in the community are surfaced. Furthermore, a well-honed hub is preferable to a blanket and institutional application of protocol. Parent 1, clearly a hub in the community, shared:

> I have your problems with me, but I don't tell the next door. That's why they come back to me… But when there's a major thing ah, need to be like something, for example like [a community worker] will say, "[Did you] see this particular person?" Then I will say, "Ya, I heard this thing and that," then I will share the knowledge that I have... But personally, things that come to me, people come and tell me, asking of, I will never share.

Unless it's like a major thing coming like the person being caught, or what happen, then I say I saw him fighting, or then I will say.

She recognises she has to listen and guard secrets well to gain the trust of her friends, but selectively convey information when people need help. Youth 3 also told a story of how his grandma, on occasions when their neighbor locked his daughter out, would take the girl in without intervening in her father's decision to discipline her. Even while she may have disagreed with how the father disciplined his daughter, she respected the difference in values and protected the girl. This is not to say that every decision a hub makes is ideal, if there was even an ideal option to pick in every situation, but it is informed by experience in the community and a neighborly sensibility. Hence, working with the hubs of the community to resolve problems within the community (BSS, 2011) is critical in helping BSS to understand a situation from the community's perspective and sense potential tension points. In so doing, BSS relies on the natural networks of the community and affirms the community's capacity.

There are drawbacks to relying heavily on hubs as well. Even if a hub has a more-than-average number of connections or 'bridges' to members of the community, a single hub realistically cannot be connected to every single member of the community. Relying on a hub to come up with a list of people who need food rations benefits people within his or her social circle, but may deny those out of it who may need these rations more. Furthermore, 'network betweenness', an index of "the extent that a person brokers indirect connections between all other people in a network" (Burt, 2001) varies from hub to hub. BSS through knowing a larger number of hubs and non-hubs can hopefully mitigate this limitation. Lastly, a vision that promotes a "high level of volunteerism and community participation among children, youths and their care-givers" (BSS, 2011) risks marginalizing the members of the community who prefer to be less involved, and it raises the question of what role – if any – lone rangers can play in the community vision. It is worth mentioning here that Youth 3, who preferred to be alone, showed a keen eye for things happening in the community and displayed a refreshing, alternative perspective his position afforded him. In this light, the task for BSS would be to figure out how to tap on the strengths and assets of peripheral community members.

Regardless of whether members of the community are involved as hubs or otherwise, the community recognises that the activities they hope to see in the community require the involvement and volunteerism of youth and parents. Parent 1 expressed the challenge this way:

> I think they should implement more activities, and then get the community to run. Because they always say we need parents to run, we need parents to come in. But how? Even if they are giving out pamphlets also if they don't come forward.

To probe into how to encourage a spirit of volunteerism, I asked the active members in the community why they got involved in the community and what their considerations were. What emerged was often a tension between neighborliness and deep realism, as echoed among the older youth as well as the parents. Neighborliness is a hope for a closer, tighter-knit community; deep-seated realism is the sober awareness that one needs to devote energy to concerns in life. Both neighborliness and realism pulled at different directions in dictating how the members of the community should spend their time. A youth also contended that this deep-seated realism could be situated in the broader national culture and was somewhat inevitable.

Perhaps beyond endorsing the inherent value of involvement, facilitators could accommodate varied and concrete reasons for involvement in the community. Parents 1 and 2 already eased this tension by recognizing that the community is a real resource they can tap on to take care of their sons. They discerned that the community could be their ears on the ground in looking out for their children. The community can be a real resource not just in parenting the kids, but also when volunteering is respite from familial concerns. One of them shared, "Sometimes I feel like I want to concentrate on my family or my kids more. But sometimes when I come to think, it's good to get out of the house." Extrapolating this principle, the older youth could be convinced that preserving social ties in the community and with BSS is not a competing priority, but a valuable resource relevant in the next stage of their lives. Regardless of why these members got involved, many wished that BSS would continue to be engaged within the community because they remembered how the community workers from BSS had journeyed with them.

Beyond Beyond

As should be apparent at this point, the community workers have been working closely with the AMK community. Not only in befriending the youth as adult role models, but also in entering spaces denied to parents to connect with youth, it is easy to understand the centrality of these community workers to the AMK community. Indeed, community engagement requires deep and transformational relationship building to be effective. The community workers have shown tremendous dedication in entering the community's shared spaces after office hours, and their efforts have borne fruit in their well connectedness within the community, in their intimate knowledge of the community's assets, and in the durable relationships they have forged with the youth. One could make the argument that these community workers are insiders to the community they serve, considering that much of their work banks on such a status.

Despite the advantages and disadvantages of the insider status of a community worker (Staples, 2001), this mode of community engagement seems at odds with the vision(s) that its community workers have articulated for the community. 'Beyond Beyond' is a recurring trope in the conversations with the community workers. When the community is sufficiently resilient, the organisation no longer needs to be around, and the community workers would at most be around as friends. There is a consensus amongst the community workers that they are outsiders to the ecosystem of the community, as framed by the asset-based community development approach BSS subscribes to, yet much of their work requires an inextricable immersion within the community.

This compels us at this point to confront whether BSS' vision for the organisation to disappear in the long run is realistic. The older youth in AMK do imagine outgrowing BSS' help ("my problem I solve myself, I am no longer a kid"), yet BSS has featured prominently in visions the youth have articulated for AMK. They hope that BSS will continue to engage subsequent generations of youth. The question of whether the community can envision a future without BSS becomes critical, since BSS' intervention has fundamentally shaped the community's conception of how a role model should be like. There may also be a "paradox of embeddedness" where the "loss of a core organisation in a network will have a large negative effect on the viability of the network as a whole" (Uzzi, 1997). In other words, the same processes that allow the community workers to connect deeply with the community might paradoxically decrease the

community's ability to adapt apart from the organisation and its community workers.

Perhaps the question of how embedded BSS is and would like to be in the community has to be further reckoned with, but evidently, this mode of community engagement rests heavily on the ties of community workers. As an older youth clarified, it is the community worker rather than BSS he is attached to, which confirms the "long-term engagement/relationship" approach the community workers in BSS have adopted. Youth 4 spoke of Community Worker A they regarded as a father figure:

> Ya I mean it's not nice la, for him to spend more time with us. I mean it's a job la, but also need time for his family also. That's why he [changed].

The youth perceived that the community worker spending more time with them than with his family was unsustainable, which prompted them to step up in his place. While the emotional labor required of "caring work" may lend to higher levels of personal accomplishment, it also places individuals at risk of burning out (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).

Conclusion

This research aims to kick-start future efforts to build a community vision. Due to the small sample involved in this study, the themes gleaned from the conversations may not be representative of the larger AMK community sentiment, but can structure the space for subsequent conversations. Furthermore, if members of the community or community workers with more intimate knowledge of the place and better-established ties engage in subsequent dialogues, they may unearth deeper aspirations and fears. Lastly, while the community vision might be specific to AMK, BSS' mode of operations shares these general characteristics, and the pros and cons highlighted in the paper are generally reflected throughout BSS' work.

Finally, while we sought to uncover the community's vision for youth in this research, what often emerged instead was the tricky and practical application of the strengths-based approach.

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Re-rationalising Rations
Preferences of the Elderly and the Role of Choice in Alternative Food Rations Distribution Models

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From 15 May to 31 July 2013, we experimented with an alternative model of food rations distribution in Lengkok Bahru estate in Queenstown. The model sought to: 1) empower the elderly with choice, 2) reduce food wastage, and 3) strengthen community bonds via the food rations distribution activity. It was also a starting point to seek ways in refining food distribution for low-income elderly. This paper summarizes the findings after executing the experiment, as well as the phases of research methodology aimed at acquiring information on the preferences, views and behaviours of the elderly.

Introduction

In May 2013, a team from National University of Singapore was tasked with exploring how food rations distribution can be improved to better serve the beneficiaries, particularly in terms of providing more options for choice and potentially reducing food wastage.

The team decided to carry out a new method of food rations distribution so as to understand the relationship between providing choice and the resultant satisfaction. At the same time, enmeshed within the food rations distribution exercise was also a study. The study was carried out in three phases:

- A **qualitative** phase was first undertaken. The team collected data through ground-sensing and interviews, so as to get a better grasp of the issues involved in current food rations distribution practices. Information on the elderly's needs, as well as improvements which the elderly sought, was also collected. This exploratory phase shaped the direction of the food rations distribution project in the subsequent months.

- A new model for food rations distribution was designed based on the above inputs, and **executed**. This was done through procuring a consignment supplier, as well as various arrangements with local stakeholders.

- Finally, the team undertook a **quantitative** study of the relationship between choice and satisfaction amongst recipients. Here, the research question was empirically verified with a questionnaire administered to a sample of 50 households: does choice lead to increased satisfaction among elderly recipients? Once this foundation was tested, other information on consumption habits, wastage and feedback was gleaned.

This paper first presents an introduction to the neighbourhood (and the stakeholders) where the study was conducted. Following this, the details of the study are discussed. Finally, implications of our findings on future rations distribution practice are discussed.

Context of Lengkok Bahru

Lengkok Bahru falls under the group representation constituency (GRC) of Tanjong Pagar, which is overseen by the Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC). The estate consists of 6 blocks of rental flats which house low-income families and the elderly eligible for the HDB rental scheme (HDB 2013). According to CDC's records as of June 2013, Lengkok Bahru's six blocks of flats (Block 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, and 61) consist of 1208 households.

A senior activity centre (SAC), NTUC SilverACE Lengkok Bahru (hereafter referred to as the SAC), currently serves elderly residents above 60 who reside in the 6 blocks. It was launched in 2012, and is currently managed by the centre manager, Ms Chai Chee Mei, who served primarily as our contact within the 3 months of study. The SAC serves more than 300 members (as of 1 July 2013), and more than 50% of the members are 70 years old and above. The SAC aims to (1) improve the quality of life of low-income seniors; (2) prevent social isolation of poor and vulnerable seniors in identified HDB rental flats; and (3) facilitate better coordination in the provision of community-based support services to the seniors (National Trade Union Congress, 2012). The SAC, together with the residents' committee (RC) and community centre (CC) in the locale, occasionally organises food rations distribution drives to address issues of sustenance and food sufficiency.

From our conversations with various stakeholders, we found that in Singapore's context, food rations distribution is taken as an additional pillar of

support. Elderly households depend on strategically disbursed rations to offset the burden of sourcing for daily consumption items. But the *operationalization* of food rations distribution and the *issues* surrounding the distribution have never been studied in depth, either empirically or academically. As such, our project aimed to plug that gap.

<div align="center">Qualitative Phase</div>

Current food rations distribution pattern

The team first assessed the context of existing food rations distribution practices in Lengkok Bahru. We worked in conjunction with the SAC, whose staff provided invaluable ground knowledge on current practices, and also with the CDC which linked us to relevant agencies engaging in similar activities within the same locale.

This portion of the fieldwork began as an exploratory phase to help us understand and frame the issues pertinent to current practice, and also as a starting point to conceptualize a new model. Subsequently, as we delved deeper and acquired a better awareness, we discovered that choice formed an overarching framework which could address several problems simultaneously.

Interviews were conducted with the following groups:

- Key stakeholders and grassroots personnel: the centre manager of the SAC, staff members of the SAC, grassroots leaders in the neighbourhood (the RC chairperson and the Queenstown district councillor), and food stall and provision shop owners in the neighbourhood.

- Residents: those that frequent the SAC and residents in the neighbourhood.

We focused mainly on three questions: 1) What sort of food rations support is already available within the neighbourhood? 2) How do the elderly residents view current food rations distribution initiatives? and 3) What kinds of changes to food rations distribution programmes will benefit the neighbourhood, from their point of view?

Existing food rations support in Lengkok Bahru SAC

Existing food rations distribution programmes target only a small number of the elderly population in Lengkok Bahru: specifically those who have limited means of sustaining themselves economically, and have gone through stringent means testing and qualify for the programme. These elderly receive support from the public assistance (PA) scheme granted by the government, and receive food rations monthly from community organisations such as the PAP, CC, RC and religious organisations. Voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs), namely Thye Hua Kuan Moral Charities and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), have also come in to provide meals-on-wheels services either daily or on weekdays.

Those elderly under the PA scheme receive immense community support especially during peak seasons, and may face an oversupply. However, there is another segment of the elderly who may need such food rations support, but are not covered by appropriate social safety nets. Our paper hence suggests that organisations (interested in providing food rations for the elderly) stagger the timing of food rations distribution during non-peak periods, as well as reach out to residents who fall under the 'grey-area' category. Some elderly households have monthly total household incomes exceeding $1,500, but their earnings may be irregular and insufficient for use. Other elderly households have children, but the latter are unable to support the elderly due to various reasons.

> "Those who are covered under the public assistance scheme have sufficient food rations already. What about the grey-area families? We need to help them as well." – RC chairperson

In addition, as the food rations come in varying quantities in each exercise, the SAC faces great challenges in assigning priorities to the elderly households. Especially for those elderly belonging to the 'grey area' households, it is hard for the centre supervisor to justify whom to give out rations to without a rigorous methodology.

> "When rations from different organisations come in, I have to see which households are in need of food rations. Some elderly don't understand why certain people get those rations when they don't, and this creates some form of unhappiness for the elderly."- NTUC Silver ACE supervisor

Therefore, our improvised model would aim to target all elderly households covered by the SAC. On one hand, it would remove any antagonistic feeling generated by mutual comparison. This is because all members of the SAC are eligible for the food rations. Also, it would help to benefit all members of the SAC, including those grey-area elderly households who are left out by the system.

Elderly's perception of receiving food rations

The discourse on 'food rations' first emerged in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation. The language choice and power relations were evident in the construct of 'food rations'. Each family was entitled to a fixed quantity of food rations, and people did not have any bargaining power to specify any requests.

Although food rations are no longer seen as war-time food relief, they still serve a similar function to provide welfare for needy households in the form of meal support. When asked about their feelings towards receiving food rations, most of the elderly we interviewed expressed contentment with what they received in previous food rations.

"We are already very contented that we receive rations… Whatever you give… good or no good… we will just take."- Auntie A

"It will be good if the food rations pack can have Marigold full cream milk because calcium is important for us... I like milk, chocolate and soursop fruit packet drinks... Paper cup instant noodles (instead of cooking ones) are good for elderly like me. For those single elderly who cook, maybe smaller packet of rice can be given to them?" – Uncle B

The fact that the elderly do have preferences (and varying needs), and yet are sometimes unable to actualize those needs, points to a need to relook a model which may be problematic. Certainly, it may not be possible to satisfy personal wants, but a more catered and nuanced model serving individual needs is possible in contrast to a model that may be disempowering for the elderly.

Hence, we aimed to design our food rations distribution as a food rations activity for all members to partake in, instead of a 'take-it-or-leave-it" conventional method. It should empower the elderly to have ownership of their decisions.

Having choice in their food rations helps to reduce wastage

The conventional pre-packed rations method may lead to wastage of food resources. As mentioned previously, the elderly have their individual dietary preferences and may not consume all the food items received in their food rations packs. For items they do not consume, they would usually (i) give the items away, (ii) sell the items to earn some income, or (iii) stock up (expired) food items in the house.

> "People give me these items… If I throw them away, I will feel like I waste food… So I just store them in my house…"- Auntie E

> "When I do house visits to these elderly, I will also make an effort to check if their food rations items have expired. Some of the elderly like to stock up their food rations and it will be problematic if those food items have expired."– SAC centre supervisor

> "Last time they just gave us Milo or biscuits. I cook for myself sometimes, so I like to choose my food items."- Uncle F

It is hence essential to provide some form of customisation in the food rations, based on what the elderly need and want. Our group gathered information on the demand for food items through interviews and house visits, so as to procure a good variety of rations that could cater to the diverse needs of the elderly. We then employed a 'choice' model, which not only aimed to grant the elderly a fair degree of agency, but also to reduce food wastage as they could then select the food items based on their own dietary needs and preferences. Although the idea of a 'choice' food rations distribution model was something foreign to them, most of the elderly welcomed this new initiative.

Table 1 summarises the various limitations of pre-existing food rations distribution drives.

Loopholes in the safety net	Food rations drives tend to reach out more to the elderly who are under the radar of welfare organisations. Grey-area households do not receive support.	The new model would have to address inequity and reach households that fall through the cracks, within reasonable parameters of cost.
Unhealthy items	The common items found in a food rations pack are unhealthy for the elderly's consumption as they are usually high in cholesterol, sugar, sodium levels.	The new model must have a range of items that are healthy for the elderly.
Wastage of items in food rations packs	Typically, the items are geared towards elderly residents who cook at home. The elderly residents who do not cook or do not have cooking facilities in their flats would not consume the food rations. As a result, they would (i) give the items away, (ii) sell the items to earn some income, or (iii) stock up (expired) food items in the house.	The new model would have to reduce wastage by taking into account these consumption habits. It is also vital to prevent the storage of expired items, which elderly would inadvertently consume.
Non-peak months	The elderly residents would face a shortage of food rations during certain months of the year as they do not receive regular food rations throughout the year.	The new model would have to be strategically timed.

Table 1: Limitations of current food ration drives

Execution

Our food rations distribution model aimed to 1) empower the elderly with choice, 2) reduce food wastage and 3) strengthen community bonds via the rations distribution activity. Based on these objectives, we then devised a points-credit system for this food rations distribution activity. All registered elderly households

were entitled to 40 points in the rations cards, as shown in Figure 1. Each food rations pack as estimated to be worth about $40.

Figure 1: Food rations card.

A variety of food items were organised in a 'shopping format' for the elderly to select from (refer to Figure 2). Other items, such as household products, were also included in the rations store.
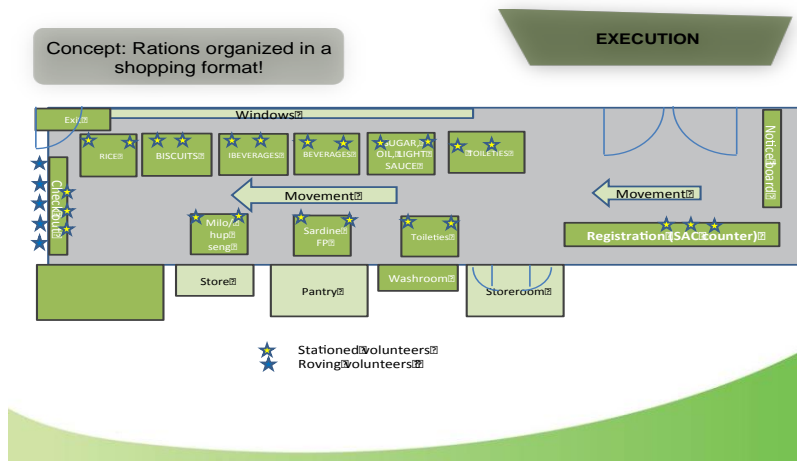

Figure 2: Concept map of our food rations distribution activity.

Figure 3: Publicity banner for our food rations distribution activity

The food rations distribution activity was held on 14 July 2013 from 9:00am to 6:00pm. We divided the elderly into three clusters (as shown in Figure 3). Each cluster was allocated a different time slot to ease the traffic flow on that day. We partnered Gobblershop, a subsidiary arm of Moovemedia under the parent body of Comfort Delgro, as they were able to provide us the items on a consignment basis at a cheaper rate.

On the event day, the SAC was furnished with item carts filled with items to create a shopping atmosphere. Each shopping cart had two volunteers to help explain the food items to the elderly, as well as to strike the points off the rations cards. We also allocated sufficient quantities of items for each cluster so that all members would get to enjoy the same variety of items. A volunteer would accompany an elderly back home after the 'shopping experience' so as to help carry the heavy food rations bags. This helped to promote interaction between the elderly and the volunteers during the process.

For SAC members who were immobile, we provided them with a catalogue from which they could choose their food rations prior to the event. Our volunteers then packed the rations packs according to their preferences and delivered them to their houses.

In total, our food rations distribution event benefitted 88.3% (296 out of 331) of the elderly members of the SAC. The high turn-up rate was due to word-of-mouth publicity among the elderly. The strong community spirit in the neighbourhood facilitated the success of the turnout. The fact that the organizing team and volunteers personally called uncontacted households also improved the turnout.

Quantitative Phase

The quantitative phase of the methodology was executed after the event. In this phase, a structured questionnaire (see Appendix A) was administered to 50 randomly selected households during the period of 19 to 22 July. Questions aimed to glean the following data:

- Preference towards choice (choice versus the conventional model, as well as other details about how this choice is operationalised)
- Basic demographic information (age, household size)
- Consumption activity (frequency of cooking, frequency of receiving rations)
- Feedback and general sentiments toward the *event* (quality of event, sufficiency of food items)
- Wastage (how wastage is dealt with, how the new model alleviates it)
- Other quantitative indicators

In total, 296 households from Blocks 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 and 61 (six blocks) participated in the food rations distribution exercise. Of the 296 households, **265 households had *personally* participated in the exercise**. The remaining 31 households had their rations packs collected *on their behalf*, and in terms of our methodology, were deemed *not* to have participated in the process of selection.

From the 265 households who selected their food rations personally, a sample of 50 was drawn. Three-stage stratification was applied to the sampling frame, based on **block/cluster**, **mobility** and **ethnicity,** in order to maintain representativeness of the sample.

Race	Mobility	Cluster 1 (Block 55)	Cluster 2 (Blocks 56 & 57)	Cluster 3 (Blocks 58, 59, 61)	Subtotal
Chinese	Mobile	67 (**13**)	62 (**11**)	64 (**12**)	179
	Immobile	8 (**2**)	5 (**1**)	13 (**2**)	41
Malay	Mobile	12 (**2**)	9 (**2**)	7 (**1**)	21
	Immobile	5 (**1**)	3 (**1**)	2 (**1**)	16
Indian	Mobile	2	2	2 (**1**)	6
	Immobile	0	0	2	2

| Others | Mobile | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Subtotal | | 94 | 81 | 90 | 265 |

Table 2: Sampling details of elderly households who **self-participated** in the food rations distribution activity, n=50. (Sample size denoted in bolded parentheses.)

Sample Characteristics

The following are the results obtained from Phase 2 of our research. The basic demographic characteristics of the 50 sample households are as follows:

- Age range: 63 – 100
- Household composition: 15 one-membered, 21 two-membered, 10 three-membered, 2 four-membered and 2 five-or-more-membered households

How many people are there in your household?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
	2	21	42.0	42.0	72.0
	3	10	20.0	20.0	92.0
	4	2	4.0	4.0	96.0
	5 and above	2	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

- 41 Chinese households, 8 Malay households and 1 Indian household (pegged by proportion to the population of 331 SAC-registered households)
- 42 mobile households, 8 immobile households

Outline of main research questions and results

The earlier qualitative phase was an exploratory means to understand what the elderly would like to see in food food rations distribution. It also informed the general direction of our project.

Having executed the exercise, the quantitative phase now sought to answer the issues surfaced from the earlier interviews:

Main research question: **Does choice increase the satisfaction of the elderly?**

This was the key premise which the project was founded on and was therefore important for verification, in order to inform future practice.

Corollary questions:

Does the model operationalise choice ideally?
Implication: Data gleaned could be used to refine the model

What are the consumption behaviours of the elderly?
Implication: Data could inform organisations on a more efficient food rations distribution process

Does imputing choice reduce the level of wastage?
Implication: Data could further inform, validate or challenge the side benefits of the new model

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Other corollary questions also arose as we worked on the operationalisation from May to July 2013.

The results obtained from this phase are discussed in the following order: 1) attitudes toward choice, 2) feedback on operationalisation of the event, 3) consumption behaviours and 4) information on wastage.

Attitudes toward choice

Finding 1: Elderly households were supportive of being able to choose their rations

The majority expressed satisfaction at being able to choose their food rations packs. 96% (45 respondents) affirmed that they were "happy to able to choose their items" compared to 4% (2 respondents)[1] who were negative.

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[1] In cases where total responses did not accumulate to n=50, we weeded out responses which were missing, invalid or incomprehensible based on respondent profile. This might have been because respondents did not wish to answer the question, or were unable to answer the question. For all indicators, however, the minimal mass of response (n=30) was reached, enabling to invoke the Central Limit Theorem for the analyses.

With 95% confidence, we can conclude that minimally 89.75% of the 265 elderly households would prefer a model with choice. This sample result is consistent with the qualitative insights we drew when we interviewed the elderly.

Extrapolating to the population of 265 households, we can thus conclude that elderly generally have positive valence to the idea of choice.

Q: Were you happy to be able to choose your items in the food rations distribution activity?

Were you happy to be able to choose your items?

Were you happy to be able to choose your items?
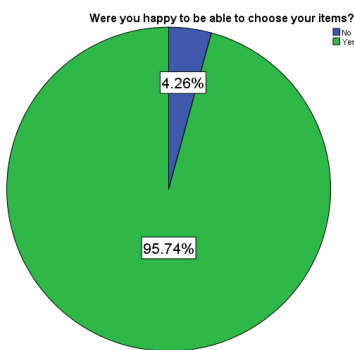
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	2	4.0	4.3	4.3
	Yes	45	90.0	95.7	100.0
	Total	47	94.0	100.0	
Missing	System	3	6.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Inferences about population

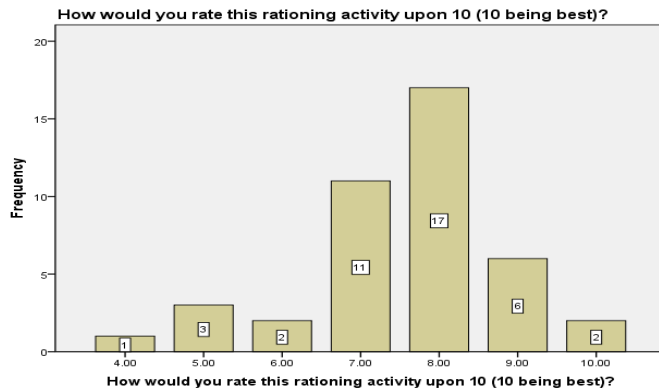|		Statistic	Std. Error
Were you happy to be able to choose your items?	Mean	.9574	.02976
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean — Lower Bound	.8975	
	Upper Bound	1.0174	
	Variance	.042	
	Std. Deviation	.20403	
	Skewness	-4.683	.347
	Kurtosis	20.819	.681

Having established the foundational premise of choice increasing satisfaction levels, we proceeded to test the more intricate aspects of the food rations distribution model.

Attitudes toward the model

> Finding 2: Elderly households were generally satisfied but also sought
> improvements to the operationalisation of choice

In terms of general valence toward the event, the scale rating hovered between 7 and 8 out of 10, with the interval of the mean rating between 7.17 and 7.97 at a confidence of 95%. We qualitatively explored *why* our respondents rated this way, and some said that they would be willing to rate the model higher if improvements were made to address several issues (see Findings 3 and 4).

Q: How would you rate this activity out of 10, with 10 being the most favoured?

How would you rate this rationing activity upon 10 (10 being best)?

Inferences about population

		Statistic	Std. Error
How would you rate this rationing activity upon 10 (10 being best)?	Mean	7.5714	.19914
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound	7.1693	
	Upper Bound	7.9736	
	5% Trimmed Mean	7.6085	
	Median	8.0000	
	Variance	1.666	
	Std. Deviation	1.29054	
	Minimum	4.00	
	Maximum	10.00	

	Range	6.00	
	Interquartile Range	1.00	
	Skewness	-.702	.365
	Kurtosis	.863	.717

Finding 3: Some elderly households did not find the rations quantities optimal.

Pertaining to the sufficiency of the self-selected rations packs, a majority felt that the quantities were optimal. But this was a weaker majority (64% or 32 respondents) than expected. The remainder of the valid responses indicated that the items were either too overwhelming or too little.

Q: Do you think you had enough food rations from our project?

Did you have enough rations from our project?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not enough	13	26.0	26.5	26.5
	Enough	32	64.0	65.3	91.8
	Too much	4	8.0	8.2	100.0
	Total	49	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.0		
Total		50	100.0		
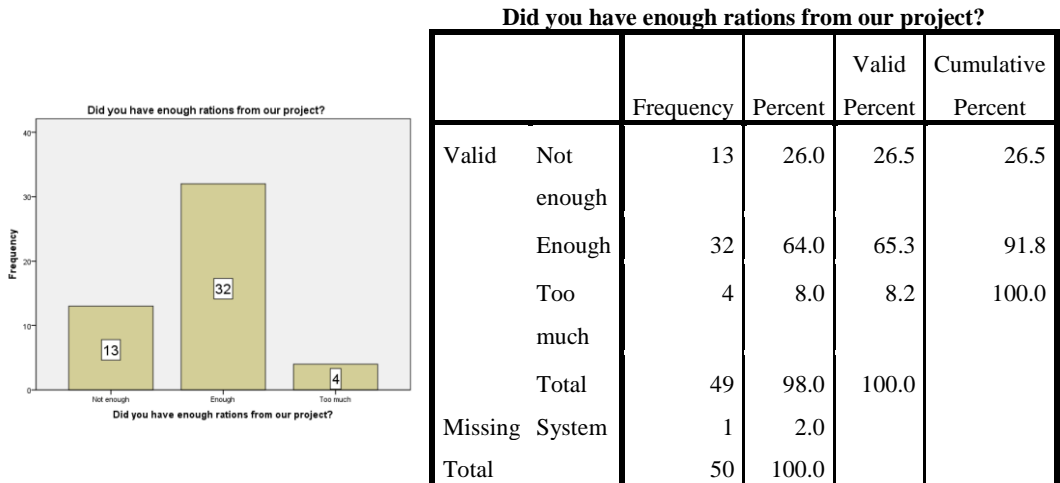
The implication of this finding is that for any effective food rations distribution exercise, quantity would need to be customised according to the varying needs of low-income elderly households, instead of a one-size-fits-all solution. Issues of logistical efficiency would have to be worked out, but such an approach would ensure more effective food rations distribution.

Finding 4: The measure of sufficiency in a rations pack was inversely proportional to household size.

At the 95% confidence level, self-rated sufficiency was negatively correlated to family size (0.299 indicates moderate correlation strength), i.e. the larger the family size, the less likely the elderly household deemed the rations pack to be

sufficient. Elderly households generally measured the consumption of their rations packs by household size. This bears some implications for structuring or redesigning of future food rations processes.

Upon further qualitative confirmation with the households surveyed, we found that even if a certain household member could actually provide for himself or herself (such as children who were still working outside), this did not change the conclusion that food sufficiency was more of a challenge for bigger households. In terms of practice, it is therefore not effective to assume that, even if a member of the low-income elderly household were working or financially active, food sufficiency would be guaranteed.

Correlations

		Did you have enough rations from our project?
How many people are there in your household?	Pearson Correlation	-.299*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.037
	N	49

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Finding 5: The range of choices was an intrinsic problem that arose from of a consignment model

The range of choices was also an issue for a small portion of the sample. 4 respondents (8%) felt that there were not enough options in this model. In terms of practical implication, the follow-up to the problem of choice would be to find an alternative mode of procurement. This would be discussed later in the paper.

Did you have enough choice in our project?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	4	8.0	8.2	8.2
	Yes	45	90.0	91.8	100.0
	Total	49	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Overall, respondents still liked the various items which they chose for their rations bags, with the modal responses being ratings of 7 and 8 (26% or 13 respondents for each).

Do you like the items in your ration pack on a scale of 1 to 10?
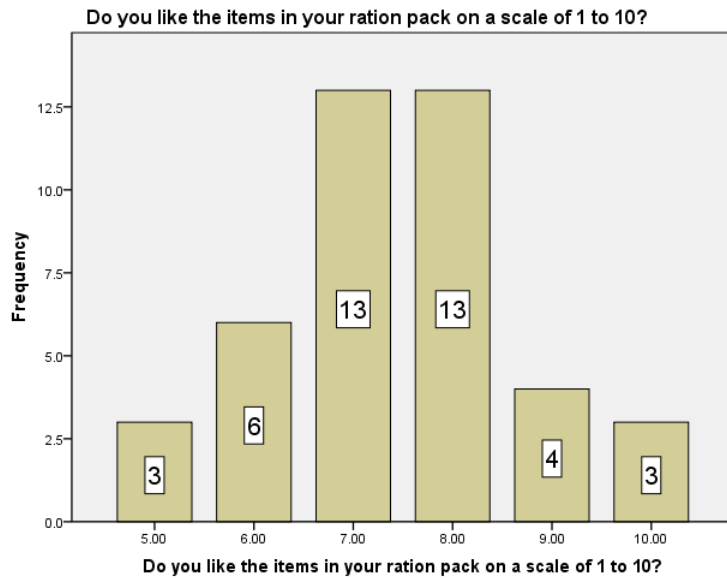
Finding 6: For the elderly, the draw going to a central space for shopping, choosing and collecting rations was the idea of interaction with other people.

We found that many of the elderly cited the company and interaction at the SAC as a motivator for them to go down to the physical location.

Would you prefer if we give you a catalogue to preselect from, or would you want to go to the SAC yourself? Why?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Catalogue	9	18.0	20.0	20.0
	SAC	36	72.0	80.0	100.0
	Total	45	90.0	100.0	
Missing	System	5	10.0		
Total		50	100.0		

Finding 7: Other supporting qualitative responses on why the elderly liked or disliked this model

The responses from the elderly on why they liked this model include: - Ability to choose preferred items and to avoid redundant items. - Novelty of the model and experience being offered. - Appreciation toward volunteers and organisers, as well as measures targeted at elderly welfare. - Enhancement of transparency and equal rations allocation through the points system.	The responses from the elderly on why they disliked this model include: - Too many items for a single elderly, too little for big households. - Some mixed-up items. - Inconvenience for some elderly. - Insufficient range and unfamiliar brands for some elderly.

These responses gave us a sense of community dynamics in Lengkok Bahru. Generally, the elderly were quite receptive and open to various welfare initiatives: most responded with appreciative sentiment, often harking back to their personal values ("if someone does something good for you, the least you can do is to be thankful and not be choosy").

Comparison and accountability were also very pertinent issues in the community. Several times throughout the 2 months of our fieldwork, elderly households would specifically hold the team accountable in order to ensure zero favouritism. Some elderly compared items to make sure that rations were equitable in quantity and quality. This was something that the SilverACE management had to constantly remind us of (i.e., to be transparent but firm to the elderly).

Such trends have to be noted for future practice, so that initiatives for food sufficiency do not inadvertently introduce negative community dynamics. Also, the positive qualitative findings can guide us in conceptualizing new models which can retain the strengths while neutering the weaknesses of the pilot model.

Consumption patterns

Finding 8: Most residents cooked their own meals.

With 95% confidence, we were able to infer from the sample that 84.21% to 99.79% of the households prepare their meals at home. This also had a bearing on item preferences, with rice products and packed beverages among the more popular selections.

Inferences about population

		Statistic	Std. Error
Do you usually cook at home?	Mean	.9200	.03876
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean — Lower Bound	.8421	
	Upper Bound	.9979	
	5% Trimmed Mean	.9667	
	Median	1.0000	
	Variance	.075	
	Std. Deviation	.27405	
	Skewness	-3.193	.337
	Kurtosis	8.534	.662

Finding 9: Patterns of item demand as follows.

From our survey of the sample of 50 households, we obtained a rough gauge of the demand for various types of items. This gauge can serve as a guide for future procurements.

Allswell	4	8%
Meiji Plain Crackers	3	6%
Meiji Oat Crackers	2	2%
Toothpaste	1	1%
Sugar	11	22%
Woh Hup Light Soy Sauce	13	26%
Noble Brown Rice	9	18%

Lux soap	10	20%
Toothbrush	5	10%
Sardine	14	28%
Hup Seng crackers	20	40%
Songhe Fragrant Rice	31	62%
Rice Bran Oil	12	24%
Fresh Produce	9	18%

White Coffee	19	38%
Soya Cereal Drink	3	6%
Soya Oatmeal Drink	8	16%
Soya Milk Powder	8	16%
Razors	2	4%
Shampoo	17	34%
Milo	26	52%

Q: Which items did you like?

Orange denotes very popular, while blue denotes popular. Most of the items being marked were powdered beverages or items used for cooking.

Finding 10: Food rations coverage for the estate was fair, but there were several cracks in the safety net.

42 of the 50 respondents (84% of responses) indicated that they had received food rations before, while 8 had not (16% of responses).
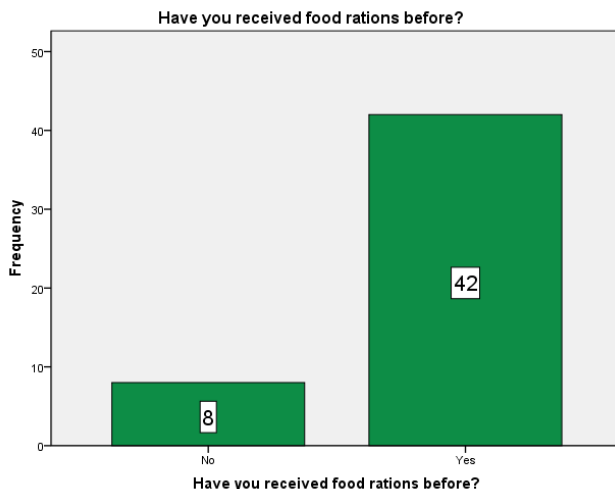

Regarding food sufficiency, the sense from our fieldwork was that although the estate was under the organisational radar of several VWOs, several problems still existed in distribution **timing** (usually at festivals or peak periods), **allocation** of resources (non-PA but low-income recipients systematically got excluded from the lists of VWO food programmes, although the SAC and some community partners like the RC attempted to address this) and **frequency** of distribution (less than 45% of respondents received rations on a half-yearly or more frequent basis).

45.45% of all respondents indicated receiving rations only once or twice in the past. Further probing suggested that this once-off event referred to an NTUC rations hand-out in 2012. Hence, while coverage was present, it was ad-hoc and once-off in nature.
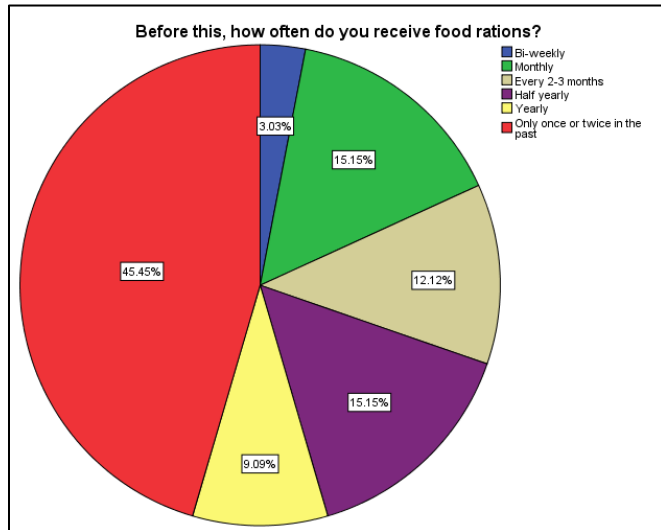
Finding 11: The average duration that a rations pack lasted for a household was between 2.401 weeks to 4.597 weeks
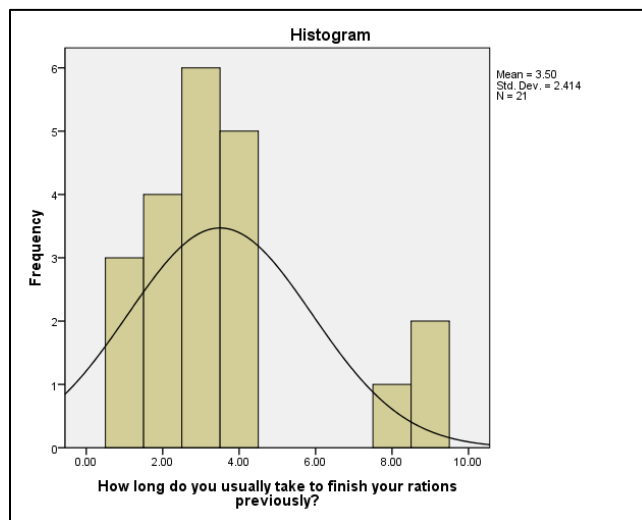
Households also differed in intensity of usage, ranging from 1.5 weeks to 9 weeks. Inferential statistics allowed us to work out approximately how long a rations pack would last. With 95% confidence, we could conclude that **the**

average household in the population of 265 took a mean duration of about 2.401 weeks to 4.597 weeks to finish a rations pack. This finding does inform strategic points at which to position rations distribution.

Descriptive

			Statistic	Std. Error
How long did you usually take to finish your rations previously?	Mean		3.5000	.52667
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.4014	
		Upper Bound	4.5986	
	5% Trimmed Mean		3.3333	
	Median		3.0000	
	Variance		5.825	
	Std. Deviation		2.41350	
	Skewness		1.374	.501
	Kurtosis		1.291	.972

Issues pertaining to wastage

Finding 11: Wastage was moderately low, but usage of items could be maximized

31 households amongst those which received rations fully utilised their items, while 10 did not finish consuming the items. Respondents also typically gave away unwanted rations when they were unable to finish them. Of the 10 responses, 7 gave their rations away while 3 put them aside.

Finding 12: Choice would reduce the level of wastage

Most respondents (39 out of 42 valid responses) agreed that **choice would reduce wastage**.

By being able to choose, will you be more likely to finish your current rations pack?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	3	6.0	7.1	7.1
	Yes	39	78.0	92.9	100.0

	Total	42	84.0	100.0
	Non-response	8	16.0	
Total		50	100.0	

Analysis and Alternative Models

In summary, we 1) determined the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot model, 2) analysed other offshoot models, and 3) discussed their applicability to the different contexts. These alternatives were suggested, upon receiving inputs from colleagues, friends and volunteers.

The benefits of the consignment model were:

- Ability to provide choice without excessive logistical or administrative backlog
- Ability to foster community interaction as the elderly congregated at the SAC
- Ability to leverage the SAC's role as a community resource.
- Cost-saving potential. Our model allowed us to save a third of our allocated $16,450.

There were, however, weaknesses inherent in the model:

- Intensive manpower
- Longer outreach phase given the large size of the SAC[2]
- More time required for groundwork and preparation
- Overall, greater labour for the same measure of choice than if the elderly were brought on a shopping trip/given a catalogue to choose from

The two alternatives listed in the last point above were conceptualised after this pilot run. Both are expanded in greater detail as follows.

Alternative	Operationalisation	Relative benefits over the pilot model
Choice via catalogue	• The item range will be presented to the elderly for pre-choosing,	• While this model is also manpower intensive, it prevents force-fitting of the item range

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[2] SACs are classified into tiers by the CDC. The SAC which we worked with is considered a Tier C SAC, with more than 300 members. Tier A and Tier B SACs are correspondingly smaller.

	• The items will then be purchased on-demand and distributed. • I.T. can also be utilized, where volunteers can have the elderly log in their demand for items electronically (e.g., via iPads).	that comes with engaging a consignment supplier. • The logistical flow can be eased. But this also reduces the interaction time at the SAC, a unique salient point of the 14 July pilot model. • Interaction will take place between specific volunteers and their allocated elderly households.
Dispersed visits to local community suppliers	• A volunteer will be matched with each elderly household, and will arrange a date with the elderly household to visit a local community store. • The volunteer-elderly pair will then procure the rations. • The community stores will then be primed for the activity beforehand.	• Volunteer-elderly interaction will be much more intense as the volunteer will have to get to befriend the elderly and follow through the process of arranging meetings. • More importantly, we are setting up community players in a win-win position: local community shops get business from their own residents, and can offer lower prices. Sponsors can "adopt" various blocks of elderly.

Lastly, the SAC tier also presents an important context. Tier A SACs would be the easiest to manage in terms of outreach and publicity; hence, groundwork for a consignment model would be rather reasonable. By contrast, higher-tier SACs (such as SilverACE Lengkok Bahru) would definitely require more time in terms of rations preparation and volunteer recruitment. We can also look at the possibility of recruiting volunteers from community sources.

Conclusion

Food sufficiency is one of the prevailing problems in Singapore, especially for elderly households that face financial difficulties and are unable to procure proper nutrition. While providing rations is necessary to relieve part of the elderly's financial burden, it is important to evaluate how to better improve current processes.

Rations distribution has never been given much attention as an academic field in the past. Our food rations study plugs this gap and questions the conventional pattern's effectiveness in delivering social good to the community. One of our most important findings is that some form of customization must be put in place to better cater to the complex fabric of needs. Doing so helps to empower the elderly on one hand and reduce food wastage on the other. It is also useful to tap on "third places" like the senior activity centres (SACs) serving the elderly population in their designated neighbourhoods. SACs have a catchment of necessary data on the elderly, and branding food rations distribution efforts as SAC activities also promotes social interaction while reducing labelling of rations as "welfare for the needy".

By relooking fundamental assumptions, our food rations prototype serves as an improvement compared to the conventional method. The choice component is welcomed by the elderly, as they are able to choose what they need and want. By allowing them to physically shop for their food items, it ensures accountability and increases their sense of happiness. Their response to how the food rations distribution carried out is heartening. And perhaps one seemingly intuitive but often overlooked fact that is observed is that <u>household size impacts the consumption pattern of the rations packs</u>.

Both the qualitative and quantitative findings point to several recommendations and guidelines: (i) **'choice-based'** food rations distribution model, (ii) food rations customised to the elderly's needs based on **household size**, (iii) tapping of potential sources of **community assets** in the neighbourhood. (iv) **reduction in the labelling** of food rations distribution as welfare for the needy.

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A Longitudinal Study of Fit-for-discharge Patients Awaiting Domestic Workers in Ren Ci Community Hospital from May 2011 to April 2012

MUHAMMAD NADJAD BIN ABDUL RAHIM

Social overstayers occupy beds in community hospitals, despite being fit for discharge. With beds occupied, patients-in-queue are unable to move from the restructured hospitals to the community hospitals, and this increases their chances of acquiring infections in the restructured hospitals. The occurrence of overstaying also represents non-optimal utilisation of resources. In Singapore, it is common for social overstayers (and families) to cite the delayed arrival of domestic workers and the lack of caregivers at home as reasons for delayed discharge. In this year-long longitudinal study at Ren Ci Community Hospital, it was found that approximately 14% of patients ended up waiting for the arrival of domestic workers, and these patients spent about half their total stay waiting. This resulted in approximately 10% of wasted bed space per cohort of patients.

Introduction

In this study, the extent of inappropriate bed use in Ren Ci Community Hospital from May 2011 to April 2012, due to patients awaiting the arrival of domestic workers, was determined. This group of patients did not require the level of care offered in a community hospital and had obtained the target rehabilitation goals set by the rehabilitation team. The reasons articulated by the patients' alternative caregivers (mostly family members) include the inability to care for the patients due to work commitment, and fitness. They had also applied for domestic workers who for various reasons would only arrive after the patients had reached their rehabilitation goals.

This investigation is useful in clarifying the claim that fit patients awaiting domestic workers in the wards are a potential key contributor to a bed crunch situation at Ren Ci Community Hospital. The unique situation faced by the target group also makes them suitable for a particular type of interim home care service that is in line with the government's push towards supporting home-based services to support ageing-in-place.

Methods

The medical records of patients who were in the community hospital on 19 May 2011, 19 October 2011 and 19 April 2012 were examined. The Case Management Meeting (CMM), Social and Nursing Summary segments of the medical record were examined to determine whether patients' discharge plans

were affected by the late arrival of domestic workers. The CMM, physiotherapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT) segments of the medical records were then examined to determine the fit for discharge date of the patients. In cases where the CMM notes did not indicate whether the PT/OT goals were met, the fit-for-discharge date was determined by selecting the first CMM date where the PT/OT indicators were (1) at a level similar to the level at discharge and (2) consistent across at least 2 CMM dates.

The total patient days, and patient days spent in the hospital while already fit for discharge, were then calculated.

The percentage of inappropriate use of beds was determined by the following formula:

$$\frac{Days\ spent\ in\ the\ wards\ by\ patients\ who\ were\ already\ fit\ for\ discharge\ but\ waiting\ for\ the\ arrival\ of\ domesitic\ workers}{Total\ days\ spent\ by\ all\ patients\ in\ the\ wards} \times 100\%$$

Results and Discussion

There were 98 patients on 19 May 2011, 105 patients on 19 October 2011, and 99 patients on 19 April 2012. These numbers added up to a total sample of 302. However, only the medical records of 286 patients were examined; 16 records remained inaccessible at the point of investigation. These 16 patients were assumed to not have faced hospital discharge delays due to waits for the arrival of domestic workers.

Inappropriate Use of Hospital Beds

Description	19 May 2011	19 Oct 2011	19Apr 2012
Percentage of patients **eventually** fit for discharge but awaiting arrival of domestic workers	16.3% (16/98)	12.4% (13/105)	15.2% (15/99)
Days spent by fit-for-discharge patients awaiting domestic workers' arrival, as a percentage of total days spent by these patients in the hospital	47.8% (388 days/ 811 days)	48.1% (268 days/ 557 days)	56.4% (329 days/ 583 days)

Percentage of inappropriate use of beds (in terms of patient days) due to wait for domestic workers' arrival	9.6% (388 days/ 4037 days)	10.7% (268 days/ 2501 days)	11.1% (329 days/ 2970 days)

Table 1**:** Inappropriate use of hospital beds

16.3% of the patients in the community hospital on 19 May 2011 *eventually* faced delays in their discharge dates despite being fit for discharge due to the late arrival of domestic workers. The percentages were 12.4% for 19 October 2011 and 15.2% for 19 April 2012 respectively (see the first row of figures in Table 1).

These patients eventually spent around half of their total stays in the wards waiting for their domestic workers' arrival (see the second row of figures in Table 1).

Around 10% of the hospital beds in the community hospital were used inappropriately (in terms of patient days) (see the third row of figures in Table 1). Given that an average stay of a patient in the community hospital is 30 days, the hospital could have accommodated approximately 13 additional patients for the 388 days of overstay spent by the patients fit-for-discharge in the first selected time point. 9 more additional patients could have been accommodated in the second selected time point, and 11 more additional patients could have been accommodated in the third selected time point.

Time Spent by Patients Waiting for Domestic Workers' Arrival

Description	19 May 2011	19 Oct 2011	19 Apr 2012
Range of time spent waiting for domestic workers' arrival	3 to 90 days	8 to 46 days	4 to 40 days
Average time spent waiting for domestic workers' arrival (±95% Confidence Interval)	24 ± 12 days	21 ± 8 days	22 ± 6 days

Average time spent waiting for domestic workers' arrival across three groups (±95% Confidence Interval)	23 ± 5 days

Table 2: Average time spent by patients waiting for domestic workers' arrival (n=44)

On average, the patients whose discharge plans were delayed by their domestic workers' late arrival would spend 23 ± 5 days in the wards while certified fit for discharge. However, the range of time spent waiting is very wide. Also, the dataset is not normally distributed for this variable. A larger sample size is needed to more confidently gauge the average time spent waiting for the arrival of domestic workers.

Justifications for Research Method

There are no established protocols to measure inappropriate bed use in community hospitals. This is unlike the tools developed for acute hospitals and selected groups of patients, like the intensity-severity-discharge review system (Strumwasser *et al.*, 1990; Coast *et al.*, 1996), the appropriateness evaluation protocol (Gertman and Restuccia, 1981), the paediatric appropriateness evaluation protocol (Kemper, 1988), Oxford bed study instrument (Anderson et al., 1988) and medical patients assessment protocol (Mozes et al., 1996; Mozes et al., 1991). Most research on inappropriate use of hospital beds involves asking various health professionals to classify patients as appropriate or not. Physician opinion is generally considered the gold standard. However, the decision of 'appropriateness' may largely depend on whose opinion is being asked (McDonagh et al., 1999). To avoid the effect of subjective opinion, this study considers only the PT/OT goals to elucidate the patients' fit-for-discharge date. This is a good operational assumption as the reason for all the patients' admission to Ren Ci Community Hospital is rehabilitation. Furthermore, patients who turn sub-acute would typically be discharged from the community hospital or would show decline in OT/PT scores. This approach is faster (requires less man-hours), and the data are more reproducible vis-à-vis interviews of health professionals as they utilise published medical records. However, care must be taken to ensure that the assumptions are valid.

The three time points were selected so as to remove sampling contamination (due to double counting of patients) amongst the three groups for the analysis. It is also possible to use the same research methodology and to select patients based on their admission months instead. This could increase the effective sampling size over a period of time while avoiding sampling contamination. The single time-point cut-off method used in this study was utilised to correlate with the current situation in the wards. However, it was found to be subject to more sources of uncertainty and variation, and thus posed a limitation to this study.

Comments

It is important to note that this study did not include the January/February period, which typically coincides with Chinese New Year. This was deliberate as during this period the overall number of hospital admissions and average bed-days in the hospital typically decrease. The phenomenon of decreased hospital admissions has also been documented for other festivals: (1) Chinese patients' weekly admissions for heat failure decrease 9.6% during the Hungry Ghost Festival and (2) Malay patients' weekly admissions for heart failure decrease 24% during the fasting month of Ramadan (Poon, 2012). These past observations, coupled with the finding that 10% of beds in Ren Ci Community Hospital are inappropriately used due to the delay in the arrival of domestic workers seem to suggest that addressing social issues is important in reducing hospital bed shortages. While increasing the number of beds available would lessen the bed shortage problem in the short term, an approach that also targets relevant social factors would probably be more effective in the long run.

Conclusion

The findings of this study present a strong case for Ren Ci Community Hospital to develop interim home care services when the bed crunch situation develops. The community hospital could potentially increase the intake of patients by 10% if all patients waiting for the arrival of domestic workers choose to utilise such interim home care services. Also, this research can be improved by considering a larger sample size and by selecting patient groups by admission months instead.

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Specialisterne
A Unique Enterprise for a Unique Group of Individuals

CHIA SHU XUAN

The paper examines the nature of autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) from the operational perspective of Specialisterne, a social enterprise headquartered in Denmark. Autism is a severe developmental disorder. It can have an impact on the ways individuals communicate and function in the society. ASD is a life-long condition that does not stop at the end of childhood. There are adults living with ASD and they need support in the form of education and training schemes to help them work and function fully in society. Specialisterne is one of the few companies that enables adults with ASD to cope well with building social relationships and living out productive lives through its unique model of employment.

Introduction

Autism spectrum disorders [ASDs] are more common than most people think. "In Singapore, it is difficult to provide a statistical figure on actual number of persons affected by autism. Assuming a conservative global prevalence ratio of 1:167, it is estimated that there are 31,036 persons with autism in Singapore today, based on the population figures extracted from the Department of Statistics Yearbook of 2011" (Autism Resource Centre, 2011). "So in your working life, you can expect to meet plenty of people with an ASD. Support and awareness from you will make a huge difference to them and the people around them" (The National Autistic Society, 2009b). It is therefore crucial for every individual to be assessed early as "early identification of communication difficulties and intervention is important because of the role that communication skills play in the development of emotional, social and cognitive skills" (Cross, 2004). This assessment is vital in determining a person's strengths and weaknesses (Cross, 2004). The assessment informs interventions that can be effectively used in order to improve the individual's ability to learn, minimising any barriers to "… learning and participation" (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan and Shaw, 2000). This ensures correct "…specialist provision for those who need it" (Croll and Moses, 2000, p. 1). It is these processes that enable individuals to feel valued in the community, and allow their efforts and achievements to be recognised (Office for Standards in Education, 2000, p. 4).

Adhering closely to the theories on autism, the aim of my attachment to The Young Men's Christian Association of Singapore-Specialisterne partnership was

foremost to conduct a literature review on autism, with a special emphasis on how unique talents and traits can reside in those with autism. This was followed by a feasibility study of whether the Specialisterne model of employment, resting heavily on the philosophy of the Dandelion Model, could effectively be deployed to fulfill the employment needs and to raise the employment standards of individuals with autism living in Singapore. This feasibility study was largely mediated by meetings with potential stakeholders from various sectors, such as National Council of Social Service, a statutory body under the then Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, as well as non-profit organisations like the Autism Resource Centre (ARC) and its associated Pathlight School, a special school for high-functioning children with autism. As a researcher, my primary responsibility was to identify potential stakeholders who could assist us, given their experience in this field of work, particularly in the area of providing education and gainful employment for individuals with autism and other disabilities. Visits to companies like Bizlink Centre, a non-profit organisation that provides one-stop employment services and job assessments for people with disabilities, were also made over the period of my research assignment.

The findings from the feasibility study are not discussed here because the study is still on-going. Instead, I focus more on what I have learnt about the autism condition from research of secondary information sources, the aspects of autism that I believe are critical to making Specialisterne such a unique and atypical operation, as well as the highly popularised link between autism and Savant syndrome.

Specialisterne and The Specialist People Foundation

Specialisterne, the Danish word for 'Specialists', was founded as a for-profit organisation in 2004 by Thorkil Sonne. Specialisterne provides value-adding services to the corporate sector, primarily IT services. In addition, Specialisterne also provides assessment, training and education services. Their consultants are high-functioning 'Specialist people' with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) such as Asperger syndrome.

The Specialist People Foundation (SPF) is the parent company of Specialisterne Denmark, and it owns the overall trademark for the Specialisterne concept. It was founded, also by Thorkil Sonne, as a non-profit entity with the purpose of helping society see Specialist people as worthy, valuable and

contributing citizens. This agenda to better assimilate individuals with ASD goes hand in hand with SPF's public manifesto of enabling one million jobs for Specialist people by facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration within a network of partners globally. The SPF drives the planning process of starting up Specialisterne social enterprises in new locations and generally enters into agreements with local Specialisterne partners. The Young Men's Christian Association of Singapore (YMCA), as one of the major and largest voluntary welfare organisations in Singapore, has arms in various activities,, including child development, education and community services (YMCA, 2012). YMCA is therefore seen as a potentially viable and reliable partner, to assist Specialisterne's maiden foray into Asian countries, and to further establish and reinforce both parties' global presence through cooperation.

The Dandelion Model is a metaphor for Specialisterne's philosophy that governs the main principles on which it operates. It calls on everyone to recognise individuals with autism as useful assets to society, instead of stigmatising them as liabilities. The core values of the Dandelion Model are to regard every individual as unique and to create a working environment that embraces individual differences and accommodates individual needs.

Most Europeans associate the dandelion as an annoying weed, but for people who are more in tune, the dandelion can also be a beneficial weed because it has nourishing and medicinal properties when planted and harvested in the right places where it is welcome. Ultimately, people can benefit from the dandelion's many numerous positive qualities.

Similarly, in order to fully harness the potential of a high-functioning individual with autism, one should first be willing and able to see through the not-so-perfect surface of the individual, and recognise that there is much more than what meets the eye. By understanding the individual and offering the right environment (whether workplace or otherwise) one can eventually gain access to the tremendous capabilities possessed by that individual, and harness the capabilities in a meaningful and socially responsible manner.

Therefore, the Dandelion Model is the cornerstone of a management philosophy that can be distilled to its simplest metaphoric meaning of wanting to

successfully transform the negative perception of a person's personal features into a positive expression that is attractive and useful to the business sector.

Weed or Herb? You Decide.

The core values of the Dandelion Model are to regard every individual as unique and to create a working environment that embraces individual differences and accommodates individual needs.

Autism is a "severely incapacitating life-long developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life" (Ritvo and Freeman, 1977). It is not always obvious – it is a hidden disability (Rosenblatt, 2008, p. 37). No definitive cause has been found for the condition at this time although research would seem to suggest that a combination of factors that are both hereditary and environmental may affect the development of the brain in some children (The National Autistic Society, 2009a). The initial use of the word 'autism' – from the Greek 'autos'; meaning 'self' - came from Eugene Bleuler (a Swiss psychologist), who used it in his description for those who suffer from schizophrenia and have a tendency to isolate themselves from others and indulge in "… self centred thinking" due to their communication difficulties (Volkmar & Klin in Volkmar, Paul, Klin & Cohen, 2005). The first pair of scholars to describe the condition were Leo Kanner and Hans Asperger, who wrote independently about the disorder in two separate studies in 1943 and 1944, respectively. Both believed that "… a fundamental biological disturbance was present from birth, which gave rise to highly characteristic problems", chief of which was an inability to form interactive social relationships with other children (Frith, 2003). Kanner identified two further features of autism – a failure to use language in order to communicate with those around them and "an obsessive desire for sameness which manifests itself in stereotyped, repetitive activities" (Evans, Castle, Barraclough & Jones, 2001), the combination of which Wing (1988) described as the 'triad of impairments'.

Further research was conducted during the latter half of the twentieth century; however no real conclusions as to the origins of the disorder were drawn. Bettelheim (as cited in Sigel, 2010, p. 555) put forward the idea that autism was caused by uncaring and inattentive mothers ('refrigerator mothers') but this was disproved by Rimland (1964), who collected a large body of evidence which pointed towards a biological explanation for the condition (Foster in Burstyn, 2007). Genetic explanations were prevalent in the 1970s, with the work of Folstein and Rutter (1977) being particularly important. They published a groundbreaking study of autism and showed that the "concordance rate in identical twins was very much higher than in non-identical twins" (Szatmari, 2003; Folstein and Rutter, 1977). The evidence was reproduced and validated by different studies on a number of occasions (Bailey, Le Couteur, Gottesman, Bolton, Simonoff & Yazuda, 1995).

Diagnostic criteria for the condition were created during the 1980s, with the 1990s seeing the first means of assessment for autism – the Autism Diagnostic Interview, which was developed by Lord, Rutter and LeCouteur (1989). By the latter part of the twentieth century, definite chromosomes were being identified as having possible links to autism, with a genetic screen being developed to identify genes which may contribute to the condition (Foster in Burstyn, 2007). Most researchers today attribute the condition to biological factors which are both neural and genetic. There have also been a number of other theories "… both biologically and non-biologically based, including yeast infections, food intolerance, gluten intolerance, brain injury, viral cause, immunology, vaccines, structural changes in the brain, environment and many more" (Foster in Burstyn, 2007).

The figures with regard to the prevalence of the disorder are variable, depending on whether one looks specifically at autism or ASD as a whole. Arvidsson, Danielsson, Forsberg, Gillberg, Johansson and Kjellgren (1997) found in their study in Goteberg that thirty one in ten thousand three to six year old children were on the autistic spectrum, while ten in ten thousand were deemed to display classic autism. Chakrabarti and Fombonne (2001) estimated that sixteen in ten thousand individuals have autism, and this figure rises to sixty three in ten thousand when all types of conditions listed as ASDs are considered, a much higher percentage than expected. A similarly high level of prevalence was indicated in a study conducted in Cambridgeshire for five to eleven year old

children covering the broader autistic spectrum (including Asperger syndrome) – fifty seven in ten thousand – which was eleven times higher than the rate of 'classic' autism.

It was noted that those who were suffering from any kind of autistic condition were predominantly male in a ratio of 4:1 in mainstream schools and 8:1 in special schools (Scott, Baron-Cohen, Bolton & Brayne, 2002). This echoed the earlier figures of a three or four to one male to female ratio across all age groups (Baron-Cohen & Bolton, 1993). Identical ratios between male and female prevalence were found in a study conducted in five counties in Atlanta (4:1), the information for which was gathered from both medical and educational sources (Yeargin-Allsopp et. al., 2003).

A recent study conducted in London concluded that approximately one in one hundred people had autism, and estimated that about half a million people in the United Kingdom had autism (Baird et. al., 2006). What is clear from these figures is that the numbers of those who are diagnosed as having some form of condition within the autistic spectrum have increased over the last decade in areas of the world that are equipped to make such determinations, but it is unclear whether this increase is due to a greater awareness of the condition or the willingness of doctors to commit themselves to an earlier diagnosis (Powell et. al., 2000). Perhaps, a more wide-ranging, all-encompassing description of ASD may have contributed as well (Fombonne, 1999).

Early diagnosis enables educationalists to tailor the provisions to best meet the needs of the children concerned. Some children are affected badly in terms of their ability to learn as autism can be accompanied by other conditions like Down syndrome and by a lack of cognitive development. Three-quarters of those diagnosed with autism have related difficulties with their learning and approximately half have IQ scores of less than fifty (Howlin, 1998). However, others have the gift of savant type abilities that can be used to the individuals' advantage. Characteristic strengths "often include auditory memory, good 'procedural' memory (that is, being able to picture how to do things), visual special understanding, and visual motor co-ordination" (Siegel, 2003, p. 78). Whatever their strengths, it is important that these strengths are identified. They can be used to build up the child's confidence and self-esteem to the extent where

the child is enabled to find strategies to combat the areas in which he/she is experiencing difficulties.

Given our understanding of the global prevalence, epidemiology, and clinical manifestations of autism, it is not hard to see how one could view autism as a double-edged sword. Couple this with the fact that children with autism would grow up to become adults with autism, and the nature of ASD as it is – an inherently labile, spectrum disorder (hence, clinical and viable progress can be achieved in those with autism) – it would therefore seem likely that certain higher-functioning individuals with ASD could be productively deployed in some industries and sectors where their skills are of high significance and in demand, and the number of these individuals could potentially be innumerable. In the next section, I look at this in more detail.

Autism and Savant Syndrome

It is important to stress that it is a misperception that individuals with ASD are lacking in intelligence. Some do have low IQ scores but others are gifted with savant-type skills which they can use to their advantage. Popular belief links autism spectrum disorders with Savant syndrome, where those with cognitive disabilities also have areas of great talent. In fact, "as many as one in 10 autistic persons have such remarkable abilities in varying degrees" (Treffert, 2009). Such beliefs are partly based on reports such as the 1978 study that suggested that out of 5400 children with autism, 531 had significant ability in one area (Treffert, 2009). And about half of all cases of Savant syndrome have a disorder within the autistic spectrum (Treffert, 2009, p. 2). It has been suggested that the right hemisphere of the brain may 'overcompensate' for disorders in the left hemisphere, resulting in savant-like abilities. Treffert argued that savant abilities "serve as a "conduit toward normalisation", with an increase in language, social, and daily living skills" (Treffert, 2009, p. 1). The skills themselves may range from simple memory feats such as recollection of trivia, expertise in a specific area, such as music, to what is known as 'prodigious' Savant syndrome, where the talent is exceptional and would not be expected in a person of normal ability.

Alongside these skills, it has been suggested that autistic children have other intact abilities. Hirschfeld et al. have conducted studies that apparently demonstrate that autistic children "nevertheless know and use gender and race stereotypes just like normal children" (Hirschfeld et al., 2007). This result is

significant as social skills are considered to be one of the 'three' indicators of autistic spectrum disorders. The authors noted that while knowledge of social orientation is impaired by autism, nevertheless these children have the ability to engage in social behaviour (stereotyping): "these results suggest that there are important aspects of social ability in autism" (Hirschfeld et al., 2007). Other reports have suggested that people with autism spectrum disorders have improved spatial skills: "Several studies have shown that individuals with autism have intact and sometimes superior performance on spatial tasks that require breaking the whole of a pattern into its component parts" (Edgin et al., 2005, p. 730). Edgin and Pennington's results also suggest "that Asperger's syndrome and autism may not be distinct disorders in terms of these cognitive functions" (Edgin, 2005) Their results suggest both these conditions exist as part of a larger syndrome, albeit skills may vary between these disorders and within the particular syndromes. Evidence from scientific studies has clearly established that children with autism retain abilities in certain areas, despite being significantly cognitively impaired.

Unique Traits shared by Individuals with High Functioning Autism

Specialist people with ASD can be effectively deployed to the IT services sector because they offer greater competitive advantage over neurotypical individuals; this is because such industries often require specialised tasks to be undertaken with intense concentration and precision – requisites which 'normal' individuals are less tolerant of, as compared to individuals with high-functioning autism.

Specialist people are thus well adapted at completing their assigned tasks fast and accurately. The likelihood of this increases exponentially once the Specialist person is comfortable in his or her surroundings, and has done the said tasks multiple times in a repetitive fashion.

It is also important to note that not all Specialist people qualify clinically as 'savants', though they exhibit signs of savantism.

Conclusion

Defining the autism spectrum clearly has become complicated by the increasing awareness that autistic people may have intact abilities in some areas. There is a long history of autistic people producing works of talent, known as Savant syndrome, or being able to produce feats of memory or calculation. Modern research suggests that autistic people may retain basic and special forms of social behaviour such as stereotyping.

Specialisterne is one of the few companies willing and able to take advantage of this awareness. In summary, Specialisterne identifies the unique traits possessed by individuals with autism, and capitalises on these traits by directing Specialist people to jobs in industries where such traits are quintessential to the tasks at hand; traits like these are therefore hugely in demand. Specialist people can hence become gainfully employed, occupy their own niche in the service industry, and more importantly (through their comparative advantage and ability to value add) change the opinions of those who previously viewed them as liabilities.

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