

Community Safety and Residential Movement¹

Bev James

Public Policy & Research

¹ The work of Charlotte Williams who helped with conducting in-depth interviews and focus groups in the four case study areas is much appreciated and acknowledged.

1. Introduction

This paper explores whether people's perceptions and experiences of crime in their communities have any bearing on decisions about where they live, their residential movement patterns and their community attachment. It overviews the considerable literature on the relationships between community attachment, residential movement, crime rates and perceptions of crime, and draws on interviews and focus groups in the four case study areas conducted in 2003 with local residents, government agencies, community groups, local businesses and local social service providers about crime and safety issues in their communities. Over 170 people participated in three panel interviews conducted annually in each case study area between 2004 and 2007.²

2. Crime, Attachment and Movement

Two theoretical approaches provide a conceptual framework with which to understand relationships between crime, residential movement and community attachment. They are social disorganisation theory and the systemic model of community attachment.

Social disorganisation theory emphasises the role of population mobility, population heterogeneity and social networks in determining the incidence of crime and the risk of victimisation.³ Central to social disorganisation theory is the idea that large, densely populated and heterogeneous urban environments with high rates of residential mobility will manifest weak social integration and difficulties in maintaining effective social controls. This will in turn result in high crime rates. In contrast, the existence of social connections between residents and "neighbourliness" are expected to reduce crime and disorder.⁴

Social disorganisation theory's emphasis on local social interactions and connections draws on the systemic model of community attachment, which posits a connection between high residential mobility, low attachment to the community and crime. Rapid population turnover in an area is likely to lead to individuals having difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships with others. Consequently, it is hypothesised that undermining attachment will affect social control and therefore crime rates will increase.⁵

Community attachment and crime

Both social disorganisation theory and the systemic model of attachment assume that attachments to a community, such as those manifested through kinship and friendship or membership of local organisations, contribute to social control or

² They included health and social services workers, Strengthening Families Co-ordinators, Child Youth and Family, Women's Refuge, youth workers, justice sector workers, Police, Victim Support, Courts, Community Probation, local solicitors, Community Law Centres, churches, community groups, Māori Wardens, Safer Communities, Neighbourhood Support, Citizen's Patrol, Community Guardians, employers and employer representative groups, local government mayors and councillors.

³ Sampson and Groves (1989); Miethe and McDowall (1993).

⁴ Crutchfield et al. (1982); Kubrin and Weitzer (2003).

⁵ Sampson and Groves (1989); Warner and Rountree (1997); Bursik (1999); Atkinson and Flint (2003); Sun et al. (2004).

regulation and decreases in the incident and prevalence of crime. Attachment to the community and connections between residents are expressed and allow the exercise of social control in a variety of ways ranging from informal surveillance of streets, to direct intervention to stop criminal acts, to informing parents about children's misconduct.⁶

The body of research that tests this association is ambivalent. Some research supports and other research challenges the role of community attachment in controlling crime.

In support of this idea of an inverse association between community attachment and the prevalence of crime, is Sampson and Groves's (1989) analysis, based on data from England and Wales. They proposed that neighbourhoods with low socioeconomic status, ethnic heterogeneity, family disruption and high residential mobility would have sparse local friendship networks, low participation in local organisations, and unsupervised youth. In turn, these factors were predicted to increase neighbourhood crime rates.

Sun et al.'s (2004) surveys in seven United States cities also found that neighbourhoods with strong social networks tended to have lower robbery rates. Neighbourhoods with weak social ties tended to have high levels of unsupervised youths.

Other evidence on the role of attachment factors in decreasing crime is mixed. Using Seattle data, Warner and Rountree found that local social ties appear to decrease assault rates significantly. However, while social ties decreased assault rates in white neighbourhoods, they had no significant effect in predominantly minority or racially mixed neighbourhoods.⁷ Other studies found that local ties have few or no significant effects on either official crime rates or self-reported crime rates. In particular, the effect of participation in local organisations on crime is not straightforward, some research shows that most stable neighbourhoods have low levels of participation.⁸

Several studies have found that concern about crime and worries about personal safety appear to influence attachment to the place where one lives. Concern about crime can depress attachment. Furthermore, the incidence of crime and antisocial behaviour can contribute to residents' dissatisfaction and whether a residential neighbourhood works for residents.⁹ However, other studies have found that perceived safety is less important to people's satisfaction with their neighbourhood compared to environmental factors such as noise and lack of sunlight, poor access to food stores and recreational areas, and dissatisfaction with house size and condition.¹⁰

Differences in findings in the studies cited on attachment and crime may be due to the different measures used, communities studied, and assumptions about the positive nature of social ties. Researchers use a variety of indicators of social ties. Studies also vary in the size of population and types of settlements surveyed. Also, some commentators suggest that the literature focuses more on social ties thought to enhance

⁶ Kubrin and Weitzer (2003).

⁷ Warner and Rountree (1997).

⁸ Warner and Rountree (1997); Atkinson and Flint (2003); Sun et al. (2004).

⁹ Sampson (1988); Groves et al. (2003).

¹⁰ Parkes et al. (2002); Parkes and Kearns (2002).

social order, not weaken it — social ties may not have controlling effects on criminal behaviour.¹¹

Residential movement and crime

Like the literature of community attachment and crime, there is also mixed evidence on whether people are influenced to move because of crime or fear of crime.

For some people, concerns about personal safety clearly influence the decision to move. For example, in one English study frequent movers reported that their main reasons for moving were to escape violence or burglaries. A number of studies in the United States show property crime to be a predictor of residential movement for older people. Analysis of United States metropolitan crime data has found that, at least for most property crimes, an area's mobility rates are a powerful predictor of crime rates (although residential mobility rates were poor predictors of homicide and aggravated assault rates). Other research suggests that mobility declines if the neighbourhood becomes safer from crime or improves its physical conditions.¹²

However, there is another body of research that shows, contrary to expectations, neighbourhoods with high residential movement can have strong social ties. Moreover, there are a few studies which also indicate that some people in unsafe neighbourhoods, or who perceive their neighbourhood to be in decline, feel powerless to leave a dangerous place.¹³ In those places, residential movement may be low, but crime may still be a problem. In those circumstances, residents may have a desire to move but are unable to achieve it.

In summary, the effects of crime on residential movement vary across studies. Crime rates or perceptions of crime and safety are possibly less important influencers of residential movement than other factors such as housing quality and housing density.¹⁴ Furthermore, individual factors such as age and family life cycle stage are important determinants of residential movement.

3. Perceptions of Crime and Safety

This section focuses on residents' perceptions of crime and safety in their case study areas, not actual crime rates. An extensive international literature has discussed how anxieties about crime can affect the way in which people live, and their sense of wellbeing.¹⁵ The concern about crime can become a problem in and of itself for communities, particularly if concerns are in excess of actual crime rates. However, a level of concern can also be useful in that it may prompt local crime prevention initiatives. Examination of 2006 crime rate data for the case study areas shows that

¹¹ Warner and Rountree (1997); Sun et al. (2004); Kubrin and Weitzer (2003).

¹² Richardson and Corbishley (1999); Walters (2002a and 2002b); Bartik et al. (1990); Crutchfield et al. (1982); Sun et al. (2004).

¹³ Sun et al. (2004); Kearns and Parkes (2002); Ross et al. (2000).

¹⁴ Kearns and Parkes. (2002).

¹⁵ Mayhew and Reilly (2007).

Amuri and Cannons Creek/Waitangirua were considerably below the national recorded crime per 10,000 population, and Opotiki and Kawerau were slightly above.¹⁶

In the case study areas, panel participants were asked whether they thought there were any problems with crime or safety in the area in which they lived. The proportions of panel participants who were concerned about crime or safety differed across the interviews. Concern was highest in all areas in the first year of interviews (2004). In all areas concern dropped sharply in the second year, and rose in the third year (Table 1).

Recorded crime per 10,000 population for police stations in the case study areas showed an actual drop only in Kawerau between 2004 and 2006. In the other areas there were small increases during that time.¹⁷ Differences in concern about crime from year to year may have been related to changes in the panels' composition as some movers joined or left the panels. Differences may have also reflected crime events close to the time of the research. For instance, in Amuri a few high profile crime incidents happened shortly before the first interviews in 2004. Different perceptions of crime may also have been due to the introduction of local community safety initiatives. This appears to be the case in Kawerau and Amuri where in Rounds 2 and 3 some panel participants commented on improved responses to crime in their community or an increased local police presence in the area.

Table 1: Proportions concerned about crime and safety issues

Case Study Area	Panel Interviews 1 2004 %	Panel Interviews 2 2005 %	Panel Interviews 3 2006 %
Amuri	61	29	49
Cannons Creek/Waitangirua	42	28	33
Kawerau	86	24	33
Opotiki	57	31	53

Source: panel interviews

Housing Affordability Surveys conducted in the four case study areas in 2005 provide some comparative data on perceptions of crime in the four case study areas.¹⁸ The surveys asked respondents to rate crime in their area as “a very big problem”, “a fairly big problem”, “a moderate problem”, a “slight problem” or “not a problem”.

The proportions were not too different from the panel findings for 2005. Combining the responses rating crime as “a very big problem” and “a fairly big problem”, Opotiki respondents were most concerned about crime at 32.5 percent, followed by Cannons

¹⁶ Data on recorded crime per 10,000 population was obtained from the New Zealand Police National Headquarters for Culverden (Amuri area), Kawerau, Opotiki and Waitangirua (including Cannons Creek) police stations. National data was obtained from Police National Headquarters (2007). The national recorded crime rate per 10,000 in 2006 was 1,024.6, compared to Culverden 516, Waitangirua 469, Opotiki 1,149 and Kawerau 1,218.

¹⁷ Police station data obtained from New Zealand Police National Headquarters.

¹⁸ Housing Affordability Survey responses for each area were Opotiki (120), Kawerau (120), Cannons Creek/Waitangirua (121) and Amuri (121).

Creek/Waitangirua (24.8 percent) and Amuri (21.5 percent). Kawerau respondents were least concerned (20 percent).

As another point of comparison, a national crime and victimisation survey conducted in 2006 found that just over one third of respondents (36 percent) thought there was a crime problem in their area.¹⁹ This suggests concern about crime in the Cannons Creek/Waitangirua and Kawerau panels in 2006 was slightly lower than the national level of concern. But concern about crime was higher in the Amuri and Opotiki panels, compared to nationally. Unlike respondents in the national crime and victimisation survey, panel participants perceived definite changes in crime in their areas over time.²⁰

In all case study areas participants in panel interviews and focus groups said that by far the main crime and safety concern facing their area was “problem” child and youth behaviour. The other issues mentioned were drugs, property crime, family violence and to a lesser extent, road safety. The issues concerning child and youth behaviour are discussed below. In comparison, the main crime problem mentioned in the 2006 national crime and victimisation survey was burglary, followed by graffiti and dangerous driving. Youth in the street or fighting ranked below those crime problems and theft.²¹

Child and youth behaviour

Many studies identify child and youth behaviour as a major perceived problem in neighbourhoods.²² Often the behaviour of concern is not particularly crime-related, but expressed as social disorder or nuisance. Youths “hanging around” in public places such as shopping centres and recreation areas are of particular concern.

Children and young people were identified as the most mobile group in Cannons Creek/Waitangirua, Opotiki and Kawerau. Residents observed that children and young people not only moved with families, but also some moved independently of families. Child and youth movement, particularly outside of family controls, was often associated in people’s minds with problem behaviours such as truancy, vandalism and petty crime. There were also concerns about the safety of children and young people who may be exposed to crime or abuse because of their unpredictable and insecure living situations.²³

Kawerau, Opotiki and Cannons Creek/Waitangirua have youthful population profiles. Accordingly, youth crime is not only perceived as more of a problem because of the visibility of young people, but it can actually account for a substantial proportion of crime locally.²⁴

¹⁹ Mayhew and Reilly (2007:31).

²⁰ Two thirds of those in the national crime and victimisation survey thought crime in their neighbourhood had stayed the same between 2005 and 2006 (Mayhew and Reilly 2007:34).

²¹ Mayhew and Reilly (2007:32).

²² Atkinson and Flint (2003).

²³ In Kawerau, concern about the movement and behaviour of children who were clients of Child Youth and Family prompted the Building Attachment programme to conduct research on that movement. The findings resulted in the community developing a project to improve services for families and enhance community safety (James, 2008).

²⁴ Nationally in 2006 the 14–16 age group had the highest apprehension rate of any age group for property offences (Chong 2007).

In all case study areas, residents reported that older people felt particularly vulnerable to harassment from youths.²⁵ In Amuri the youth problems cited included the verbal abuse of others, especially older people, on the street. Problematic youth behaviour was identified as a relatively recent issue, generally confined to particular locations and families. There was a view that, while there is little serious crime in the area, there has been a rise in anxiety about crime and more young people's involvement in "nuisance behaviour".

Groups of young people congregating in the town centre, particularly at holiday times, are particularly visible in Kawerau. Those interviewed recounted well known incidents of burglaries, vandalism, and older people being threatened, jostled and mugged in the shopping centre by young people. Such incidents were highlighted as evidence of a "youth problem" growing in severity. In Kawerau and Opotiki, the "culprits" of nuisance behaviour and petty crime were thought to be not only local children and young people but also those visiting for holidays. Residents in Cannons Creek/Waitangirua commented on young people out late, burglaries, vandalism, graffiti and "boy racers".

In all the communities there was a general concern about a lack of family supervision of children and youth and their disengagement from school. Truancy was considered to be linked with juvenile crime:

15–17 year olds not at school, on the fringes of crime, drugs ...
(Cannons Creek/Waitangirua social service provider).

They can't read and write and therefore lack confidence ... they don't want to go back to school ... they drop out of the course, they don't understand, can't read or write (Kawerau youth worker).

There are a few youth who have nothing better to do than burgle homes
(Opotiki resident).

There's a hard core of ratbags, mostly 12–14 ... some have been expelled from school and are on correspondence, but you can't ensure they are studying ... elderly people are becoming quite scared (Amuri resident).

A lack of recreation and leisure activities for older children and teenagers was identified in all communities and given as another explanation for youth crime. In rural areas, the expense of travel to organised sport and other activities was cited as a barrier to participation.

There's no excitement, no entertainment ... no youth centre now (young person, Kawerau).

²⁵ The 2006 national crime and victimisation survey found that older people were more worried than others about intimidation. However, older people were less concerned than other age groups on other measures of concern about crime. Young people were very concerned about crime and their own personal safety (Mayhew and Reilly 2007:38, 47).

There's nothing for the 15–18 year olds. They're into nuisance behaviour, bored (Amuri resident).

I kind of feel something needs to be done within the community to help our young ones, because there is nothing here for them. And there needs to be something there for them because they're just running wild (Opotiki resident).

A lack of local employment was also seen to contribute to youth problems. Loss of casual work opportunities around the Amuri district was cited as reducing young people's opportunities for earning money and keeping them "out of trouble". Those who have lived in Kawerau since the early days of the 1950s and 1960s identified loss of local employment opportunities and changes to the apprenticeship system as contributors to youth problems.

Concern about crime versus concerns about other problems

Housing Affordability Surveys conducted in the four case study areas in 2005 included a question asking people to rate problems in their area such as unaffordable housing to rent or buy, unaffordable interest rates, job layoffs and unemployment, crime and a polluted environment. This enables a comparison of residents' concerns about crime against some other concerns. The findings may have overstated concerns about housing, given that the focus of the surveys was housing. Nevertheless, crime did not rank as the biggest concern.

Across the four case study areas crime was considered "a very big problem" by 10.4 percent of respondents, and was ranked third after concerns about job layoffs and unemployment and lack of suitable housing that is affordable to buy. When combining those who considered crime to be "a very big problem" and "a fairly big problem," one quarter of respondents agreed, making crime the second biggest problem, after job layoffs and unemployment.

No case study area ranked crime as the problem of most concern. For Amuri respondents crime was second after lack of suitable housing that is affordable to rent. Opotiki respondents placed crime second after job layoffs and unemployment. Both Kawerau and Cannons Creek/Waitangirua placed crime third. Kawerau respondents considered crime less of a problem than job layoffs and unemployment and unaffordable interest rates. Cannons Creek/Waitangirua respondents placed crime after lack of suitable housing that is affordable to buy and unaffordable interest rates.

4. Attachment to the Community and Perceptions of Crime and Safety

Overwhelmingly, participants in the panel interviews and focus groups of all ages identified positive reasons for remaining in their areas. Apart from some young people who felt “stuck”, unable to move because of few resources and prospects, most were very positive about the advantages their communities offered.

Residents in all areas suggested that knowing friends and neighbours, living near relatives, participation in local groups, and being connected with local institutions such as schools or churches, were important reasons for them remaining in the area. Importantly too, those social ties were seen to be critical to the communities successfully managing “problem” youth and controlling crime. Most agreed those things needed to be managed to ensure their communities remained attractive places to live.

In all areas people said it was notable that residents “look out for” one another. There are strong family and church networks, and neighbours know each other:

I find neighbours are very sharing and will give you a hand (Kawerau resident).

There's a greater family influence ... people pick up on problems. There's a better chance of problems being caught (Cannons Creek/Waitangirua resident).

It's a small community; people keep an eye out for one another (Amuri resident).

You can walk down the street you can have eyeball contact with people and they'll smile at you ... it makes people feel comfortable and a lot safer than perhaps they would otherwise (Opotiki resident).

Part of small town life is the sharing of information. Regardless of actual crime rates, in the smaller areas, crime is big news. In places such as Amuri, Opotiki and Kawerau, criminal and antisocial behaviour quickly become known, and a degree of social pressure can be exerted. In Opotiki, residents commented that the Police, Māori wardens, social service workers, Māori elders and other adults know the families of most children and young people, and keep an eye out for them.

As one young person observed: “Everybody knows you, will look after you ... older people look out for young people”. In other places similar comments were made:

It's a good thing that people are nose-y ... it's a small enough community to know when kids are wandering the streets ... there were some kids persistently doing this and the Police were rung about it. They picked up the kids and took them to school (Amuri resident).

We meet kids on a personal level, pick up on what's happening in their home life. I make it my business to meet young families (Kawerau local social service provider).

Outsiders

In all case study areas, population changes have affected perceptions about the incidence of crime locally, and who might be involved in crime or victims of crime. Residents gave examples of how the changing face of their community has affected the way they perceive their own and others' attachment to the community.

In Amuri, residents observed that, with considerable in-movement over the last 15 years, the composition of the community has changed greatly. It was noted that there is some unease about the diversity within the district. The sense of "knowing everyone in the district" might be disappearing. Strong views were expressed about the value of dairy farming to the area, as this is the group most obviously associated with movement. While some considered that perceptions are changing to become more inclusive of those involved in the dairy industry, others expressed a view that farm workers, and particularly those in dairying will continue to be seen negatively as "transients". Some attributed a perceived increase in crime to "out-of-towners" coming in (although crime was not explicitly associated with dairying or any particular employment).

In Kawerau, like Amuri, several people noted that the sense of "knowing everyone in town" may be disappearing. They commented that, although the population has not increased (in fact it has fallen since 1991), there has been considerable movement in and out over the last decade, so that the composition of the community has changed.

In Opotiki, social service providers noted that some families are moving to the district for cheaper housing, or to live with family. Some were described as transient (in the sense of unpredictable and unplanned movement) and disconnected from the community in which they are living. Residents also discussed the recent development of large coastal subdivisions in the area and proposals for new industries such as aquaculture. Some were concerned that an influx of a more diverse workforce, and greater numbers of holiday-makers or part-time residents will change the dynamics of the town. Incomers were not necessarily seen as bringing crime, but were definitely perceived as impacting on and potentially changing an existing way of life, not necessarily for the better.

There were examples where certain disruptive behaviour or crime was seen to be "caused" by incomers. For example, the perception in Kawerau, Opotiki and Cannons Creek/Waitangirua that children and young people moving in may be responsible for antisocial behaviour.²⁶ Another example was the arrival of "P" (methamphetamine) in the Opotiki district, which was widely seen as a very serious matter. There was a strong perception that the hard drug business is run mainly by "strangers coming in".

Although in all case study areas a few people raised concerns about people moving into the area and bringing crime or associated problems with them "outsiders" were not

²⁶ James (2008).

considered to be a major cause of crime. Nor was any influx of crime from outside cited as a reason for residents to consider moving.

5. Do Safety Concerns Affect Movement?

Do residents' concerns about their own or their family's safety prompt a move for them? This section looks at why people moved into their present house, whether there are any safety concerns that would prompt a move in future, and whether any of those who had left the case study areas had moved because of safety concerns. Finally, some negative external perceptions of crime in these communities are considered as potential drivers of movement.

Reasons for moving to their present house

Most research participants said that concerns about crime and personal safety were not a major influence on their decision to move to the house they were living in. This was especially so in Amuri, Kawerau and Opotiki.

Only five percent of participants in the Kawerau panel and three percent in the Opotiki panel mentioned safety concerns as a factor in moving to their current house. However, the Opotiki focus groups indicated that for some, the decision to move to Opotiki has been directly related to concerns about personal safety. Opotiki is a place that families will move to, or send their children to, as it is seen as a safe place. Some Opotiki social service organisations considered that there is movement to or return home to the district because individuals are seeking safety and security. In the Amuri panel, while only one person reported that safety was a definite factor in moving to their current house, others also noted the security and quietness of Amuri as positive factors in their move.

In the Cannons Creek/Waitangirua panel interviews, 14 percent said that they had moved to their present house because of a concern about crime or personal safety in the location where they had previously lived.

The moves that directly related to personal safety included moving because of relationship breakdown, conflict with relatives, harassment, unsafe neighbourhood and needing to establish a more stable and secure living environment. Often the safety issues were intertwined with difficult housing circumstances such as living in crowded conditions. Comments included:

I had no choice, I had been evicted from [my relative's] home (Kawerau resident).

This was the only place I could go when I had trouble with my partner (Cannons Creek/Waitangirua resident).

Both our whānau are patch members and my children were getting to like the scene ... so we actually came here to get them out of that environment (Opotiki resident).

I returned to Christchurch, was burgled twice in the first four months, and so moved to the beach to be close to family and get away from crime, then I was looking for a house to buy and fell in love with this area and found a nice house here ... you could say I moved to Culverden to get away from crime in Christchurch (Amuri resident).

Despite these examples, in all case study areas, people gave more important reasons for moving to their current house than concerns about safety. The most important reasons were to do with being closer to family and for housing-related reasons. Some also moved to their current house to be closer to services and amenities, for employment, or for lifestyle reasons. Moving for lifestyle reasons was sometimes associated with improving the safety of their families, as these people said:

We moved away from Auckland because of the crime rate up there. I feel that I'm ready to bring up our children in a safe environment (Opotiki resident).

The semi-rural lifestyle for raising kids is very good (Kawerau resident).

It was a change from the rat race. Get my children out of the North Island concept (Amuri resident).

Safety issues prompting a future move

Panel interviewees were asked whether they would move from their current house because of any concerns about crime or safety. Table 2 shows that few would consider moving from their house. In all case study areas, the proportions were lower than 10 percent across the three interviews.

Table 2: Proportion of panel interviewees who would move because of safety concerns

Case Study Area	Panel Interviews 1 2004 %	Panel Interviews 2 2005 %	Panel Interviews 3 2006 %
Amuri	2	6	5
Cannons Creek/ Waitangirua	9	8	6
Kawerau	7	1	6
Opotiki	9	7	3

Source: panel interviews

In the 2005 Housing Affordability Surveys, the proportions of respondents in the case study areas who said they would be prompted to move away because of any safety or security issues was somewhat higher than in the panels for Cannons Creek, the highest area at 14 percent, and Kawerau (12.5 percent). But the findings were similar for Opotiki (8.3 percent) and Amuri (6.6 percent), the area that people were least likely to move away from because of safety or security issues.

Over the three years of panel interviews, 60 responses²⁷ indicated a possible future move for safety reasons. Of those responses, 45 specifically referred to criminal activity, such as home invasion, burglary, vandalism or gang harassment, which would prompt a move. Similar reasons prompting a move were given in the Housing Affordability Surveys in the case study areas.

In the panels 15 responses did not cite crime as a reason. Instead they referred to road safety (such as living too close to a main road), natural hazards (flooding, earthquakes, landslides), or perceived unsafe condition of their house (such as vulnerability to fire). Natural hazards were particularly identified by Opotiki residents, as their area experienced extensive flooding and landslides in 2004 prior to the first panel interviews. In the Housing Affordability Surveys natural disasters were most mentioned by Opotiki and Kawerau respondents. They were the most mentioned safety issue among Opotiki respondents (rating higher than crime), and the second most mentioned safety issue among Kawerau respondents, after burglaries.

The focus groups also indicated that safety was not a major driver of future movement. Cannons Creek/Waitangirua focus groups commented that they would move for work, or because of housing problems, not because of any concerns for the safety of themselves or their families. Kawerau focus groups said that residents would move away from the area for school or tertiary education, employment and to increase property investment. In the Opotiki focus groups, no one was thinking of moving because of worries about their own or their family's safety. However, three people reported knowing of individuals who had moved out of Opotiki town, either because of experience of burglaries, or simply feeling less secure. But more importantly, they said that families would be likely to move away for education, and older people would move to be closer to hospital services. No one in the Amuri focus groups was thinking of moving out of the district because of a concern about personal safety. Nor had anyone heard of others moving or wanting to move because of a concern about safety. The main reasons for moving out were identified as education, employment, and among older people, loss of mobility and health problems.

A trend for older people to move out of the community was particularly mentioned in Amuri and Opotiki. Older people may be more likely to consider moving, either because of concerns about the safety of their neighbourhood, or fear of injury in their homes. In Amuri several commented that older people felt vulnerable due to youth misbehaviour. However, it was generally agreed that, while such incidents were unsettling, these did not really compel older people to move from the district. When older people did move away, it was mainly because they wanted to be closer to health services, public transport and to move into a smaller, more manageable home. Opotiki residents also talked about older relatives moving away. Sometimes an older person's decision to move is due to a variety of factors, with personal safety being only one, and usually not the most important factor. More important are concerns about health, difficulties in accessing services, reduced personal mobility and distance from family.

²⁷ This includes some panel members who said they would move because of safety reasons in each round; i.e. the number of people is smaller than the number of responses to the question.

It's having a big house and grounds, there are no small units here so they have to move to Christchurch where there is a choice (Amuri resident).

I do feel safe but I know two or three people who don't. The recently widowed feel vulnerable, maybe have never driven a car. They move to join their family, but would have stayed if their family were in Opotiki ... widows having to manage finances might feel insecure. There is a lack of information. Some might feel unsure of themselves ... they have been relying on their husband and they suddenly find they have no husband and they have got no form of transport (Opotiki resident).

Movement reasons of those who moved away

The main reasons for those panel interviewees moving away from the case study areas were to do with housing, family, education or work.²⁸ None of the movers in the second round of interviews said that safety was a factor in their move. Only one person in the third round of interviews, who had shifted away from Cannons Creek/Waitangirua, mentioned feeling unsafe as a reason for moving.

External perceptions of crime

In three of the areas — Opotiki, Kawerau and Cannons Creek/Waitangirua — residents are well aware of the effect that publicity about local crime has not only on locals' views about the safety of their community, but also on external perceptions of their communities. Occasionally, negative perceptions appear to have influenced decisions about moving. For example, some in focus groups commented that families are put off from moving to Opotiki because of perceptions of crime. In Cannons Creek/Waitangirua, several interviewees commented on the negative image of gangs, crime and violence that has been associated in the past with the area and which remains a persistent negative impression. A few said that they knew of residents who wanted to move out of Cannons Creek/Waitangirua, not because of any concerns about personal safety, but because they were uncomfortable about the negative image of the place.

Despite three case study areas experiencing negative images relating to crime, there was general agreement among those interviewed that such negative images are largely distortions. Instead, they saw their communities as vibrant and settled, with many long-term residents. In contrast to those negative images, some interviewees emphasised that they had moved to their communities and staying there precisely because they felt it was a safe place for them:

Has good small town dynamics, a very warm friendly town to live in (Kawerau resident).

It's got a great community. It's safe for children and the beaches are close (Opotiki resident).

²⁸ Not every panel member who moved away from a case study area could be contacted. In the second round of interviews, 20 people who moved away were interviewed and in round 3, 29 people were interviewed.

People out of the area are the ones with a bad perception. Those who live there love it ... a friendliness, dynamism, a very supportive community ... I had an idyllic childhood here (Cannons Creek/Waitangirua resident).

6. Conclusions

Crime is not seen as a significant problem in any of the case study communities. In all areas, research participants considered their community to be a safe place to live, even if some crime and safety problems were identified. Each community acknowledges that there are major issues with youth offending, and identified other issues concerning drugs, property crime, family violence and to a lesser extent road safety. Natural hazards are also an ongoing concern and in Opotiki and Kawerau may be more likely to prompt a move than any criminal activity.

What stood out was research participants' conviction that the immediate area in which they lived was safe. While there may be dangers "elsewhere" (across town, in the next village or suburb, in the big city), their local surroundings were judged to be safe. They tended not to consider crime and safety to be major issues in their lives, and few had personally experienced crime.

However, this is not to say that crime goes unnoticed. On the contrary, whenever there are notable incidents of crime these tend to be known and remarked upon, especially in small places. Also, strangers are noticed. This suggests that in the smaller communities at least, local social controls operate as part of the management of antisocial behaviour.

In all areas, there were more important reasons for moving house than concerns about crime or safety. In none of the areas were motivations for moving house, either into or away from the area, strongly related to concerns about crime or personal safety. Only a very small number of research participants noted that crime was a reason for moving to the house they currently live in. Similarly, a small proportion of research participants said that they would be prompted to move from their home because of concerns about their safety.

Crime rates or perceptions of crime and safety appear to be less important as factors influencing residential movement in these four areas than other factors such as housing affordability and quality and wanting to live close to family. Furthermore, individual factors such as age and family life cycle stage are important drivers of movement.

Bibliography

- Atkinson, R., and Flint, J., 2003, "Locating the Local in Informal Processes of Social Control: The Defended Neighbourhood and Informal Crime Management" *CNR Working Paper No. 10, ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research*. www.neighbourhoodcentre.org.uk
- Bartik, T.J., Butler, J.S., and Liu, J.-T., 1990, "Maximum Score Estimates of the Determinants of Residential Mobility: Implications for the Value of Residential Attachment and Neighborhood Amenities" *Upjohn Institute Staff Working Paper 90-01*. www.upjohninst.org/publications/wp/9001.html
- Bursik, R., 1999, "The Informal Control of Crime through Neighborhood Networks" *Sociological Focus* 32(1), 85-97.
- Chong, J., 2007, *Youth Justice Statistics in New Zealand: 1992–2006*, Ministry of Justice, Wellington.
- Crutchfield, R., Geerken, M., and Gove, W., 1982, "Crime Rate and Social Integration", *Criminology* 20(3 & 4), 467-478.
- Groves, R., Middleton, A., Murie, A., and Broughton, K., 2003, *Neighbourhoods that Work: A Study of the Bournville Estate, Birmingham*, The Policy Press, Bristol.
- James, B., 2008, "What happens to research? Responses to a project on the residential movement of children and young people" *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand, Issue 33*, March 2008.
- Kearns, A., and Parkes, A., 2002, *Living in and Leaving Poor Neighbourhood Conditions in England*, CNR Paper, No. 8, ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research.
- Kubrin, C., and Weitzer, R., 2003, "New Directions in Social Disorganization Theory" *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 40(4), 374-402.
- Mayhew, P., and Reilly, J., 2007, *Community Safety Findings from the New Zealand Crime & Safety Survey 2006*, Ministry of Justice, Wellington.
- Miethe, T., and McDowall, D., 1993, "Contextual Effects in Models of Criminal Victimization" *Social Forces*, 71(3), 741-759.
- Parkes, A., and Kearns, A., 2002, "Residential Perceptions and Housing Mobility in Scotland: an analysis of the longitudinal Scottish Housing Condition Survey 1991-1996", *2002 CNR Working Paper No.3, ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research*. www.neighbourhoodcentre.org.uk
- Parkes, A., Kearns, A., and Atkinson, R., 2002, "The Determinants of Neighbourhood Dissatisfaction", *CNR Paper No. 1 January 2002, ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research*. www.neighbourhoodcentre.org.uk

- Police National Headquarters, 2007, *New Zealand Crime Statistics 2006 A Summary of Recorded and Resolved Offence Statistics*, New Zealand Police, Wellington
www.police.govt.nz/service/statistics/2006/calendar
- Richardson, K., and Corbishley, P., 1999, *Frequent Moving: Looking for love?*, YPS in association with Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Ross, C.E., Reynolds, J.R., and Geis, K.J., 2000, "The Contingent meaning of neighbourhood stability for residents' psychological well-being", *American Sociological Review*, August 2000, 65(4), 581-597.
- Sampson, R.J., 1988, "Local Friendship Ties and Community Attachment in Mass Society: A Multilevel Systemic Model", *American Sociological Review*, October 1988, 53(5), 766-779.
- Sampson, R., and Groves, W., 1989, "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory", *The American Journal of Sociology* 94(4), 774-802.
- South, S., and Crowder, K., 1997, "Escaping Distressed Neighborhoods: Individual, Community and Metropolitan Influences", *The American Journal of Sociology*, 102(4) 1040-1084.
- Sun, I., Triplett, R., and Gainey, R., 2004, "Neighborhood Characteristics and Crime: A Test of Sampson and Groves' Model of Social Disorganisation" *Western Criminology Review*, 5(1), 1-16.
- Walters, W.H., 2002a, "Later-Life Migration in the United States: A Review of Recent Literature", *Journal of Planning Literature*, August 2002, 17(1), 37-66.
- Walters, W.H., 2002b, "Place Characteristics and Later-Life Migration" *Research on Aging*, March 2002, 34(2), 243-277.
- Warner, B., and Rountree, P., 1997, "Local Social Ties in a Community and Crime Model: Questioning the Systemic Nature of Informal Social Control", *Social Problems* 44(4), 520-536.