Exploring Families' *connection* with and *movement* through an Area-based Service System: Creative Clinical Data Mining within a Developmental Evaluation Process

Kirsten Harmer, Magdalena Liso and Sarah Spiker
Mission Australia
Assoc Professor Wendy Earles
James Cook University

About Mission Australia

- Mission Australia is a national non-denominational Christian community services organisation
- We are over 150 years old
- Our vision is to see a fairer Australia by enabling people in need to find pathways to a better life

---

Critical Reflection

- At a national level, CS were grappling with questions like:
  – "What do we need to do to achieve our vision?"
  – "What does a fairer Australia look like?"
  – "What outcomes do our services need to be focusing on?"

We were looking for a better understanding of our impact, and a more consistent approach to measuring it.

CfC Response – National Evaluation of 6 sites

Are we making an impact as a Facilitating Partner?

Are the Activities delivered by Community Partners and by Mission Australia making an impact?

In each case the key considerations are –
  – *What outcomes are we achieving?*
  – *What is working?*
  – *What is not working?*

ECB and Developmental Evaluation Methodologies: But, what about Program Evaluation?

Complementary and different approaches of understanding and working in organizations and programs:
- **Program Evaluation** tends to apply a recognized model of evaluation to a specific situation
- **ECB** co-creates and co-sustains an evaluation system based on practice wisdom and the 'ways things are done around here'
- **Developmental Evaluation** aims to assist practitioners innovate and adapt their practice in changing and complex environments


Communities for Children

FUNDER of early intervention and prevention services in an area	SUPPORT ORGANIZATION to community and service providers in an area
LEAD NONPROFIT ORGANISATION & FACILITATING PARTNER PROCESS	
PURCHASER of early intervention and prevention services in an area	(co-) PROVIDER of early intervention and prevention services in an area

Investigating Integration

- Purpose: to contribute to understanding users' experiences of an integrated system of (activity) provision.
- Question: *What can we learn about activity users' connection with and movement within the system of provision from existing records of activity use?*

Mission Australia
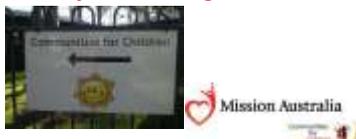
Clinical Data Mining (CDM)

- CDM is a paradigm of practice-based research that engages managers and activity staff in analysing and evaluating routinely recorded material to explore, evaluate and reflect on their practice.
- It is about knowledge-generation to contribute to evidence-informed practice and can be used for quantitative and qualitative material (Epstein 2010).
- CDM proceeds through a series of steps:
  - identifying a data set
  - identifying variables and attributes
  - establishing a time frame.

Mission Australia

Identifying a data set

Two possible data sources

- Inala to Ipswich: 500 families *I'm a CfC Family* database
- Mt Druitt 200 families *Community Membership Card*

Variables and Attributes

- *family member number*
- possibly the *access to program* information (title of the referring worker's position, the agency name, advertisements, family, friends and other)
- *project name* and *term dates*
- It was not the intention of this study to access or use any demographic information for activity users.

Mission Australia

Time frame and sampling strategy (examples)

Activities*	Activity code for this study	April-June 2011	July-September 2011	November-December 2011
Kids' Gym: Baby and Me Time	-	-	-	Yes
Kids' Gym: Kids 2-5 years (all groups)	KG	Yes	Yes	Yes
HOOK'D UP project	HU	Yes	Yes	Yes
Family Links: Whalan Learning Circle	WLC	-	-	Yes
Family Links: Whalan Cooking for Adults	WCA	-	-	Yes
Family Links: Whalan Romp & Stomp	WRS	-	-	Yes
Family Links: Whalan Sing & Grow	WSG	-	Yes	-
Family Links: Whalan Walking the Talk	WWT	-	Yes	Yes
...				

Mission Australia

Considering ethical issues and developing appropriate protocols

- Clinical data mining approaches must be used with caution. The ease of access to user data sets does not mean they are readily available for mining.
- The CfC *About you Form* used in Mt Druitt did alert those completing it that the information would be tracked using the member number.
- It was also voluntary for activity users to take up a family number and activity access was not restricted to members.
- For this study certain protocols were put in place to protect client demographic information such as ensuring that only de-identified data was viewed.

Mission Australia

Conducting analyses

- First it was examined for any patterns in connection points for families.
- Second it was examined for continuing use of the same activity.
- Third it was examined for use of activities offered from one family link hub.
- Fourth, it was examined for use of activities by a family across different hubs or activities that were not hub-based.
- The information on 'access to program' was also aggregated across all data sets to provide some insight into referral sources.

What was found?

There were three groups of families within the extracted data set of 126 families:

- 49 families who exclusively used Kids' Gym;
- 25 families who exclusively used HOOK'D UP; and
- 52 families who accessed activities through family links hubs

Patterns in connection

- The nature of the connection activities evident in the extracted data highlighted the importance of play opportunities for children, groups for enhancing parenting skills, and self-development programs for parents as engagement strategies.
- For example: Of the 52 families in the data set for hubs, 20 were engaged with activities in the period April-June 2011 – indicatively 15 engaged with playgroups and 8 engaged with self-development activities for women (some families engaged with more than one activity).

Continuous use

- Kids' Gym

  16/49 families demonstrated continuous use over the 3 terms (but this may be for different children), 21 families used the activity in two terms and 12 families used the activity for one term only.

- HOOK'D UP

  25/25 families engaged continuously in the 9 months data period (but this may also be for different children).

Increased engagement

There was evidence of take up of a range of other activities once connection was made. Of the 52 families:

- 17 families connected with one activity;
- 9 families connected with 2 activities;
- 14 families connected with 3 activities;
- 8 families connected with 4 activities;
- 3 families connected with 5 activities; and
- 1 family connected with 6 activities within the data period.

This indicates that about two thirds of families took up other activities once engaged.

Movement

Of the 35 families who engaged with more than one activity:

- 26 families accessed activities within an individual hub (13 at Blackett, 9 at Hebersham and 4 at Whalan);
- 8 families accessed activities at more than one hub;
- 1 family engaged with a hub and then with a stand-alone activity (Kids' Gym); and
- No families engaged with a stand-alone activity and then accessed a hub.

This indicates that about two thirds of families use activities at a single CfC hub while one third access activities across hubs.

It also indicates that within this time period there was little or no movement between hubs and stand-alone activities.

Supported connection and movement

- The evidence suggests that the main support for connection or movement in the data period was from family and friends (99) and from advertisements in the community (61), and this occurred cross a range of activities.
- The health department made referrals to Kids' Gym (37) but also to some hub-based activities (10).
- Other government agencies made some referrals namely Community Services (2) and Housing (2).
- The facilitating partner Family Links Worker (16) and the Aboriginal Family Connect Worker (10) supported connection to hub-based activities and movement.

Mission Australia

What does this tell us about what we are doing?

- There was some evidence beyond intuitive knowing that the contractual obligation to connect families and children with (relevant) services was achieved.
- Hubs as a 'soft entry' model is highly effective in promoting greater service access.

What was learnt about the process?

- Clinical data mining can provide a means to demonstrate connection and movement.

Mission Australia

Deep listening for experiences – specific study 3B

Miller CfC, NSW

Mission Australia
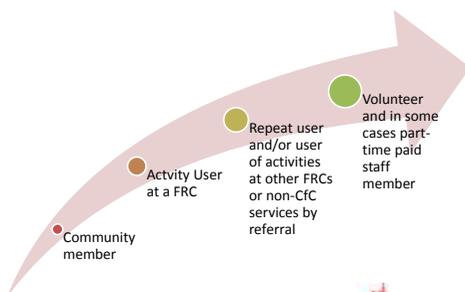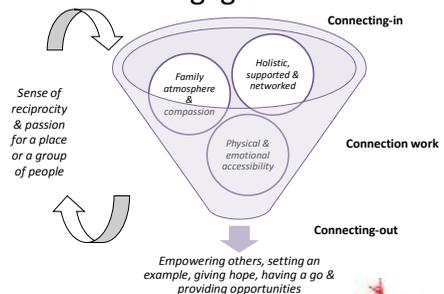
Methodology and design

- Exploration of the data needs
- Design of a collection instrument
- Agreement on the site and sampling
- How to gain access to the participants and build rapport
- Ethical considerations
- In-depth interviews and analyses across the interviews based on common themes

Mission Australia

Results

Community member → Actvity User at a FRC → Repeat user and/or user of activities at other FRCs or non-CfC services by referral → Volunteer and in some cases part-time paid staff member

Mission Australia

SS3B: The underlying story of engagement

Connecting-in

Family atmosphere & compassion

Holistic, supported & networked

Sense of reciprocity & passion for a place or a group of people

Physical & emotional accessibility

Connection work

Connecting-out

Empowering others, setting an example, giving hope, having a go & providing opportunities

Mission Australia

The underlying story of engagement

- For the FRCs at Sadleir and:
  - receiving practical compassionate assistance when you were in need,
  - feeling a sense of community at the centre, a deep desire to give back compassionately to others based on your own experiences, and
  - active engagement of others such as family members and friends.
  - Interviewees valued having a centre with activities all in one accessible place and the offer of referral to other services to meet needs.

The underlying story of engagement

- Across all FRCs there was a *connecting-in* and a *connecting-out* process for members of the community, and workers and volunteers to do the *connection* work. People *connected -in* because they needed assistance and/or were motivated to contribute.
- There was a very strong *sense of reciprocity*.

Questions and Reflections

Contacts and acknowledgements

Contacts:
Sarah Spiker spikers@missionaustralia.com.au
www.missionaustralia.com.au/cfc

Assoc Prof. Wendy Earles – **James Cook University**
Wendy.earles@jcu.edu.au

Mission Australia Site Managers:
Jenny Chaves – Inala to Ipswich (Qld)
Margaret Osmond – Cairns (Qld)
Bernadette Burchell – Greater Dandenong (Vic)
Kirsten Harmer – Mt Druitt (NSW)
Magdalena Lisa – Miller (NSW)
Nicole Rowe – Taree (NSW)