



“Time to find a new freedom”: TOMNET and Men’s Sheds -
Meeting older men’s contributive needs in regions within South East and
South West Queensland, Australia?

A Thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

“Time to find a new freedom” refers to one older man’s philosophy on retirement. This thesis examined the effectiveness of two male-only organisations in South-East and South-West Queensland, Australia – TOMNET and Men’s Sheds – in fulfilling older men’s (aged 50 years and over) contributive needs in retirement. An examination of the degree to which these two organisations provided a framework for realising positive solutions to the issues surrounding the marginalisation of older men in the community was conducted. The three research questions focused on the implementation of programs and philosophies by the organisational leadership, the engagement of the membership in these programs and the future sustainability of each group.

Contemporary ageing studies have focused predominantly on the needs of women and younger and middle-aged men. Scant research has been conducted into ageing and the specific needs of older men as they engage with retirement. Building on the scholarship of Maslow (1943, 1962, 1970, 1971), McClusky (1974, 1976) and other noted sociologists, I developed the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework as the study’s conceptual framework. This qualitative, interpretive, multi-site case study research presented an analysis of the lived experiences and multiple truths of older men’s ageing experiences. The research was conducted in three phases: 1) a Likert scale survey that elicited 268 respondents; 2) 29 semi-structured interviews; and 3) six focus groups with a total of 48 participants. The accompanying data analysis identified categories of responses and resultant themes clustered around the three research questions.

My contribution to theoretical knowledge can be found in the investigation of multiple data sources that led to the creation of the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework. This framework enhances contemporary understandings of ageing, acknowledges the importance of contributive needs and can be applied to both genders. My contribution to methodological knowledge was demonstrated in the design and implementation of an ethical, respectful and reciprocal research

process applicable to older men. This study's contribution to policy knowledge included the awareness raised by considering older men, ageing and suicide as a wicked problem. The study's contribution to practice knowledge targeted three tiers. At the macro level, this thesis added new knowledge to this understudied age and gender group despite this group's ongoing overrepresentation in suicide statistics. At the meso level, this thesis generated new understandings around the issues surrounding ageing and older men. At the micro level, knowledge about TOMNET and Men's Sheds provided insights into the social understandings of not only this demographic but also other marginalised cohorts within the community.

Key words

ageing, contributive needs, gerontology, lifelong learning, masculinity, Men's Sheds, older men, purposeful living, salutogenics, suicide, TOMNET

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

This Thesis is entirely the work of Deborah L. Mulligan except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Principal Supervisor: Professor Patrick Danaher

Associate Supervisor: Professor Glen Postle AM

Student's and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

DEDICATION

Rory Michael Mulligan

(20 August 1991 – 22 December 2010)

This thesis is dedicated with much love to my son, Rory, who is forever 19 years old and will never know what it is to inhabit an old man's mind and body. Every paragraph in this document was written with him in mind and the future he could have had if not for the cancer that took him from us.

running with the angels



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It was such an honour to work with all the TOMNET and Men's Shed members and administrators, past and present, who contributed to the making of this thesis. Thank you for your vision, generosity and spirit. This is just the start of our collaborations.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“When you age, all the days are the same in many respects. Except that with each year that passes we get more frail, and therefore more dependent on others.”

Participant (Shed Focus Group 3)

1.1. Overview of the Chapter

Every day in the year 2016, more than two Australian men aged over 50 took their own lives (n=806). Every day in the year 2016, more than one Australian man aged over 60 took his own life (n= 464). Globally, men over 85 have the highest suicide rate of any demographic (mindframe-media.info/for-media/reporting-suicide/facts-and-stats, 2017, n.p.).

It is possible, and indeed probable, that suicide ideation is inextricably linked with the unfulfillment of an older man’s contributive needs. The aim of this research is to uncover the relationship between these two factors – i.e., suicide ideation in older males and how this may relate to their contributive needs not being fulfilled.

This topic of research is a developing area of interest. Extensive scholarly literature about older men, suicide and contributive needs is difficult to find. The suicide data are published yearly by such organisations as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, but little examination has occurred to uncover the voices behind these ‘silent statistics’. This issue is slowly emerging into the public arena as the Baby Boomer (claimed to be the most formally educated generation thus far [McCrinkle, 2014, p. 10]) men and women mobilise to find a more purposeful future after retirement. As is the 21st century trend, much of the discussion around male retirement is played out in contemporary public forums such as podcasts (*Creative Male Ageing* [tonyryanmedia.com.au/], *The Art of Manliness*), online communities (*Australian Men’s Health Forum* [amhf.org.au/], *Growing Bolder*, *The Good Men Project*) and blogs (web log posts) (*barrygoanna*, *Ted Carr- Retirement Journeys*).

Definitions of the pivotal terminology used in this chapter and throughout the thesis are provided in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
Contributive need	A theory based on the assumption that older people have a basic need to contribute purposefully to their community (McClusky, 1974, p. 334).
Marginalised	Socially isolated and vulnerable.
Men’s Shed	“...any community-based, non-profit, non-commercial organisation that is accessible to all men and whose primary activity is the provision of a safe and friendly environment where men are able to work on projects at their own pace in their own time in the company of other men. A major objective is to advance the wellbeing and health of their male members” (mensshed.org/what-is-a-mens-shed/).
Older man	Any male over 50 years.
Suicide	The intentional taking of one’s own life.
Salutogenic	Health giving.
Sustainable	“Ongoing viability” (Van Der Laan, 2014, p. 205).
TOMNET	The Older Men’s Network, an organisation based in Toowoomba (Queensland, Australia) that was established to mitigate suicide ideation for men aged over 50 years.

This research set out to:

- explore the effectiveness of two local organisations, TOMNET and Men’s Sheds, in fulfilling older men’s (aged 50 years and over) contributive needs; and
- understand the degree to which these two organisations provide a framework for realising sustainable and positive solutions to the issues surrounding the contributive needs of older men in the community.

Both of these aims culminated in the following research problem:

“Time to find a new freedom”: TOMNET and Men’s Sheds - Meeting older men’s contributive needs in regions within South East and South West Queensland, Australia?

As was noted in Table 1.1, this thesis defined an older man as one who is over 50 years of age. At the age of 50 in Australia, people are eligible to join seniors' groups and organisations (such as National Seniors Australia). 50 is also perceived to be the entrance to the "third age" or the retirement phase (Cusack & Thompson, 1999, p. xi). TOMNET classifies 50 as the age at which men are likely to encounter professional issues such as retrenchment, and so they may need the support of peers. Milligan et al. (2013) referred to this age as being the "target age" (p. 14) for Australian Men's Sheds. Participants in this study were drawn from this "target age" only, although generally Men's Sheds cater for a wider age range (anyone over 16 years).

Chapter 1 provides an overview of and a rationale for the thesis and briefly outlines the content of each of the subsequent chapters. Section 1.2 provides the reader with background information describing the crisis surrounding the lack of attention by government, media outlets and society in general to the contributive needs of older men. This negligence has created a marginalised group in society. Section 1.3 presents a summary of the evolution of TOMNET and the Men's Shed organisations. Section 1.4 highlights the significance of the research. Section 1.5 explains why the research is justified on theoretical and practical grounds. Section 1.6 describes the scope of the research, and states the study's research questions. Section 1.7 presents an overview of the thesis, followed by a personal note in Section 1.8. The conclusion to this chapter is presented in Section 1.9. Figure 1.1 provides a flowchart of the progression of the chapter.

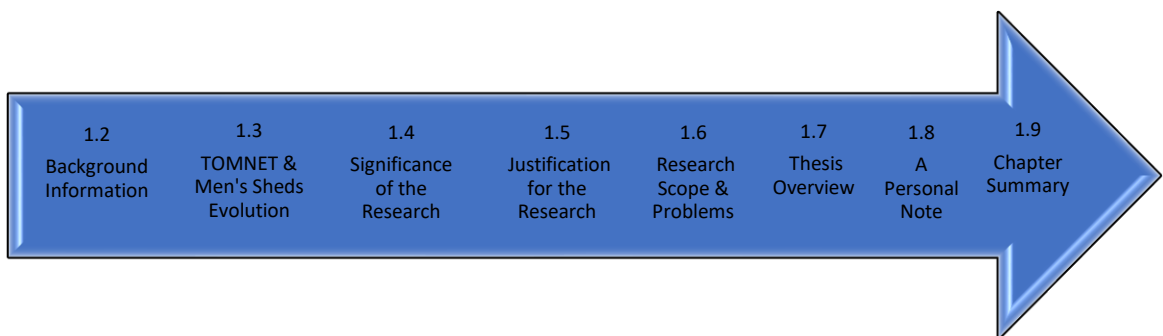


Figure 1.1. A flowchart of the progression of Chapter 1

1.2. Background Information: A Complete Gender Perspective

Historically, discussion around gender and age has tended to focus primarily on the social issues facing older women and the particularised forms of discrimination to which they have been, and continue to be, subjected (Belgrave, 1993; Fletcher, 2001; Payne & Whittington, 1976; Reeves Sanday, 1981; Rikleen, 2016). Whilst this scholarship is valuable and often timely, research into prejudices and biases towards men, and in particular older men, has been scarce: “Older age is essentially ‘feminised’ in the literature with women having received far more scholarly attention than men” (Milligan et al., 2013, p. 6). This is not a recent phenomenon. Beales and Petersen (1999) articulated this same argument nearly two decades ago when they asserted that: “...discussion on gender and age tends to focus on the issues surrounding older women, the longevity of females in comparison to males, and the particular disadvantages and discrimination women face when old related to their gender” (p. 201).

In contemporary society, a complete gender perspective acknowledges that clarity is needed to examine the outcomes of the harmful treatment of both genders in our society. From that perspective, we need a more comprehensive discussion around the experiences of older men. A Google search of “discrimination against older women” revealed that 10 out of the 10 articles listed on the first page mentioned the words “older women”. A Google search of “discrimination against older men” revealed that 1 out of the 10 articles on the first page mentioned the words “older men”.

This research is not about pitting one gender against another. As a woman aged over 60 who has been in paid and unpaid employment all of her adult life, I have inescapably and directly experienced gender discrimination on many occasions, and still do to a certain extent. My research stance is grounded in a concern for equality for both genders. Despite historical and present gender biases, I embrace the future as a time when both genders can move forward as equals and are cared for in their old age in a socially responsible manner as the “living legacies” (Northridge, 2012, p. 1432) that they are.

1.3. The Evolution of TOMNET and Men's Sheds

1.3.1. TOMNET.

TOMNET (The Older Men's Network) is an organisation that was established in Toowoomba in 2001 by a group of older men for older men (aged 50 or over). TOMNET posits that, if an older man cannot find his place in society or does not feel needed or appreciated by the community in which he lives, he may suffer from isolation and develop mental health issues, potentially leading to suicide ideation.

TOMNET's motto is "reconnecting older men" (tomnet.org.au/). The website states that TOMNET "provides older men with opportunities for mateship, the chance to re-connect with the community and cope positively with life after loss. TOMNET is a non-religious and non-party political organisation, and all men are considered equal" (tomnet.org). TOMNET stresses that the heart of the organisation lies in its philosophy of older men helping older men. There are over 280 members in Toowoomba city plus affiliated rural groups.

McGowan, Enkelmann, and Burton (2014) emphasised that TOMNET is more than simply a conduit for social activities. They referred to TOMNET's success in meeting the needs of older men in the way outlined by Earle and Fopp (1999, p. 113), including involvement (a sense of belonging), satisfaction (a sense of wellbeing), autonomy (freedom of individuality), integration (a sense of being part of a whole) and creativity (a sense of working together for the shared benefit of the community).

1.3.2. The Men's Shed movement.

With the advent of apartment living and smaller house blocks, the long-held iconic Australianism of the backyard shed is slowly diminishing. Contemporary Men's Sheds are communal spaces where members of a community gather to work on projects that traditionally would have been constructed in a shed in the backyard. The Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) was established in 2007 as a representative body for Men's Sheds nationally. The latest figures revealed that there are over 985 sheds nationwide, with 159 of those operating in Queensland (mensshed.org).

The motto of the Australian Men's Shed Association is "Men don't talk face to face[;] they talk shoulder to shoulder" (mensshed.org/about-amsa/what-is-amsa/). This is mostly paraphrased as simply "shoulder to shoulder".

The Men's Shed movement rejects the notion of a 'one size fits all' definition. Each Shed is autonomous and reflects the community in which it was formed. AMSA identified a Men's Shed as:

...any community-based, non-profit, non-commercial organization that is accessible to all men and whose primary activity is the provision of a safe and friendly environment where men are able to work on meaningful projects at their own pace in their own time in the company of other men. A major objective is to advance the wellbeing and health of their male members. (mensshed.org/what-is-a-mens-shed/)

1.4. The Significance of the Research: The Importance of the Recognition of Older Men's Contributive Needs

Established research and media attention focused on older Australians target three facets of so-called "successful ageing" (Timonen, 2016, p. 13). These were related to financial awareness such as superannuation (australiansuper.com; Power, 2018; startsat60.com/category/money/superannuation); physical/medical matters such as how to keep fit in retirement (Author Unknown, 2017; Coxwell, 2014; Everett, 2016); and social activities such as dating in later life (elitesingles.com.au/em/online-dating/over-50; sixtydating.com/australia). Few of the published articles or data actually focused on the diverse needs of older males specifically.

McClusky (1974) stated that older people have five imperative needs that should be met "...in order to satisfy the basic requirements of the aging" (p. 331). He categorised these needs under the following headings:

1. Coping: to do with financial matters
2. Expressive: to do with hobbies and social activities
3. Contributive: to do with a desire to be of service
4. Influence: to do with exerting influence on their environment as agents of social change
5. Transcendence: to be selfless (pp. 332- 338).

The third, contributive need, is the focus of this study. It has four lenses based on community ideals. These are:

- to “experience the need to give”
- a “desire to be useful and wanted”
- a “desire to be of service”
- a “desire to share the cumulative experience of one’s life with others”

(University of Wyoming, 2018, n.p.).

Scholarship and media attention have adequately addressed the first two needs – i.e., coping and expressive – but have ignored the other three, which are equally important. Further, if sufficient recognition is awarded to the contributive needs of older men, the remaining two needs, influence and transcendence, will simultaneously be addressed.

1.5. Justification for the Research: Older Men as a Marginalised Group within Society

As at June 2016, there were 98.8 males for every 100 females in Australia. Fourteen percent of Australia’s total population was aged 65 years and over. The male cohort of this age group is rising and, by 2026, they will account for 18% of the total male population (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2017, n.p.). Logie, Hogan, and Peut (2004) stated: “This cohort is also more highly educated than previous ones and may have different expectations and needs than today's older Australians” (p. 1).

There are major dedicated centres for research about ageing throughout Australia: the Western Australian Centre for Health and Ageing (Western Australia); the Australasian Centre on Ageing (Queensland); the Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research (New South Wales); the Centre for Research on Ageing Health & Wellbeing (the Australian Capital Territory); the Monash Ageing Research Centre (Victoria); the Flinders Centre for Ageing Studies (South Australia); and the Centre for Rural Health (Tasmania). However, studies conducted within the last decade that focus solely on the wellbeing of Australian older men are difficult to find. Valuable research into the phenomenon of ageing per se has been published (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2017; French, Sargent-Cox, &

Luszcz, 2012; nationalseniors.com.au), but scant attention has been paid to gender differentiation. Research conducted by the PATH through Life Project based at the Australian National University has focused on physical and mental decline in older men and women (Anstey et al., 2012), and it used empirical, clinical data based solely on questionnaire responses.

Male suicide in Australia is a national problem. Figure 1.2 provides a gender comparison between the percentages of males and females who engaged in intentional harm (suicide) in 2016. It clearly demonstrates that males are three times more likely to commit suicide than females: 75.1% (males) compared with 24.9% (females).

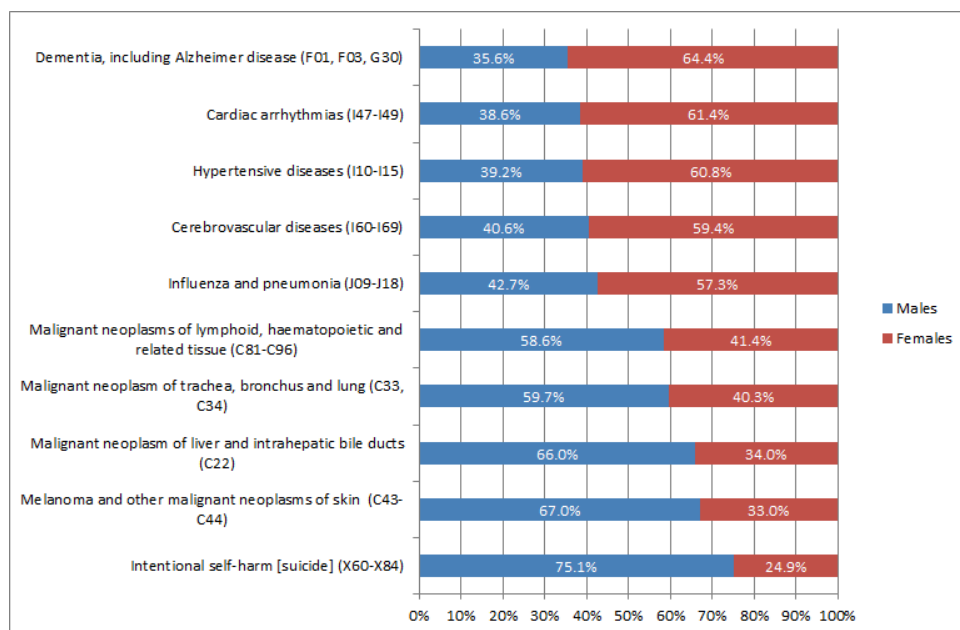


Figure 1.2. Greatest sex ratios within the 20 leading causes of death (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017a)

Note: ABS material used as supplied.

Misinformation about male suicide in Australia is rife. The television documentary *Man Up*, which aired on the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) in 2016 (manup.org.au/), proposed that suicide was most problematic for males between the ages of 15 and 44 years. Whilst this is certainly a concern and public awareness should be paramount, figures produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (see Figure 1.3) clearly show that the 85 years plus male cohort is most in danger of death by suicide (almost 40 deaths per 100,000). At no time during the three-part series was this fact mentioned. Clearly, within a discussion about male suicide, this was a glaring omission.

Age specific death rates for Intentional self-harm, by sex 2016 (a)(b)(c)(d)

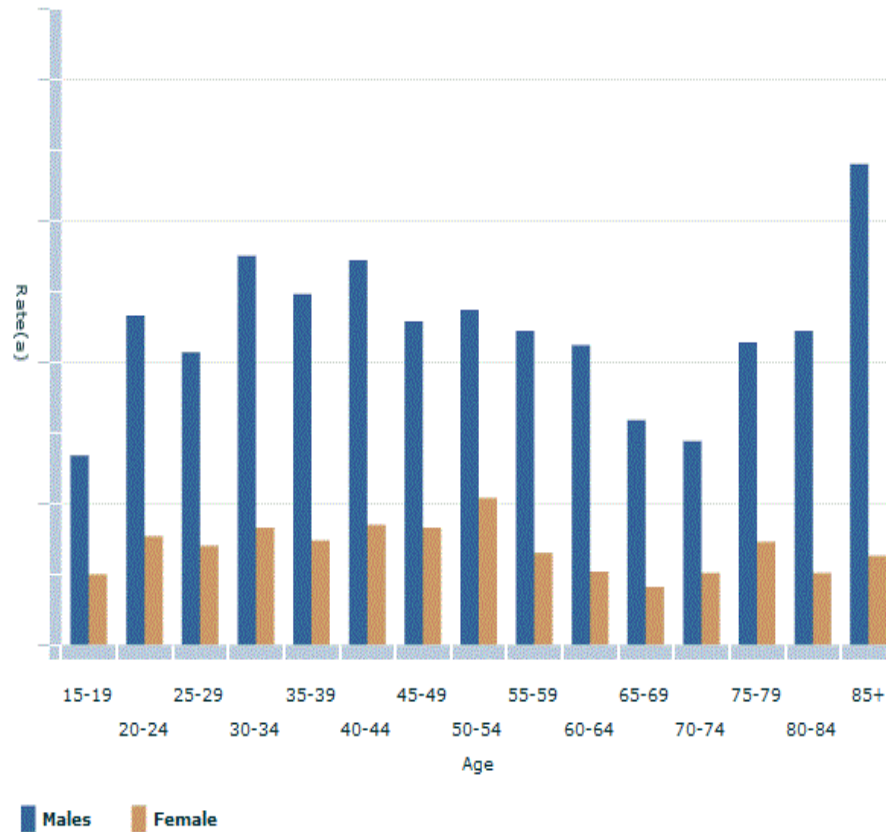


Figure 1.3. Age and sex specific death rates for intentional self-harm (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017b)

Note: ABS material used as supplied.

Draper (2015) posited that: “...it’s certainly not due to a lack of knowledge about suicide in older men, or its drivers” (n.p.). He stated that issues such as “... severe depression, loneliness, social isolation and lack of social support...” (n.p.) were drivers of suicide ideation. This silent statistic is often overlooked, and the marginalisation of older men within society is subtle. Publicly, it occurs most frequently in discussions centred around male suicide.

Whilst much emphasis has been placed on financial security/resources, less emphasis has been placed on the management of the social/community aspects of older men’s lives. The justification for this study is that there remains a crucial need for authentic research with theoretical, methodological, policy and practical contributions that add to the knowledge base of the gendered issue of meeting older men’s contributive needs. Thus, in this study, additional theoretical knowledge is addressed through the notional dimensions of ageing in Australia in the 21st century,

particularly the contributive needs of older men. Methodological knowledge is enhanced by designing and enacting ethical and empowering research into the complex phenomenon of ageing and the contributive needs of older men in Australia. Policy knowledge is critical for the engagement of the positioning of affirmative agency for older men, and to reinforce the positive and dynamic role of an ageing Australia. Practice-based knowledge aims to inform the designers of the programs of TOMNET and Men's Sheds, and to assist others in designing similar programs.

Australia has a chance to be a world leader in this area of research, given the increased comparative longevity of our males, and where this positions us nationally and globally (Noone, 2016). Data collected from TOMNET and Men's Sheds' members and associated parties are essential for a number of reasons: firstly, to inform policy decisions about appropriate actions and interventions to benefit older Australian men that will support positive ageing; secondly, to analyse the factors and characteristics determining healthy ageing; and finally, to raise the profile of older men within the community in order to break down traditional stereotypes. The results of this study will be used to publish reportable publications and will also be made available to the TOMNET and Men's Sheds' administration and members.

1.6. The Scope of the Research and the Research Questions

As Australia's population ages, its age profile is also predicted to change. In 2016, 57% of Australia's population was aged between 65 and 74 years; 30% was aged 74 to 84 years; and 13% was aged 85 years and over. By contrast, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW, 2017) projected that, by 2046, 45% of the population will be aged 65 to 74 years, 35% will be aged 75 to 84 and 19% will be 85 years and over. This profile is represented pictorially in Figure 1.4.

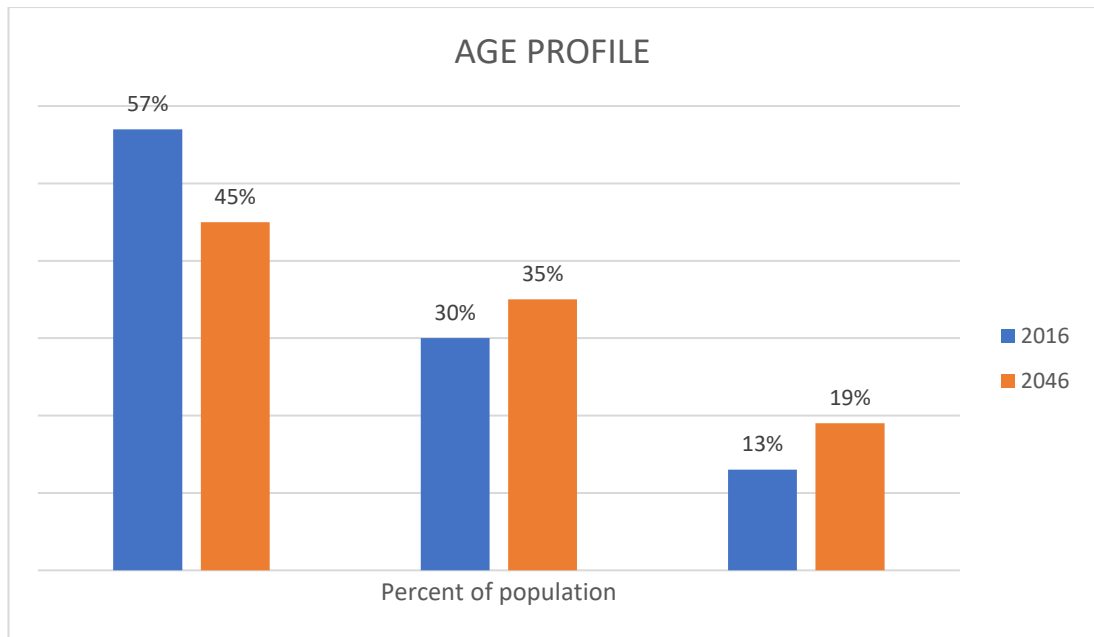


Figure 1.4. Predicted age profile changes of the Australian population from 2016 to 2046
(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2016)

This situation presents a twofold challenge in terms of assessing the level of support needed for older people from local, regional, state and federal government agencies, and in developing and implementing improved initiatives that are feasible for meeting the needs of older Australians. Funding for new and existing organisations is highly competitive and needs to be pursued actively in order to survive in the current political climate. Innovative and practical solutions for the inevitable problems arising from an ageing population need to be created and implemented.

Currently, viable existing programs such as TOMNET and Men’s Sheds are rarely acknowledged for their best practice successes and for their practical involvement in the community. Grants to sustain these not for profit community organisations are hard won, with little help from government agencies. To assist in improving this situation, it is necessary to determine the status of the use of the practices and policies that are currently implemented. Furthermore, as our ageing population increases at such a significant rate, it is expedient to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of organisations such as TOMNET and Men’s Sheds from the perspectives of all stakeholders, including their members and interested others.

The research objectives addressed in this study are twofold, and involve discussion around:

- the effectiveness of the programs offered by TOMNET and Men's Sheds in meeting the contributive needs of older men from the perspectives of the organisational leadership and the membership; and
- the TOMNET and Men's Shed philosophical frameworks as vehicles for delivering sustainable and positive solutions to the issues surrounding the contributive needs of older men in the community.

Fundamentally, the perspective taken is that two influential organisations currently exist in Toowoomba and surrounds that are seeking to address the contributive needs of older men in our community. Investigating the programs offered in each of these organisations is intended to allow the organisations to review their future directions and to amend policies and objectives where necessary. When this research is published, the wider community will benefit from the analysis and identification of the determinants of healthy ageing in Australia.

In this study, I provide a case study analysis of TOMNET and selected Men's Sheds that addresses three broad contemporary issues to do with older Australian men. These issues were derived from a lack of gender specific research, suicide rates and unconscious research bias (i.e., preconceived ideation) against older Australian males. From these issues, I have developed three specific research questions to explore the research objectives of this inquiry. These research questions are not linear in purpose, and they have overlapped throughout the research process:

- **Research Question 1:** How does the TOMNET and Men's Sheds' organisational leadership seek to implement the design of their programs and philosophies so that they best fit the contributive needs of older men?
- **Research Question 2:** How have the members of TOMNET and Men's Sheds experienced and engaged with their programs and philosophies vis-à-vis members' contributive needs?
- **Research Question 3:** To what extent are TOMNET and Men's Sheds important vehicles for the sustainable delivery of the contributive needs of older men in the community?

Each of the questions is addressed by examining archival documents; data collected from surveys conducted within individual groups; semi-structured

interviews and focus groups conducted with stakeholders; the collection of field observation notes; and a reflection journal. The investigation has involved interactions with the main TOMNET Centre and affiliates, and 9 Men's Sheds located within the regions of South East and South West Queensland, Australia.

Figure 1.5 presents an outline of the scope of the study. Each research question is aligned with the enquiry tools utilised to represent that question most effectively.

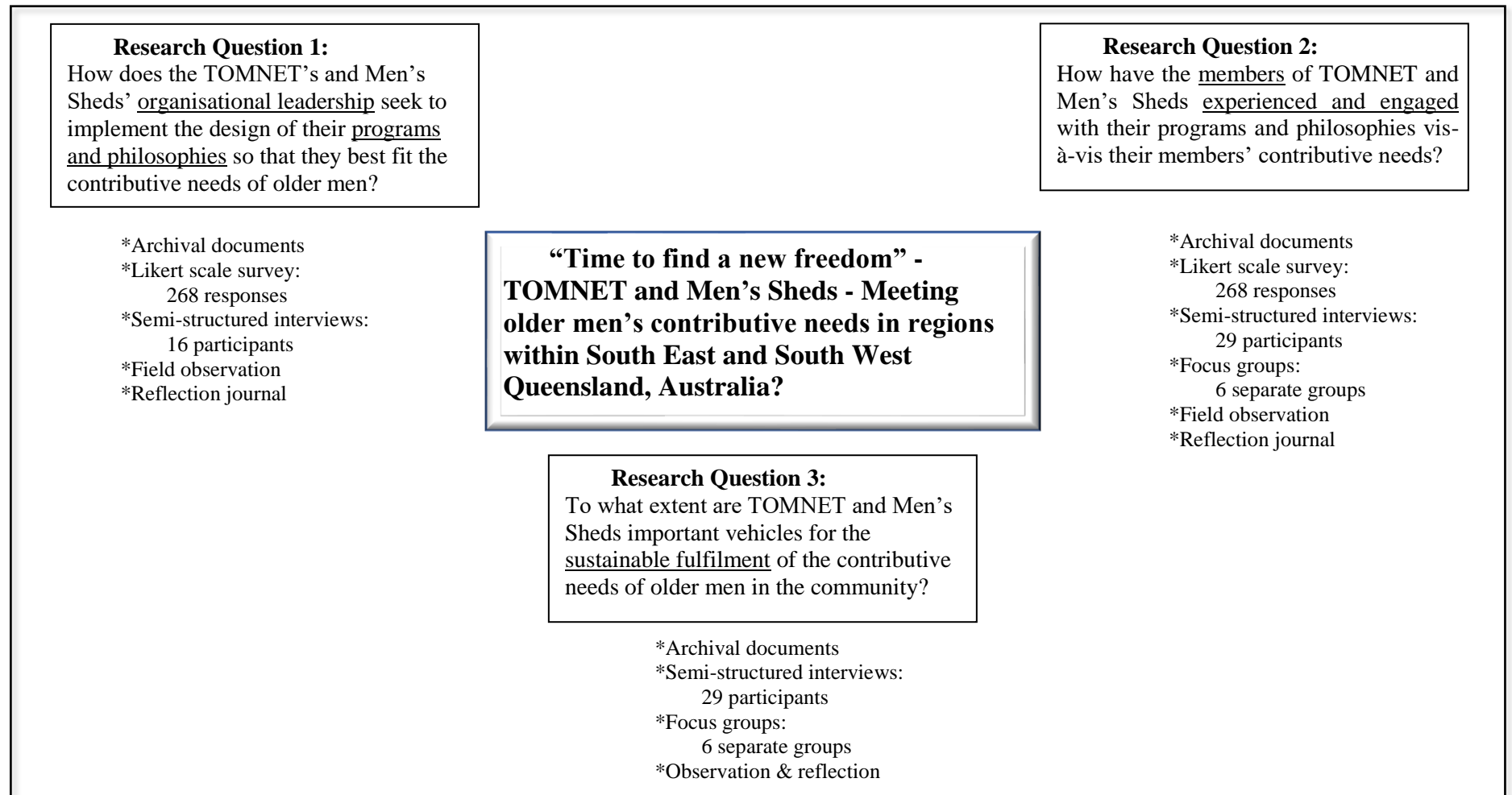


Figure 1.5. An outline of the scope of the study

1.7. Overview of the Thesis

This chapter has explained the fundamental framework of the thesis. The thesis focus has been outlined, and definitions have been provided. The background information has described the crisis surrounding the inattention by government, media outlets and society in general to the contributive needs of older men. I have argued that this negligence has created a marginalised group in the community (Section 1.2). I have described the evolution of TOMNET and the Men's Sheds organisations (Section 1.3). I have discussed the significance of the research (Section 1.4). I have stated the research problem and explained why the research is warranted on theoretical, methodological, policy and practical grounds (Section 1.5). I have described the scope of the research and explicated the study's research questions (Section 1.6). I have presented a thesis overview (Section 1.7). I have provided a personal note to orientate the reader to the two key assumptions embedded in my research (Section 1.8). A summary of the chapter is presented in Section 1.9.

Chapter 2 provides the contextual framework of my study. I examine the underlying theories to do with "ageing well" in the 21st century. I then discuss a major construct of ageing based on the phases of life along with more contemporary philosophies that advance the notion of "successful" ageing. As this research is focused solely on older men, the importance of the traditional notion of masculinity is also examined as a significant facet of the contextual framework of this research.

Chapter 3, the conceptual framework, narrows the focus from a general discussion of ageing and masculinity to a more specific view of the current status of older men in society. The discussion builds the case that generally older men are marginalised and treated as a 'one size fits all' stereotype within the community. I then demonstrate that contributive needs are important for every aspect of life but particularly for older men. The marginalisation of these men has contributed to their disenfranchisement within society. Their particular needs have been overlooked by society at large to their detriment. As a result, I have compiled the Older Men's Contributive Needs and Identity Framework that aligns with and amalgamates the work of previous scholars in this area. As a background to the research, I then outline the separate histories of TOMNET and Men's Sheds, and I review the limited amount of literature published about these organisations, thereby demonstrating the imperative for more research around the subject of older men's health and wellbeing.

Chapter 4 outlines each sequential component of the research design. O’Leary (2010) referred to the methodological design as a study’s “blueprint” and argues that it provides “...legitimization for knowledge production” (p. 89). I begin by describing the rationale and the philosophical underpinnings behind the decision to utilise an interpretivist paradigm. From there I discuss the qualitative orientation of my research. I then go on to discuss the nature of case study research and why it was chosen as the preferred research method of this investigation. Site and participant selection are subsequently reviewed. Data collection and analysis techniques are then examined, followed by the ethical and political elements of the study.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examine the data collected from the surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and archival documents, and how the findings are applied practically to address the study’s three research questions. Chapter 5 explores the design of the TOMNET and Men’s Sheds programs and philosophies, and examines whether and how they best fit with the contributive needs of older men. Chapter Six focuses on the members themselves and investigates the ways in which they have experienced and engaged with the programs and philosophies vis-à-vis the members’ contributive needs over time. Chapter Seven looks to the future and examines the organisations’ effectiveness as vehicles for the sustainable delivery of older men’s contributive needs in the coming decades. Each of these chapters follows a set pattern and is based on three key themes: Ethos, Structure and Membership.

Chapter 8 provides an analysis of the findings in relation to the study’s three research questions, including a discussion of the implications of these findings and thus the significance of this study and its contributions to multiple forms of knowledge. This chapter concludes the thesis by presenting future challenges and further fields of enquiry related to the marginalisation of older males in contemporary society.

1.8. A Personal Note

Embedded in my research project are two key assumptions. Firstly, I strongly believe in the notion of the equality of the sexes. There exists a dominant school of thought that women and girls have been historically, and continue to be, oppressed by males. I agree. In saying that, I do not think that the answer to the equality of the sexes lies in a revenge doctrine where one gender is pitted culturally against the

other. I believe in social equity regardless of ethnicity, sexual/religious preference, age or gender.

The other key assumption behind my research is that I believe that every member of society, regardless of age or gender, should be respected and afforded the opportunity to contribute to her or his community. Older men are struggling and have the dubious honour of an over represented suicide rate. Their plight is largely ignored by media and government. That society finds this silent, unchanging and entrenched statistic acceptable is an abomination in an enlightened 21st century.

This research builds on the philosophy of at-risk masculinity that began with my Master of Education thesis (Mulligan, 2000), which explored boys in education. As an experienced teacher (41 years), I have witnessed the ongoing educational marginalisation of primary school aged boys with below average mastery of literacy skills. I believe that education is a transformative process and that learning flourishes in a tailored, supportive environment.

1.9. Summary of the Chapter

This qualitative, interpretive, multi-site case study research has undertaken an analysis of the lived experiences and truths of older men's experiences in two community-based, psychosocially distinct, male-only organisations. In doing so, I provide an understanding of the contributive needs with respect to men over the age of 50 years, and I provide justification and direction for masculinity affirming organisations aimed specifically at older men.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

“Our career, our work is who we are and then it’s taken away and we’ve got all this knowledge and experience and we’re suddenly marginalised...and there’s that feeling of emptiness.”

Dave (TOMNET Member)

2.1. Overview of the Chapter

The first chapter introduced the research problem framing this thesis, which was entitled:

“Time to find a new freedom”: TOMNET and Men’s Sheds - Meeting older men’s contributive needs in regions within South East and South West Queensland, Australia?

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the literature around which my thesis has been developed. I situate the research within the contextual landscape of masculinity and ageing after the age of 50 in contemporary society. The topics addressed in this chapter locate each of the research questions within the parameters of this context.

A search of the extant literature revealed that there has been minimal Australian (or global) research relating to two major influential facets of older men’s wellbeing: firstly, the lack of governmental and community support for older men’s health and wellbeing; and secondly, the importance of organisations such as The Older Men’s Network (TOMNET) and Men’s Sheds as avenues for meeting older men’s contributive needs. Against this backdrop, I use this chapter to identify and define the gap in the literature relevant to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. After ascertaining this gap, I situate the study within the relevant sociocultural and historical contexts of ageing and older men in Australia, and I relate these contexts to the construction of my study’s conceptual framework in Chapter 3.

More specifically, Section 2.2 examines the major thematic approaches that relate to ageing ‘well’ in the 21st century. The section begins with a discussion about population growth and the rise of gerontophobia. Concepts based on the phases of life, along with more contemporary philosophies that advance the notion of ‘successful’ ageing, are then provided. Notions of masculinity and generational identity are also examined as important facets of the contextual framework of this

study. Section 2.3 narrows the focus from a general discussion about ageing and masculinity to a more specific interpretation of the ways that society marginalises older men. I continue to build the case that older men of all generations are marginalised within the community (and indeed, at times, by themselves). Section 2.4 discusses four specific mental health issues often experienced by older men as a result of this marginalisation: feelings of loneliness, loss of identity, social isolation, and suicide ideation. Following this, Section 2.5 provides an outline of the separate histories of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds. I then examine the limited amount of literature published nationally and globally about these organisations. Section 2.6 provides a summary of the chapter. This literature review focuses on the treatment of older men’s contributive needs, thereby demonstrating the imperative for more research around the subject of older men’s needs to promote positive health and wellbeing. The chapter progression is presented in the flowchart in Figure 2.1.

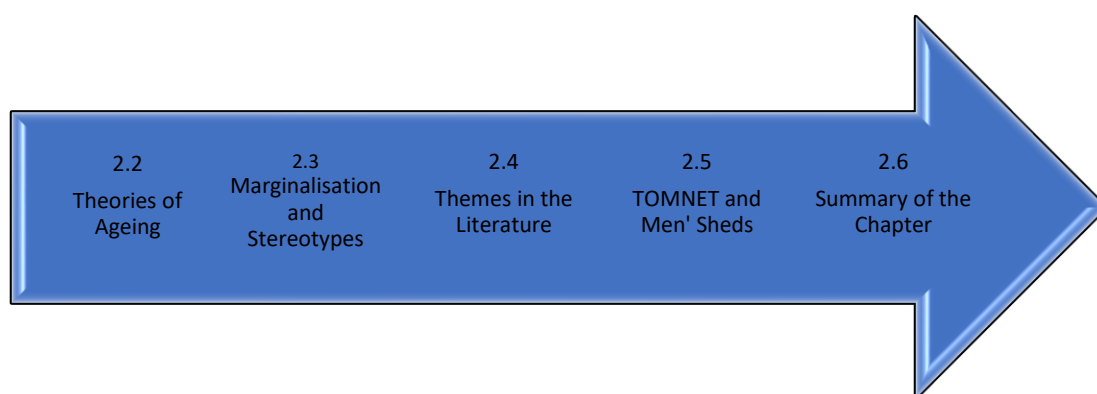


Figure 2.1. A flowchart of the progression of Chapter 2

2.2. Theories of Ageing

Firstly, I examine the underlying theories to do with ageing ‘well’ in the 21st century. I discuss a major construct of ageing based on the phases of life, along with more contemporary philosophies that advance the notion of ‘successful’ ageing. As this research focusses on older men, the importance of the traditional notion of masculinity is also examined as a significant facet of the contextual framework of this study.

2.2.1. Longevity and the rise of gerontophobia.

In 2013, Australia joined the list of seven countries where the life expectancy of both sexes is over 80 years. The other countries comprised Iceland, Israel, Italy,

Japan, Sweden and Switzerland. Australia's life expectancy is higher than countries with a similar standard of living to ours such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States (Scutt, 2016). A snapshot of ageing Australians revealed that, by 2056, nearly one quarter (22%) of Australia's population is predicted to be aged 65 years and over (Logie et al., 2004, p. 1). The percentage of Australians aged 85 and over will grow rapidly. It is predicted that they will represent 4.9 percent of the population by the year 2055. There are projected to be around 40,000 people aged over 100 in 2054-55 (Hockey, 2015).

The issue of a rising older population has prompted some scholars and social observers to comment obstructively rather than constructively, and to add nothing positive to interpret this future demographic shift in a manner that is palatable to younger and older generations. Beales and Petersen (1999) referred to the ageing demographic as an "agequake" (p. 201). Bytheway (1995) described gerontocracy as "a form of oligarchical rule in which an entity is ruled by leaders who are significantly older than most of the adult population" (p. 45). Butler (2015) addressed the issue of gerontocracy and the negativity surrounding it as being related to longevity. He posited that current thinking depicts a "'time bomb' narrative" whereby older Australians "...will use their new political clout to entrench their own privileges at the expense of everyone else" (p. 4).

These types of comments represent a form of public scaremongering. This obstructive rhetoric, which resides in the arena of popular discourse and is fueled by the media, adds flames to the currently common stereotypical assumptions about masculinity and power, particularly when references are made to rule by gerontocracy in the Middle East and communist countries ("Gerontocracy", 2011; Lenton & Libich, 2016). Blogger Ross Dawson (2009), self-styled "keynote speaker" and "futurist", went so far as to state: "...we can expect government policies to be unmitigatedly pro-aged, with barely a look in for the young" (n.p.). This gerontophobia further marginalises the ageing demographic in Australia and particularly stigmatise older males, who may be perceived in light of these negative stereotypical assumptions.

2.2.2. The construction of ageing.

Notions of what it is to be ‘old’ vary around the world. “The social construction of aging entails the creation of social norms and symbols that encapsulate the aging process” (Author unknown, 2016b, n.p.). Whilst some of the Australian media and politicians construct a futuristic, gerontocracy-oriented policy debate, youth is socially constructed as being a more valuable and socially accepted phenomenon. Clearly the implications of ageing and old age need to be “reobserved and rethought” (Erikson & Erikson, 1997, p. 62), including in Australia. Boulton-Lewis (2012b), a proponent of lifelong learning, stated: “Such ageist thinking needs to be addressed with sound arguments...” (p. 26). She further proposed the implementation of “...a new research paradigm that would place ageing itself at the centre of the debate and which incorporates older people themselves into the research process” (p. 30). Unlike Western societies that seem to value youth above all else, traditional Eastern philosophies link age with wisdom. The numerical significance of the concept of ‘old age’ varies globally and historically as well, as the current standard of living means that we live longer than our ancestors and depends upon the lifespan of the people within the culture. In the African country of Chad, the average life expectancy for a male in 2017 was 49.4 years (cia.gov/Library, 2018); therefore a person in her or his late 40s or 50s is considered ‘old’. Conversely, in Australia in 2018, a person born in (July) 1952 may be eligible for the aged pension at 65 years (Author unknown, 2018). In this subsection, I explore three major scholars and their constructions of ageing in Western society.

Eric Erikson, the 12th most cited psychologist of the 20th century (Haggbloom et al., 2002), stressed the sequential significance of eight character-forming crisis stages that occur throughout life. In 1997, Erikson’s wife Joan updated her husband’s theory to add a ninth stage as she experienced life as a 90 year old. She published a new book entitled *The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version with New Chapters on the Ninth Stage of Development* (1997) that included her husband’s previous treatise focusing on the eight stages of development, which was published in 1982.

Erik Erikson’s original theory (1982) encompassed the following quotients: 1. Trust vs Mistrust in infancy; 2. Autonomy vs Shame & Doubt in early childhood; 3. Initiative vs Guilt at play age; 4. Industry vs Inferiority at school age; 5. Identity vs Role Confusion in adolescence; 6. Intimacy vs Isolation in young adulthood; 7.

Generativity vs Stagnation in adulthood; 8. Integrity vs Despair in old age (Erikson & Erikson, 1997, pp. 56-57).

Each of these sequential stages was categorised by the syntonic followed by the dystonic quotients – i.e., a positive statement to do with growth and hope followed by a negative statement around challenge and confrontation. According to Erik Erikson (1982), the two opposing statements represented the challenges that individuals face at particular stages in life. They posited that difficulties arose if the challenge of each developmental stage were not overcome.

Joan Erikson (1997) reconceptualised her husband's eight original dystonic quotients into a ninth life stage as she herself experienced the negative impacts of old age. The ninth stage offered nothing new in the form of quotients but presented a rather negative view of her experience of a deteriorating mind and body, resulting in diminished self-esteem and confidence: "Old age in one's eighties and nineties brings with it new demands, re-evaluations and daily difficulties" (p. 105). She theorised that the "circumstances" of old age (lack of independence and control) weakened the mind and body. However, she stressed that "...it is important to remember that conflict and tension are sources of growth, strength and commitment" (p. 106).

Erikson (1997) began by examining the Infancy stage and noted that, owing to declining physical health, "elders" (p. 107) were forced to mistrust their own abilities. This resulted in a mistrust of their autonomy (Stage 2) over their bodies. She posited that, by the time a person reached her or his 80s, the initiative reflected in Stage 3 was "all memorable enthusiasm" (p. 108). The urgency of being productive (Stage 4) was notably absent in this ninth stage, and an individual was forced to accept her or his inadequacies. Erikson lamented: "Not to be competent because of aging is belittling" (p. 109).

Erikson (1997) posited that Identity (Stage 5) became an issue in old age. Status and role were challenged by oneself and society, especially when compared with the previous identity formed in midlife. Isolation (Stage 6) became a threat to the older person as social insecurities were magnified and as one's friendship circles diminished. Erikson cited the older person's decrease in activity and generativity (Stage 7) as a precursor to a "designation of uselessness" (p. 112). She proposed that a lack of challenges at this age resulted in stagnation, and she drew a comparison between the despair experienced in Stages 8 and 9. She claimed that Stage 8 despair was retroactive as an individual reviews life's regrets and missed opportunities. Stage

9, however, was consumed by the despair of the daily routine of living in the present. She commented that this may be compounded by negative thoughts lingering from Stage 8.

Table 2.1 depicts both Erik (1982) and Joan (1997) Erikson’s lifespan stages.

Table 2.1

Psychosocial Life Stages

ERIC ERIKSON’S PSYCHOLOGICAL STAGES (1982)	QUOTIENTS	JOAN ERIKSON’S 9TH STAGE (1997)
1. Infancy	Basic trust vs Mistrust	Mistrust of abilities
2. Early Childhood	Autonomy vs Doubt	Lack of autonomy
3. Play Age	Initiative vs Guilt	Guilt owing to dulled enthusiasm for initiative
4. School Age	Industry vs Inferiority	Incompetence
5. Adolescence	Identity vs Confusion	Doubt about status and role
6. Young Adulthood	Intimacy vs Isolation	Disabilities dominate relationships
7. Adulthood	Generativity vs Stagnation	Less stamina to devote to new projects
8. Old Age	Integrity vs Despair	Negative self-reflection

Adapted from Erikson & Erikson (1997, pp. 105-114).

The 7th, 8th and 9th stages of the Eriksons’ theories (1982, 1997) are most applicable to my research. Stage 7 referred to people’s perceptions of their lives thus far. If they perceived that their lives (family and/or business) were not working out as expected, they experienced regret about past decisions, and they felt a sense of hopelessness rather than a sense of purpose. Stage 8 focused on retirement and acceptance of the past’s achievements and failures. Erikson’s (1997) Stage 9 provided an insight into the physical and mental challenges of ageing after 80 years: “I am persuaded that[,] if elders can come to terms with the dystonic elements in their life experiences in the ninth stage, they may successfully make headway on the path

leading to geotranscendence” (p. 114). Erikson (1997) described the term “geotranscendence” as rising above “the universe and time” and “surpassing all human knowledge and experience” (p. 127). This description aligns with Maslow’s (1970) highest need, self-transcendence, which is elaborated in Chapter 3.

Both Erikson scholars stressed the attainment of wisdom in the last two stages. When she stated: “To grow old is a great privilege”, Joan Erikson (1997, p. 128) challenged older people to embrace a positive moral agency for the benefit of themselves and their community. From this perspective, Rich (2013) referred to moral agency as a term that implied that: “...people are responsible for their own beliefs and actions” (p. 218).

Most importantly for my research into older men’s health and wellbeing, both the Erikson scholars stressed the significance of the role of the environment when discussing the concepts of self-awareness, self-confidence, human development and identity.

Joan Erikson (1997) pointed out that: “Individual and society are intricately woven, dynamically interrelated in continual change” (p. 114). Moreover she asserted that our communities do little to promote the presence of an integrated ageing population in a positive or practical manner, and she stated: “The usual attitude towards elders is bewildering” (p. 116). Furthermore, Erikson (1997) posited that: “...the difficulties of the ninth stage both contribute to and are exacerbated by society’s disregard...” (p. 114).

Critics of the Eriksons’ (1982, 1997) stage-based construction of ageing argued that it was written from a perspective of privilege, and that it portrayed a decidedly masculine psychology. Erik Erikson himself acknowledged this fact (Ayub, 2017). Whilst this criticism may disadvantage other researchers, the fact that he wrote from a male perspective aligns neatly with my study into older men. Paradoxically, feminist scholars have used his construction of psychosocial development as a springboard from which to conduct and compare their own psychological research (Gilligan, 1982; Helson & Srivastava 2001).

From a different perspective, Peter Laslett (1991), a British historian, criticised Erikson’s (1982) theory as being too narrow. He believed that old age should be divided into two categories, depending on the individual’s health. He posited that the “flexible” (p. 156) Third Age comprised healthy elders who then progressed into the frailty of the Fourth Age. Laslett believed that the transition between the Third and

the Fourth Ages was "...greater than at any stage of the previous life course" (p. 153). He based this assertion on his proposition that the Fourth Age of "decline" (p. 153) could occur at any time during the Third Age depending upon the health of the individual. Further, he entreated the Third Agers to model the fullness of life for their successors.

2.2.3. **Successful ageing.**

The act of ageing after 50 has become a pawn of the media and politicians. The leading political Australian organisation that lobbies for the rights of people over 50, National Seniors Australia, produces a magazine entitled *50something* (50something, 2018). Online community groups such as Over60 (oversixty.com.au) and startsat60 (startsat60.com) offer advice about dating, travel, fashion, nutrition, and other lifestyle issues. Alongside this landscape, new visions of ageing are proposed. Terms such as 'productive ageing', 'healthy ageing', 'positive ageing' and 'active ageing' all supposedly culminate in the nirvana of "successful ageing" (Buys, 2006, n.p.). These labels are trumpeted by both the media and powerful governmental policy-makers. When used as identifiers for the promised 'good life', this lexicon is vague at best, and it presents an unhelpful dichotomy between successful and unsuccessful ageing. Tension arises when older persons are not living up to the notion of ageing successfully or positively. By default, the antithesis of this is that they are identified as ageing unsuccessfully or negatively.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2002) described active ageing as "the process of optimizing opportunities for physical, social and mental wellbeing throughout the life course, in order to extend healthy life expectancy, productivity and quality of life in older age" (p. 12). 'Healthy ageing' was thought to be the "ability to continue to function mentally, physically, socially, and economically as the body slows down its processes" (Hansen-Kyle, 2005, p. 46). 'Productive ageing', as defined by Kaye, Butler, and Webster (2003), possessed a dual conceptualisation in that it manifested itself externally through contributions to community, and internally through the positive moral agency of self-belief that transcended "...the physical or functional status of the older person..." (p. 200). 'Successful ageing' was portrayed by Minkler and Fadem (2002) as "Low probability of disease and disease-

related disability; high cognitive and physical functioning and active engagement with life” (p. 229).

Timonen (2016) argued that these “prescriptions for ageing appropriately” (p. 61) were unhelpful social determinants as they imply a negative valence for individuals constructed as ageing “inappropriately”. Further to this point, she claimed that the “successfully” ageing citizen was a “...social construction” that could well lead to the marginalisation of those who do not conform to this rigid construct (p. 62). Timonen referred to these labels as a design of “model ageing” (p. viii), and she posited that this design distinctly disadvantaged those older members of society “...who are not well resourced in terms of health, wealth, social networks and the surrounding environment” (p. 79). She argued that policy-makers who are invested in manipulating older people seek to provide a particularly self-serving model of ageing.

2.2.4. Masculinity and the generations.

In order to understand the character of older men, it behoved the researcher, as an older woman, to explore established philosophies around gender. I also considered generational differences as a valid concern owing to the fact that a key influence on attitudes towards ageing is formed and contextualised by a person’s earlier life experiences (Britton, Shipley, Singh-Manoux, & Marmot, 2008).

In his *Australian Huffington Post* article entitled “What a piece of work is a man”, Garone (2015) took issue with the traditional version of masculinity that still pervades today: “We know that men tend to compare themselves against a masculine ideal which values power, strength, control and invincibility” (n.p.). He argued that this attitude is outmoded and detrimental to men’s mental health. He implored the reader to consider that “the world has changed and so must our definition of what it is to be a man” (n.p.). Garone further asserted that, from a young age, boys believe that they are expected to conform to the hero narrative: tough, strong, reliable “fixers” – of relationships, of society, of themselves (n.p.). He maintained that this was especially so for men who suffered through two world wars and for whom stoicism was an accepted expectation of males in society.

McCrinkle (2014) defined a generation as “a cohort of people born within a similar span of time...who share a comparable age and life stage and who were shaped by a particular span of time (events, trends and developments)” (p. 2).

Woodspring (2016) provided an alternative way of looking at these demographic phenomena by conceptualising them as “mnemonic communities” - i.e., “groups that hold common memories and that construct the past together” (p. 43).

Scholars suggest that there are three living generations of older men (men over 50 years) in Australia: the Seniors born 1900-1924; the Builders born 1925-1945; and the Baby Boomers born 1946-1964 (McCrinkle, 2014). Each of these generations has experienced tremendous social upheaval.

“Seniors” or the “Federation Generation” (born 1900-1924) grew up during the Great Depression. They were born shortly after Australia obtained nationhood and became a Federation in 1901. These men may have fought in both World Wars. This cohort is characterised by perseverance in the face of adversity, traditional values and financial frugality (McCrinkle, 2014, p. 8).

“Builders”, “Traditionalists” or the “Silent” generation comprise the bulk of the Korean War veterans. They were born in the crisis period between 1925 and 1945 (the end of World War 2). Their cohort is hard working, conformist and respectful of authority (Kane, 2016).

“Baby Boomers” (born 1946-1964) came of age during the social revolution of the 1960s. Born after World War 2 ended, they were part of the baby boom era that, along with immigration, helped almost to double Australia’s population (McCrinkle, 2014, p. 10). They witnessed, and in some cases participated in, the Vietnam War. They are characterised by independence, individuality and competition (Anderson, 2013).

Although they are vastly generalised, cohort characteristics that promote collective memory are too prevalent to be ignored when conducting gerontological research. The link from theory to practical application is essential when gathering background information about observed trends and when conducting a descriptive analysis of demographic groups. General knowledge of each of the generations affords the researcher a theoretical link to the past whilst acknowledging individual differences within specific groups. It also provides a rudimentary framework for understanding the attitudes of an ageing male population.

2.2.5. Conclusion.

Section 2.2 has examined the major underlying theories to do with ageing ‘well’ in the 21st century, and I have discussed the thematic approaches underlying the study. Section 2.2.1 discussed the significance of the concept of ‘old age’ as being aligned with longevity. The rhetoric around the term ‘gerontocracy’ was discussed along with its publicly negative connotations and assumptions around the stereotypically gerontophobic thinking regarding older men. Section 2.2.2 presented a major construct of ageing based on the phases of life. In Section 2.2.3, the notion of ‘successful’ ageing and its associated social pressures were described. As this research has focused on older men, I also examined the importance of the traditional notion of masculinity as a significant facet of the contextual framework of this study, as was discussed in Section 2.2.4.

I chose these themes for their significance in relation to the research topics that focus on the contributive needs of older men. The concept of old age and the alleged rise of the gerontocracy were used as a springboard to explore related themes that are relevant to ageing in contemporary society. The Eriksons’ (1982, 1997) stage-based construction of ageing was explored as a theoretical background to provide information pertaining to the psyche of older people, with particular attention being paid to Stages 7, 8 and 9. Societal norms and assumptions that negatively influenced the acceptance and celebration of ageing were also presented. The notion of generational masculinity provided a framework to demonstrate the diversity of backgrounds and experiences that influence masculine world views within the over 50 demographic. Section 2.3 now narrows the generalised discussion around ageing to focus on community attitudes towards ageing and older men.

2.3. Marginalisation and Stereotypes

Section 2.3 shifts the focus from a broad discussion around ageing and masculinity to a more specific view of the status of older men in society. This section builds the case that generally older men are marginalised and treated as a ‘one size fits all’ stereotype within the community.

2.3.1. The marginalisation of older men.

I have adapted the notion of marginalisation from the work of Cruwys et al. (2013), who defined it as:

...a state in which individuals are living on the fringes of society because of their compromised or severely limited access to the resources and opportunities needed to fully participate in society and to live a decent life. Marginalised people experience a complex, mutually reinforcing mix of economic, social, health and early-life disadvantage, as well as stigma. (p. 4)

Danaher, Cook, Danaher, Coombes, and Danaher (2013) suggested that:

“Sociocultural marginalization assumes many forms and has multiple causes and effects” (p. 3). Furthermore, the marginalisation of older men may include such concepts as ageing (Barnhart, 2012; Cain, 2012), gender (Beales & Petersen, 1999), mental illness (Author unknown, n.d.) and rurality (Tynan, McDermot, Mactaggart, & Gericke, 2015). Sociologists are inconsistent about a definitive definition of the term marginalisation, citing “...the complexity of the definitional difficulty associated with sociocultural marginalization” (Danaher et al., 2013, p. 3).

Building on the complexity of the nature of marginalisation and adapting it to the framework of this thesis, I have set certain parameters around my definition:

Marginalisation is the conscious conduct or attitude towards a group or concept as having a less significant or unimportant value as considered by other members of the community.

In this thesis, the group refers to older men and the concept refers to old age. With this in mind, I have considered a number of factors that influence marginalisation:

- Marginalisation may take the form of adherence to traditional and outmoded assumptions and opinions. These ideologies reinforce traditional stereotypes that are unhelpful and that can be destructive to those targeted.
- The deleterious effects of marginalisation include destructive feelings of loneliness and social isolation as well as loss of identity and self-esteem, all of which may culminate in suicidal ideation and practices.

2.3.2. Stereotypes.

Negatively gendered labels and attitudes pathologise older men and create barriers between older men and society that deny the realities of old age. Cusack and Thompson (1999) maintained that old age is socially constructed, and that biases such as stereotypes impose limitations on the possibilities for personal growth and individualism. They posited that these types of assumptions have to do with the nature of retirement and ageing. In both cases, they proposed that the general attitude of older members in society is that they are a non-productive drain on the community and that they are forever trying to “recover lost youth” (p. 21).

Butler (2015) contended that negative stereotypes to do with ageing and old age are “crafted and reinforced in our cultural sector - the media, advertising and entertainment industries” (p. 50). He asserted that these industries need to look beyond merely endorsing funeral insurance, and that their fixation on the promotion of youth no longer reflects the reality of an ageing population.

In his podcast series entitled *Creative Male Ageing*, broadcaster Tony Ryan interviewed Dr Anthony Brown (secretary of the Australian Men’s Health Forum), who referred to the three negative stereotypes of ageing and retirement associated with older men as follows: 1. “You’re on the scrapheap”, which reflects feelings of worthlessness after paid work has ceased; 2. “The underfoot husband”, which signifies feelings of displacement and partner relationship disruption after work has ceased; and 3. “The rocking chair on the verandah”, where men are “out of sight, out of mind and waiting to die”. Brown stated that men unconsciously believe these negative stereotypes: “Once you retire, you withdraw, and it’s just decline and decay from then on. There’s this idea that, if you’re retired and you’re a bloke, well then, that’s it, you’re past your prime” (Ryan, 2017). The stereotypes mentioned by Brown are the topic of the next section of the thesis, 2.3 Themes in the Literature.

2.3.3. Conclusion.

Section 2.3 has discussed two major issues facing older men in contemporary society: marginalisation and negative stereotypical assumptions. Section 2.4 addresses the resultant mental health concerns arising from these societal pressures and the themes that arose as the literature was explored.

2.4. Themes in the Literature

Four recurring themes emerged throughout the literature search. Section 2.4.1 addresses the social and emotional pressures that older men experience when they are marginalised and stereotyped negatively in the community. These include loneliness owing to social isolation and exclusion. Section 2.4.2 examines the concept of the loss of identity after retirement. Section 2.4.3 defines the term ‘suicide’ and considers its ideation through the lens of older men in terms of their actions or expectations. Section 2.4.4 focuses on community capacity building as a means of establishing pathways that lead to finding positive solutions to the crisis situations that older men find themselves experiencing.

2.4.1 Loneliness, social isolation and social exclusion.

Lifeline Australia (a crisis support and suicide prevention organisation) defined the concept of loneliness as: “...a feeling of sadness or distress about being by yourself or feeling disconnected from the world around you. It is also possible to feel lonely even when surrounded by people” (lifeline.org). Social isolation refers to the absence of interaction with other people. Social exclusion occurs when an individual or group is marginalised in society (Beach & Bamford, 2016). Loneliness and social isolation are often blurred and can be confused with social exclusion. Although connected, they are different in important ways. Hawkley and Cacioppo (2010) have argued that each of these elements is cyclical and flows from one to another. An individual may feel lonely and/or misunderstood, which may lead to self-isolation, culminating in a self-imposed or societally imposed social exclusion. “If you are afraid that others won’t accept you, you may come off as aloof or critical. Then people become more careful around you, so a self-fulfilling prophecy and a loneliness loop develops” (n.p.).

Research evidence has suggested that men and women experienced social isolation and loneliness differently (Doughty, 2016; Steptoe, 2013; Tijhuis, 1999). Beach and Bamford (2016) conducted research about older men in England and revealed that men were less likely to seek support for emotional or mental/physical health issues than women. He hypothesised that this may be caused by “masculinity ideologies, norms, and gender roles” (p. 6). His study also found that historically older men’s mental health tended not to be the focus in research about ageing. This

was borne out by the results of my Google Scholar search on research focusing on ageing and the older man in the last 20 years. Articles concentrated mainly on physical health concerns such as diet (Hughes, 2004), disability (Fleming, 1999) and disease (Elwood et al., 2013).

As the population ages and the number of older men increases, it is reasonable to assume, based on previous trends, that many will become socially isolated and lonely. A large number of men will live by themselves owing to increased divorce rates for those over 50. “Grey divorce” is on the rise (Jones, 2015). In 2011, 19% of men living alone were over 70 years of age, and 23% of men were over 80. This is an increase by 62% since 1986 (de Vaus, 2015).

The trigger points that lead to social isolation and loneliness are distinct for men and women. Establishing social networks impacts on men and women differently (Beach & Bamford, 2016). Three decades ago, House, Landis, and Umberson (1988) hypothesised that continued research into this phenomenon was crucial as social relationships are vital to human wellbeing and are critical to the maintenance of good health (p. 544).

A survey commissioned by the Australian mental health organisation Beyondblue, on behalf of the Movember Foundation (a global men’s health organisation that was started in Australia), investigated social disconnectedness in men aged 30 to 65 years (Hall & Partners, 2014). The survey concluded that many men wanted greater honesty with their friends, and to be able to talk about personal problems. They admitted that they did not always have the skills or tools to initiate these conversations or to understand how to respond when a friend confided an issue to them. 50% of the men surveyed claimed to talk rarely about deeper personal issues with friends, while 31% claimed that they did not spend much time talking with their friends in general. This research confirmed a link between social connectedness and psychological distress. Men who had experienced bouts of loneliness were likely to have friendships based on a common interest or purpose, and their contact with friends fell away as participation in these groups (e.g., sporting clubs, employment) ceased.

2.4.2 Identity.

Section 2.3 referred to the damaging social stereotypes imposed on older men and their consequent marginalisation. This thesis focuses on the perceptions about older men that society considers to be true and on the impact of these assumptions on individuals' identities. Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith (2012) referred to identity as the "...traits and characteristics, social relations, roles and social group membership that define who one is" (p. 69).

Multiple theories exist around an individual's formation of identity. The idea of multi-storeyed or multi-layered identities (Biggs, 1999; Duvall & Beres, 2011; Hood, 2011) is based on the theory that identity is framed through stories and that these stories construct and are constructed by our lives, our relationships and the interactions that we have in our world. Feminist researcher Margaret Gullette (2014) theorised about an ageing identity that was socially and culturally reliant. As a devotee of social constructionism, Gullette (2014) rejected comprehensively the notion of authentic gender differences and their influence on male/female character traits. Jenkins (1996) contended that we have one social identity, which is reflexive and reactive. He proposed that identity is not a rigid concept and that the one true self is non-existent. He maintained that our identity is shaped by our own sense of ageing and how others perceive us as we age. In other words, identity is a fluid notion and is influenced by the ageing process as it interacts with cultural norms and assumptions. Additionally, Woodspring (2016) asserted that "...time, body and identity are connected" (p. 88).

As an interpretivist, I believe in the concept of multiple truths and of multilayered identities acknowledged through giving voice to the stories of our lives and relationships. From this perspective, identity is shaped by the complexity of our internal (thought processes) and external (relationship-based) environments, and gender frames significant parts of our behaviour. I refute absolutes in terms of identity as being purely socially constructed and not gender-based. I assert that we adapt our identity to the circumstances in which we find ourselves as we age and interact progressively with our environment. I do not think that we can ignore our own personal histories as a factor in shaping our perceptions of self. However, I do believe in the fluidity of those perceptions as dynamic and reactive entities in our personality that can be either creative or destructive. The fulfilment of certain needs

impacts on our identity as we age and then, having had those needs met, we are emotionally free to transit into another dimension or layer of identity.

2.4.3 Suicide ideation.

Rigid adherence to traditional masculine norms and stereotypes has been cited as an important predictor of suicide ideation – specifically, older men’s reluctance to discuss the personal impact of significant life events. Research has indicated that suicide can become an acceptable and rational decision for men when circumstances determine that transcending lack of support and loss of control over life events seem to be no longer possible. The act of suicide then becomes the ultimate way of exercising control, thus indicating to oneself and others an enacted masculinity as an intentional and autonomous problem-solver (Deuter & Procter, 2015).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2017b) defined suicide as “intentional self-harm” (n.p.). The projected growth in the number of older Australians, coupled with the fact that men over 85 years have the highest suicide rates in Australia, makes the exploration of suicide ideation in this demographic a significant issue. 38.3 men in every 100,000 of that age group die by suicide. This rate is around seven times higher than that for women of all ages (Draper, 2015, n.p.).

This trend is not a recent phenomenon, with 1975 figures revealing males 75 years and over as having the highest age-specific suicide rate in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 1994). Referencing these statistics, Draper (2011) posed the question: “Why then is so little attention paid to suicide in older age groups?” (n.p.). He suggested that the answer was complex and lay in ageism and stereotypes. Firstly, Draper theorised that society may view the ageing population as a potential burden on the health and welfare system and that older people themselves may share this view. Secondly, he proposed that some people in the community may be of the opinion that suicide is an acceptable and rational notion for the older generations in the absence of legal euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide. Thirdly, he proposed that acknowledgement of the problem of suicide in old age may spark a very public ethical debate around positive and negative issues. Finally, the “myth” that old age is demoralising and depressing has significant support within society, even though, Draper argued, research consistently demonstrated the opposite (n.p.).

COTA New South Wales (originally Council on the Ageing) has labelled the suicides of older men as “the suicides we choose to ignore” (2017, n.p.). The executive director of the Lifeline Research Foundation, Alan Woodward, stated: “It would seem one of the key things around quality of life and happiness for older people is their perceptions around how they fit socially and with their families, how society regards them and their real ability to participate in life” (Donoughue, 2016, n.p.). Woodward further suggested that research into suicide in old age should be approached holistically, rather than limiting our focus to attention to mental disorders. He pointed out that there were “quite a number of people” (n.p.) who were mentally stable when they chose to commit suicide and knew exactly what they were doing at the time. David Helmers (executive director of the Australian Men's Sheds Associations) has suggested that the high rate of suicide among men aged over 85 is “...alarming, but not surprising. It's a very complex problem. It's tragic. They feel worthless” (Donoughue, 2016, n.p.).

Stereotypical bias may also foster suicide ideation in older men. Whilst being interviewed on a Radio National Breakfast program, Dr Rod MacKay (Director of the New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry and Mental Health) explained:

We're in a country that values the Australian virile young man [,] particularly when we're thinking about men. We don't think about men who may be slightly frailer and are helping and contributing by what they do and what they say. (Kelly, 2015)

He also asserted that older men did not feel that they were active contributors to the community in which they lived. The following subsection examines this proposition.

2.4.4 Community capacity building.

This subsection discusses community as it relates directly to the older demographic. This thesis is based on the concept that community capacity building is pivotal to the fulfilment of older men's contributive needs. Figure 2.2 depicts eight focus group topics of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) (2007) global investigation into age-friendly cities. These topics mirrored rhetoric that positioned the act of ageing as a positive process and that highlighted the benefits of older people engaging actively within a community. WHO's contention was that ageing

policy needed to be directed at issues of social inclusion and community engagement, and that older people have a key role to play in defining and developing a framework for community capacity building.

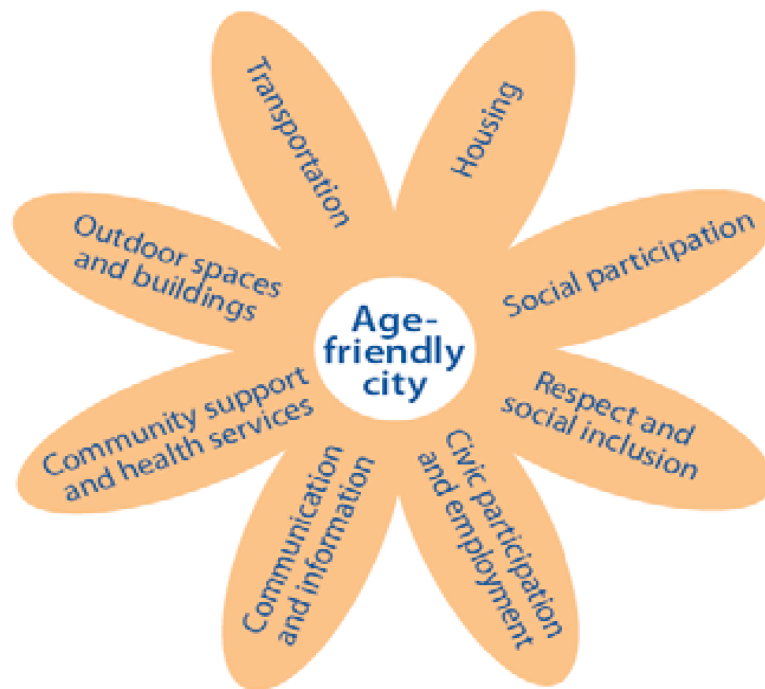


Figure 2.2. Elements of an “Age-Friendly City”

Note: Reproduced from *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* (p. 9), by the World Health Organisation. 2007, Geneva, Switzerland: Copyright 2007 by the World Health Organisation.

Table 2.2 unpacks the features of age-friendly cities that are most applicable to my study. These are Social participation, Respect and social inclusion, Civic participation and employment, Communication and information, Community support and health services, and Outdoor spaces and buildings.

Table 2.2

Global Age-friendly Cities and the Link with my Study

AGE-FRIENDLY CITY FEATURE	FEATURE UNPACKED	LINK WITH MY STUDY
Social participation	The level of participation of older people in recreation, socialisation, and cultural, educational and spiritual activities influences their mental and physical health.	Older men have the highest level of mental health issues and the highest suicide rate of any of the age-related cohorts (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017b).
Respect and social inclusion	Assumptions and behaviour of the community towards older people influence identity and quality of life.	Older men are marginalised within the community owing to negative assumptions around ageing and masculinity (Ryan, 2017).
Civic participation and employment	Connections afforded by opportunities for volunteerism and paid work add to purpose.	Some older men have been forced into retirement. Volunteerism affords them the opportunity to engage meaningfully with their community (Volunteering Queensland, 2017).
Communication and information	Social environments and health and social service enterprises should be accessible to all members of the community, regardless of age or gender.	Older men require spaces where they are able to communicate positively with their peers for their good health (Culph et al., 2015).
Community support and health services	Health and support services are vital to maintaining health and independence in the community.	Older men find it difficult to access health services tailored to their particular needs (Nurmi et al., 2018).
Outdoor spaces and buildings	The provision of outdoor spaces and buildings influence health behaviour and social participation outcomes.	Older men should be able to access salutogenic environments where they can learn new skills and share their wisdom (McDonald, 2005).

The concept of community capacity building has been described by Van Der Laan (2014) as “vague” (p. 213), but most scholars agree that it involves elements of human and social capital (Chaskin, 2001) such as: a shared understanding of the community’s history and power (Goodman et al., 1998); leadership (Kwan, Frankish, Quantz, & Flores, 2003); learning opportunities (Findsen & Formosa, 2011); and

sustainability (Barker, 2005). Stuart (2014) cited the Western Australian Department for Community Development's definition of community capacity building as the promotion of: "the 'capacity' of local communities to develop, implement and sustain their own solutions to problems in a way that helps them [to] shape and exercise control over their physical, social, economic and cultural environments" (n.p.). This is a useful definition in terms of the relationship among the features recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2002) as being important for an ageing population and for older men. Each of the features listed in Table 2.2 outlines the social determinants that relate specifically (but not exclusively) to older men in the community. Effective community capacity building that considers the needs of every age demographic provides a successful antidote to the stereotypical thinking and negative assumptions surrounding ageing.

Stone and Hughes (2002) proposed that social capital is the "...glue that holds communities together" (p. 1). Older people contribute to this "glue" in that they play an important role in supporting and maintaining informal social networks through volunteering. "The central thesis of social capital theory is that 'relationships matter'" (infed.org/mobi/social-capital/). A sense of belonging and commitment provides a vital link to enhance community networks and solidify relationships within those communities to promote a strong civil society (Healy, 2004, p. ix).

2.4.5 Conclusion.

Section 2.4 has examined the major themes that emerged throughout the literature review phase of this research. Section 2.4.1 discussed the theory of the "loneliness loop" (Hawkey & Cacioppo, 2010, n.p.) that results from loneliness, social isolation and social exclusion. Research evidence has suggested that men and women experience social isolation and loneliness differently, in that men are less likely to acknowledge their feelings of disengagement. It confirms the link between social connectedness and psychological distress. Section 2.4.2 examined self-identity and the transformation of identities as we age. Section 2.4.3 introduced statistics that indicate that male suicide is far more prevalent than female suicide, and that men over 85 years have the highest suicide rates in Australia. Section 2.4.4 discussed the World Health Organisation's contention that ageing policy needs to be directed to issues of social inclusion and community engagement.

Section 2.5 focuses on two organisations that were set up to mitigate men's mental health issues.

2.5 TOMNET and the Men's Shed Movement

Section 2.5 outlines the separate histories of TOMNET and Men's Sheds (Sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2).

Rabinowitz (2016) stated: "Men's groups help men [to] trust other men again" (n.p.). He noted that participation in male-only groups is beneficial for men in three specific ways. Firstly, they learn how to deal positively with tensions in personal relationships. Secondly, strong emotions can be expressed in a safe environment. Thirdly, interactions with other men with similar life experiences helps men to rebuild confidence in themselves through sharing personal stories and learning from others.

The two foci of this section, TOMNET and Men's Sheds, share similar philosophies in their desire to be of service to men; however, they have distinct and disparate practices in the application of those philosophies. At the time of the study, TOMNET operated only in South East and South West Queensland. Its membership was open only to men over 50 years of age. TOMNET targeted men in danger of suicide ideation and emphasised the importance of meaningful conversations. It had a central headquarters in the regional city of Toowoomba, and there were 12 regional and rural affiliates. There were about 350 TOMNET members in total.

The last formal count conducted by the Queensland Men's Shed Association (QMSA) in 2016 revealed the existence of 156 Men's Sheds in Queensland. Each Men's Shed was autonomous, and memberships were fluid. Some Sheds welcomed women members, some Sheds were open to men of all ages and some were open only to men over a certain age. Some Sheds were member-specific in that they serviced war veterans, or fathers of children with autism. Since its inception in 2007, the Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) has fostered the formation of Men's Sheds throughout the world. Countries hosting Shed Associations included Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Greece, Kenya, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Poland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, the United States and Wales (barrygoanna, 2017).

Table 2.3 provides a summary of the differences in location, membership and philosophy between the organisations.

Table 2.3

A Summary of the Differing Elements of TOMNET and Men's Sheds

ELEMENT	TOMNET	MEN'S SHEDS
Location	South East and South West Queensland	National Global
Membership	Male only Over 50 years Approximately 350 members in total	Male or female 16 years plus Shed membership varies Approximately 156 Sheds in Queensland
Philosophy	Address suicide ideation in older men through meaningful conversation	Provide a space where men work on construction projects and socialise

2.5.1 TOMNET.

TOMNET was established in 2001. Its mandate was specific: to reach out to older men in regional and rural communities and, in so doing, to reduce the rates of depression and suicide in this age group. Their modus operandi was to build a community that valued older men and that recognised the potential of sharing life experiences. The founding fathers hypothesised that, through the connectedness that such collaboration enabled, it was possible to target the feelings of isolation that were common to this gender and age cohort.

The TOMNET founders posited that, after the first bloom of retirement fades, men often lose their sense of self-worth and retreat into the safety of their family homes, cutting ties with the outside world. This was especially so if they were widowed or unmarried: "Older men experience a unique and challenging transition once the workplace ceases to be a major part of their lives" (tomnet.org.au). Isolation becomes a major contributor to depression, which in turn feeds suicidal thoughts. More research focused on older men is vital for the health of communities and their inhabitants. Knowledge and understanding are essential elements that assist policy-makers to identify, devise and assess programs and organisations. Public awareness and support in addressing necessary policy changes are fundamental for creating beneficial systemic change.

TOMNET has three over-riding objectives. These objectives focus on the concepts of mateship, wellbeing and support. They are interwoven and have equal value:

Mateship: The Older Men's Network Inc. aims to identify and connect with isolated older men and establish peer support networks and services to improve their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing and to provide them with a sense of belonging.

Wellbeing: The Older Men's Network provides older men with the opportunity to benefit from individual peer support, to enhance social networks and to gain a sense of belonging in the community.

Support: TOMNET values older men, regardless of their circumstances, and provides meaningful peer support networks that are responsive to and reflective of individual needs whilst positively promoting the role of men supporting men in the community (tomnet.org.au, n.p.).

With a membership of approximately 350 men at any given time (numbers fluctuate owing to illness and death), TOMNET seeks to fulfil older men's needs previously unrecognised or ignored within the community at large. The organisation provides opportunities for older men to become engaged in a range of meaningful and relevant roles that are beneficial to the community, thereby creating an avenue to promote feelings of worthiness, value and altruism, each of which is a facet of the two contributive needs of influence and transcendence.

Whereas generally health support groups tend to focus on mental or physical health issues only, TOMNET believes in a more holistic approach to issues related to older men. TOMNET stresses that it is not specifically a health support group; rather it combines a number of ideologies and functions. Simply put, TOMNET has developed a blueprint that includes the identification of the needs of the membership, developing programs to suit these needs and monitoring the activities within the programs (The Older Men's Network Inc., 2011, p. 14).

The group does not exist solely to provide emotional support for men suffering from health, financial or social problems. Its purpose is to provide a range of support as well as information for men facing common problems to do with the process of ageing. Members of the group engage in a variety of activities focusing on an assortment of issues at any given time. This ensures that the group is not locked into any one organisational label or model. Schloper and Galinsky (1995) explored the

notion of a continuum, with self-help groups at one end of the spectrum and psychotherapy groups at the other. TOMNET's administration has branded the organisation a psychosocial group. These groups specialise in "talk therapy". Psychosocial groups are: "...an effective way to improve quality of life and can lead to fewer hospitalizations and less [*sic*] difficulties at home, at school and at work" (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2015, p. 1). TOMNET employs several approaches centred around conducting meaningful conversations that are consistent with this philosophy.

The organisation aligns itself with the five needs of older men as defined by Earle and Fopp (1999). These needs as adopted by TOMNET (2011) are: "involvement, satisfaction, autonomy, integration and creativity" (p. 13). Men view participant involvement as worthwhile, and it imbues members with a heightened sense of belonging. Overall satisfaction with the organisation effectively remains as a motivation for continued participation. Autonomy suggests freedom and acceptance of individuals "with their peculiar imperfections and blemishes" (p. 13). Integration is looked upon as "the glue which binds the members together" (p. 13). Creativity addresses members' interests and aspirations.

Throughout its history, TOMNET has obtained various funding grants that have been used to establish strategic programs based on its over-riding philosophy of suicide prevention through connectedness and belonging. In 2006 TOMNET secured a three-year funded project to create the TOMNET Community Connections Program. These funds ensured the services of a qualified co-ordinator, the continuation of the main centre in Toowoomba and the expansion of outreach services in high-risk rural regions.

One of the major strategies implemented during this three-year period was the creation of a Client Intake Process checklist, which minimised the amount of writing that the client had to complete in the initial consultation. This ran simultaneously with the provision of an in-house counselling service as well as the utilisation of the services of health support professionals within the community. Unsatisfactory interactions with these community support groups led to the development of five core training programs that addressed the general lack of knowledge relevant to older men. These modular programs were entitled: "Older Men's Issues", "Grief and Loss", "Effective Communication", "Team Building" and "Suicide Prevention" (tomnet.org.au, n.p.).

2.5.2 Men's Sheds.

The accepted definition of a common 'shed' is that generally it refers to "a building, room or garage where things are made, fixed or stored" (Golding, 2015, p. 6). Owing to the complex nature of the Men's Shed organisation, scholars are hesitant to offer a conclusive definition of a "Men's Shed". In fact, the Men's Shed Movement has rejected the notion of a common definition, suggesting that each Shed is an autonomous entity and reflects the needs of the community in which it was formed, although manual work of some kind is common. Golding (2015) describes Men's Sheds as a "social movement comprising...a large, informal grouping of individuals or organisations that focus on a specific social issue: the broad community involvement and wellbeing of men in community settings" (p. 9). Whilst acknowledging the diversity of membership, environment and activities that each Men's Shed provides, AMSA has offered the following definition:

AMSA recognises as a Men's Shed any community-based, non-profit, non-commercial organization that is accessible to all men and whose primary activity is the provision of a safe and friendly environment where men are able to work on meaningful projects at their own pace in their own time in the company of other men. A major objective is to advance the wellbeing and health of their male members. (mensshed.org/what-is-a-mens-shed)

Starting with one Shed located in regional South Australia in 1993, the Men's Shed Movement has developed globally, with associations/registered Sheds in countries (as noted above) including Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Greece, Kenya, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Poland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, the United States and Wales.

In 2015 there were 916 Men's Sheds across Australia (Golding, 2015, p. 19). Shed memberships were variable and reflected population movements. Individual members of a Shed are referred to as "Shedders" (Golding, 2015, p. 399).

The extant literature around the membership of a Men's Shed extolled the beneficial nature of the outcomes associated with men's health. The core of the Men's Shed Movement stresses that each member is equal, and that the interactions provided within the Shed promote healthy, "identity-affirming behaviors" (Ford, Scholz, & Lu, 2015, p. 775).

Waling and Fildes (2017) addressed the issue of male anxiety about being teased and derided by peers when seeking information about health-related topics: “This makes it difficult to find practical ways to engage men in help-seeking behaviour...” (p. 758). They discussed the fact that this was ameliorated by the informal nature of the Shed and of the resultant conversational topics that arise. Wilson, Cordier, Doma, Misan, and Vaz (2015) explored the efficacy of health promotion within Men’s Sheds. They promoted the idea of Men’s Sheds as a vehicle to deliver programs that focus on specific community needs: “an understanding of the target population and the program setting are crucial...” (p. 138). In their examination of Men’s Sheds and male friendship, Shaw, Gullifer, and Shaw (2014) posited that “...older men’s friendships are rich and rewarding and offer great benefits and support in later life...” (p. 50). Moreover, as Ormsby, Stanley, and Jaworski (2010) stated: “...sheds are considered to be culturally, socially and psychologically important to many Australian men” (p. 607).

David Helmers, executive director of AMSA, has explained that the benefit of Men’s Sheds lies in their ability to connect men with one another: “What we prevent is social isolation. Social isolation is the tipping point. It creates poor eating, poor living, substance abuse, suicide. Lots of the key killers of men can be linked to social isolation” (Donoughue, 2016, n.p.).

2.5.3 Conclusion.

Section 2.5 has reviewed the two organisations around which this thesis has been constructed, TOMNET and Men’s Sheds. Organisational philosophies were presented along with a brief history of each group.

2.6 Summary of the Chapter

The literature review began with a general discussion about ageing and masculinity (Section 2.2). It then progressed to the broader issues that older men face in society (Section 2.3). This was followed by a narrowing of focus involving the particularised crises that older men experience owing to the wider community’s lack of commitment to the health and wellbeing of this demographic (Section 2.4). The final section in this chapter (Section 2.5) discussed two organisations, TOMNET and

Men's Sheds, established to address these crises. Figure 2.3 orientates the reader to the flow of the contents of Chapter 2 and summarises the topics covered.

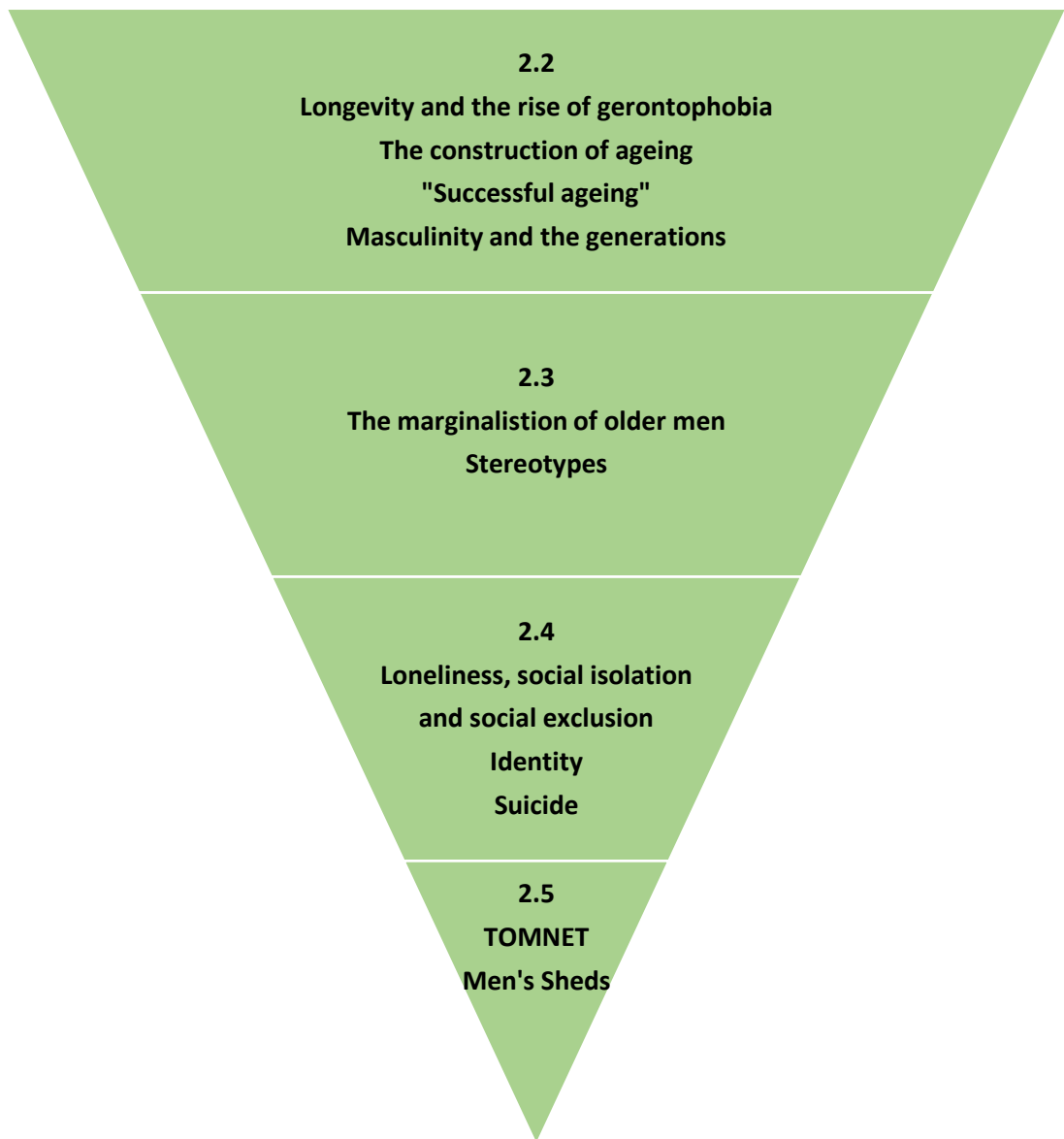


Figure 2.3. The flow of the literature review discussion

Chapter 3 examines the scholarship related to my conceptual framework and presents a lifespan view of ageing and older men, narrowing to an individual's needs as he enters older age.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

“You have a feeling of ‘Hey, I used to be important here once’.”

George (Shed 3 Office Holder)

3.1. Introduction

In Chapter 2, I reviewed theories of ageing, including popular ageing constructs in the form of Eric and Joan Erikson’s (1997) psychological stages of ageing. I established that older men may experience indifference and marginalisation in our community through common collectively held assumptions of negative stereotypes to do with ageism.

I went on to explore the ramifications of the harmful treatment of older men through their manifestations of loneliness, social isolation, social exclusion, and suicide ideation and practice. I then identified two regional (South East and South West Queensland) male-only organisations, TOMNET and Men’s Sheds, one of which (TOMNET) was established for men over 50 years only.

In this chapter, I explain the key concepts in the thesis’s theoretical structure. In so doing, I develop a conceptual framework around which to position the study’s three research questions:

- **Research Question 1:** How does the TOMNET and Men’s Sheds’ organisational leadership seek to implement the design of their programs and philosophies so that they best fit the contributive needs of older men?
- **Research Question 2:** How have the members of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds experienced and engaged with their programs and philosophies vis-à-vis members’ contributive needs?
- **Research Question 3:** To what extent are TOMNET and Men’s Sheds important vehicles for the sustainable delivery of the contributive needs of older men in the community?

This chapter supports my contention that the fulfilment of contributive needs is crucial for older men to live satisfying and purposeful lives. The marginalisation of these men has contributed to their disenfranchisement by wider society. Their particular needs have been overlooked by society to their detriment. I begin Chapter 3 (Section 3.2) by reviewing the scholarship of Maslow (1943, 1962, 1970, 1971) and

then follow on to Section 3.3 with an examination of McClusky’s (1974, 1976) Margin Theory. Both these sections lay the foundation for Section 3.4, which presents a comprehensive investigation of the framework around which my thesis was developed – i.e., the contributive needs of older men. Linkages with Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are provided in Sections 3.5 and 3.6 with discussions around the concepts of salutogenics (Section 3.5) and sustainability (Section 3.6). Section 3.7 presents a summary of the chapter. This chapter progression is presented in Figure 3.1.

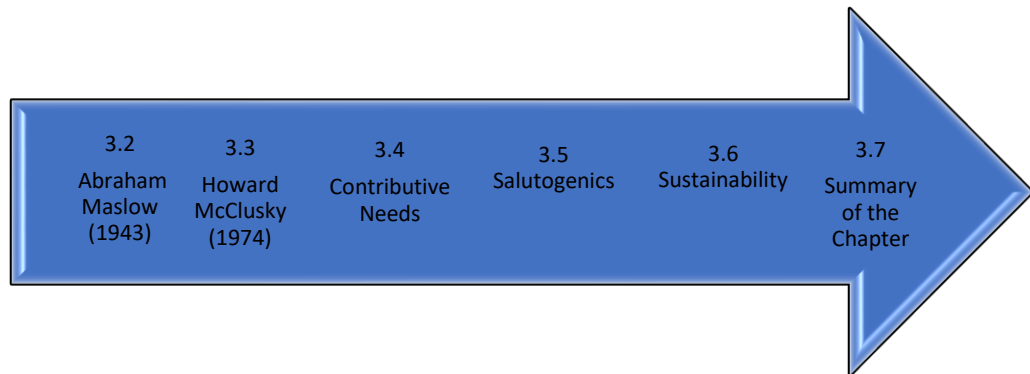


Figure 3.1. A flowchart of the progression of Chapter 3

Two prominent scholars, Abraham Maslow (1943) and Howard McClusky (1974), developed theories around the needs of individuals to achieve their potential throughout life. Both these scholars commonly defined a need as a “condition marked by the lack of something” (Cusack & Thompson, 1998, p. 43). They argued that this lack or deficiency motivated the individual intentionally to achieve a desired objective.

3.2. Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)

In his influential article “A Theory of Human Motivation”, Maslow (1943) hypothesised that healthy human beings have a certain number of needs that motivate their behaviour. These can be arranged hierarchically, with some needs, such as physiological and safety needs, being more necessary or rudimentary than others, such as social and ego needs (Burton, 2012). Scholars often present this motivational hierarchy of needs, referred to by Maslow in 1943 as “hierarchies of pre-potency” (p. 370), as being a five-level hierarchical pyramid, with the lower levels of the hierarchy requiring satisfaction before success on the upper levels can occur. For example, Maslow proposed that, if basic physiological (e.g., breathing, food, water) and safety

(e.g., security) needs were not being catered for, it would be difficult to reach the other three needs of love/belonging (e.g., positive relationships), esteem (e.g., confidence) and self-actualisation (e.g., problem-solving). The successful attainment of each level is dependent on achieving the one below it. Figure 3.2 presents Burton's (2017) depiction of Maslow's original "hierarchy of needs" (1970, p. xiii), and offers a clearer visual interpretation of Maslow's theory.

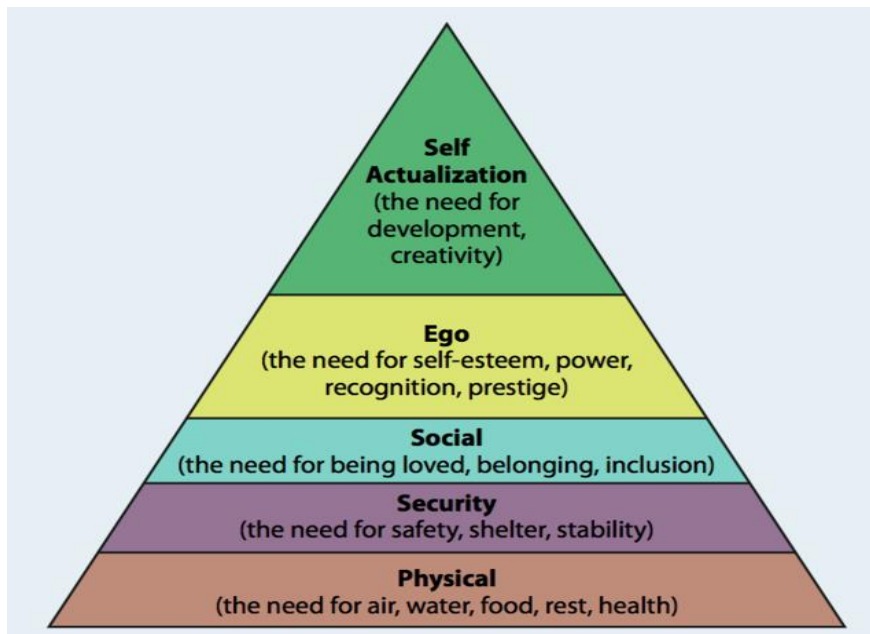


Figure 3.2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Burton, 2017, n.p.)

Note: Reproduced from *Our Hierarchy of Needs* (n.p.), by Neel Burton. 2017, September 17 (psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hidden-and-see/201205/our-hierarchy-needs).

Extensive inclusion of the nuances of each level in Burton's (2017) interpretation has added a deeper and more practical understanding of Maslow's (1943) intention. He explained that Maslow himself referred to the four bottom levels of needs – i.e., Physiological, Safety, Love and Esteem – as being the "deficiency needs" (n.p.) and argued that, if these needs remain unfulfilled, an individual could become anxious and unstable. This instability could prevent further personal development, and an individual may become stalled at one level trying to satisfy these deficiencies. Once the deficiency needs are catered for, the "growth need" (Burton, 2017, n.p.) became manifest and an individual might then strive for self-actualisation and the attainment of full personal potential. This final goal is the hardest to achieve owing to the "uncommon qualities" (n.p.) required for its fulfilment. Maslow (1962) referred to the individualist nature of his theory when he claimed: "Every person is, in part, 'his

own project' and makes himself' (p. 181). This theory has a particular relevance for older men in that they need to intentionally self-identify their lack of the deficiency needs before they can effectively and actively fulfil their contributive needs.

Maslow (1943) considered that social science had always underrated human potential. He argued that the two notions of intentionality and consideration of identity separated humans from animals, and that the essential difference between the two lay in a human's deliberate goal setting rather than in the instinctive actions of an animal. Maslow believed that every individual was capable of reaching self-actualisation. Successful, productive older people were depicted as being "self-actualizers" (Cusack & Thompson, 1999, p. 40). These were individuals who practised a continuous process of the fulfilment of potential throughout their lives.

Nearly three decades later, Maslow (1970) provided adaptations to expand the facets of self-actualisation. Table 3.1 combines information retrieved from Gautam (2007) and McLeod (2016) to simplify these additional adaptations.

Table 3.1

Adaptation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943, 1970; adapted from Guatam, 2007, n.p. and McLeod, 2016, n.p.)

MASLOW'S (1943) ORIGINAL HIERARCHY OF NEEDS	LATER ADAPTATIONS (MASLOW, 1970)
<p>1. Biological and Physiological needs air, food, water trust of the environment</p>	
<p>2. Safety needs protection from harm autonomy and control</p>	
<p>3. Belonging and Love needs positive relationships creativity and enterprise</p>	
<p>4. Esteem needs success recognition and contribution</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Cognitive needs search for knowledge and meaning discovery</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Aesthetic needs appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form intimacy with the environment</p>
<p>7. Self-actualisation needs fulfillment of potential generativity</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Self-transcendence needs spiritualism integrity</p>

Figure 3.3 presents a revised diagrammatic depiction of information based on the original hierarchy, provided by McLeod (2016, n.p.), that recreates the growth of the five to eight level hierarchy of needs, including the three new levels. Maslow's (1943) initial needs are featured with a blue background, with later innovations (1970) coloured orange.

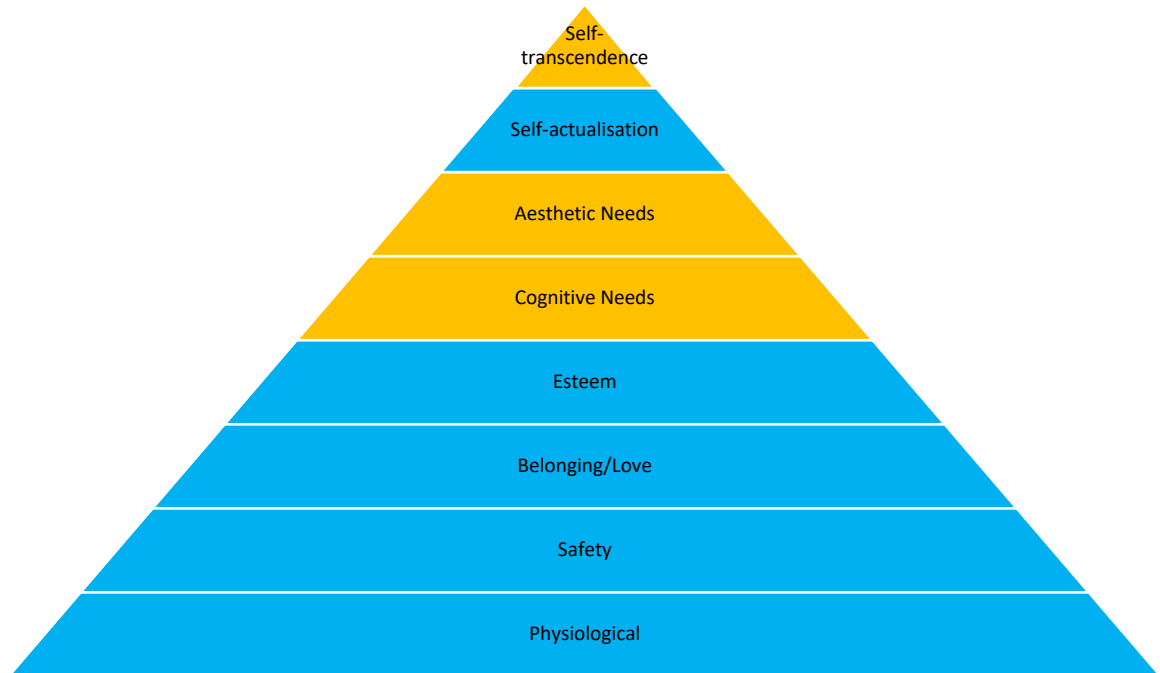


Figure 3.3. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943, 1970) adapted from McLeod (2016, n.p.)

Maslow developed cognitive and aesthetic needs in the 1960s and formalised these needs in 1970 (Maslow, 1970). Cognitive needs were typified by the necessity to know and understand, and were characterised by curiosity and inquisitiveness (McLeod, 2017, p. 4). Aesthetic needs were manifested in an “appreciation and search for beauty, balance [and] form” (McLeod, 2017, p. 4). Following from the upper most level of self-actualisation, Maslow (1962) proposed that individuals may reach “transcendence of the environment” (p. 168) in which they experience a “peak” (p. 98) where they become aware of the full potential of the unity of humanity at large and feel more in harmony with the environment and humankind.

Subsequently, scholars (Hoffman, 1988; Kenrick, 2010) have critiqued the term ‘deficiency’ as being too vague, citing that what may be a deficiency for one person was not necessarily a deficiency for another person. There also seemed to be frequent exceptions. For example, some people often risk their own safety to rescue others from danger (Tay & Diener, 2011). Pearson and Podeschi (1997) acknowledged criticism of Maslow's (1943, 1970) naïve elitism, whilst Lethbridge

(1986) challenged the notion of self-actualisation. He found little evidence of the need for a hierarchy in a real-world situation: "...what real individuals, living in what real societies, working at what real jobs, and earning what real income have any chance at all of becoming 'self-actualizers'?" (p. 90).

More recently, Rutledge (2011) has raised the issue of the importance of social connection and collaboration. She stated: "Humans are social animals for good reason. Without collaboration, there is no survival" (n.p.). Rutledge emphasised the role of partnership and social interconnectedness as being timeless. She posited that it was important when battling for food in prehistoric times, and that it remained a fundamental survival technique in our complex contemporary societies: "Connection is a prerequisite for survival, physically and emotionally" (n.p.).

Rutledge (2011) further hypothesised that "needs are not hierarchical. Life is messier than that" (n.p.). She argued that pivotal to the interactive and dynamic nature of human personality was the need for group belonging, especially in today's digital and social media-focused world. Rather than a hierarchy, Rutledge reframed Maslow's (1943) four lower level needs as satellites radiating around the need for connection and the role of technology. She characterised prehistoric campfire conversations as having the same ritual and necessity for connectedness and belonging that Facebook serves today. Denning (2012) has graphically illustrated Rutledge's (2011) hypothesis as depicted in Figure 3.4.



Figure 3.4. "Maslow (1943) Reframed" by Rutledge (2011) as illustrated by Denning (2012)

Note: Reproduced from *What Maslow missed* (n.p.), by Steve Denning. 2012, March 19 (forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2012/03/29/what-maslow-missed/#66a3c054661b).

Rutledge's (2011) updated model is relevant to this thesis from the point of view of the needs of older men and connectedness, although I contend that positive social connections occur only when Maslow's (1943, 1970) first two levels of needs have been adequately catered for. As was noted above, it is difficult for a human to make effective and sustainable connections with others prior to physiological and safety needs being met.

Despite these criticisms, Maslow (1943, 1970) remains a significant scholar and is the 14th most frequently cited psychologist in introductory psychology textbooks (Haggbloom et al., 2002). Some researchers have proclaimed him as the 10th most eminent psychologist of the 20th century (Haggbloom et al., 2002). Burton (2012) posited that, "although Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been criticized for being overly-schematic and lacking in scientific grounding, it presents an intuitive and potentially useful theory of human motivation" (n.p.). For these reasons, it is an appropriate building block in the conceptual framework centred on contributed needs and purposeful living being assembled in this chapter.

This examination of Maslow's (1943, 1970) hierarchy of needs led Cusack and Thompson (1999) to extrapolate that the three lower levels – physiological, safety and social needs – were met for older people. However, ageist attitudes and negative stereotypes prevented older people from achieving the higher levels of esteem and self-actualisation.

A paper written by ex-resident TOMNET psychologist Lloyd Enkelmann (2012) discussed the original Maslow (1943) hierarchy and its application to the TOMNET philosophy. His paper, entitled "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the Culture of TOMNET" (2012), is represented diagrammatically in Figure 3.5, with the Maslow ideal at the top and the TOMNET application italicised below.

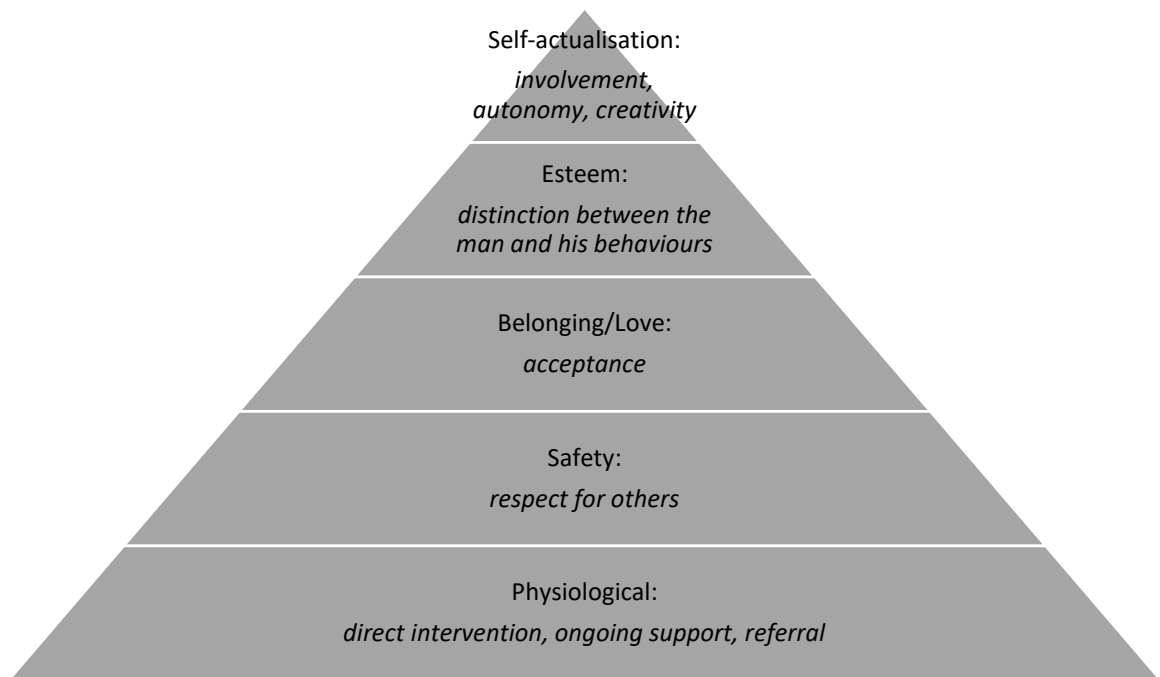


Figure 3.5. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) and the culture of TOMNET (adapted from Enkelmann, 2012, n.p.)

Enkelmann (2012) proposed that, if a member's physiological needs were not being met, direct or indirect intervention should be staged in the form of ongoing support within the organisation (chatting within the group) and/or referral to the resident TOMNET psychologist. Safety needs were addressed by ensuring that the TOMNET environment remained a safe place for members. A non-threatening climate of acceptance was fostered despite personality differences. Enkelmann (2012) believed that TOMNET should be a "leveller of men" (p. 1), that men came to TOMNET as "help seekers" or "help givers" (p. 1) and that this diversity made for meaningful relationships and interactions. This is a process that Enkelmann (2012) referred to as "connection through action" (p. 2), thus fulfilling Maslow's (1943) third need of belonging/love.

Based on this comprehensive conceptual discussion, it can be inferred that marginalised older men have, in the main, purposefully and intentionally achieved the lower two levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. They have generally worked diligently throughout their lives to provide the basic needs of food, water and shelter for their loved ones. They have also strived to ensure that their families have had economic security and physical safety. However, they can be stalled on the third level of Belonging/Love. With feelings of decreased social status and power owing to retirement or retrenchment, loneliness and/or social isolation may impact on their

ability to communicate with family and friends. This lack of communication or connectedness then impacts negatively on their lives, and their contributive needs are not being fulfilled. “It’s as if we’ve become superfluous and almost disposable because of older age” (Ryan, 2017b).

3.2.1. **Maslow and Erikson.**

There are substantial parallels between the concepts provided by the stages of the Eriksons’ (1997) psychosocial model (please refer to Chapter 2, Table 2.1) and those of Maslow (1943, 1970). All three scholars focused on social and personality development, which was strategically staged throughout an individual’s life course. Maslow (1943, 1970) proposed a series of developmental levels that needed to be attained in order to enable comfortable and purposeful movement to the upper level. Similarly, the Eriksons (1997) both subscribed to another series of life course stages from birth to death.

Both Maslow (1943, 1970) and Erik Erikson’s (1997) original theory (published in 1982) used syntonic and dystonic quotients. Eric Erikson used these positive and negative emotions specifically in each of the eight stages to represent the challenges that individuals may face throughout life. Wahba and Bridwell (1976) recognised that Maslow concentrated on the two key quotients of gratification and deprivation to establish the dissatisfied dominance of one need over another in an individual’s personality (p. 213). For example, when an individual is deprived of safety needs, gratification becomes paramount to the exclusion of more highly ranking needs.

Another commonality existed in relation to the acknowledgement of the influence of unforeseen critical events. Erik Erikson (1997) theorised that the individual was still able to develop to the next stage as long as the crisis was balanced positively and negatively. Stages were fluid and could be revisited and amended at later stages in a person’s life. Even though each of Maslow’s (1943, 1970) needs was hierarchically interdependent, when needs were fulfilled an individual progressed to the higher level.

Figure 3.6 depicts Loh, Roh, Ee, and Ruey’s (2014) interpretation of the similarities between Erik Erikson’s (1997) stages and Maslow’s (1943) original hierarchy. This group of researchers has aligned Erik Erikson’s (1997) Stage 1 with Maslow’s (1940, 1973) physiological needs. Stage 2 correlates with Safety needs.

Stages 3 and 4 relate to the need for Belonging and Love. Stages 5, 6 and 7 are centred on the need for Self-esteem. Stage 8 completes the hierarchy by attaining Self-actualisation.

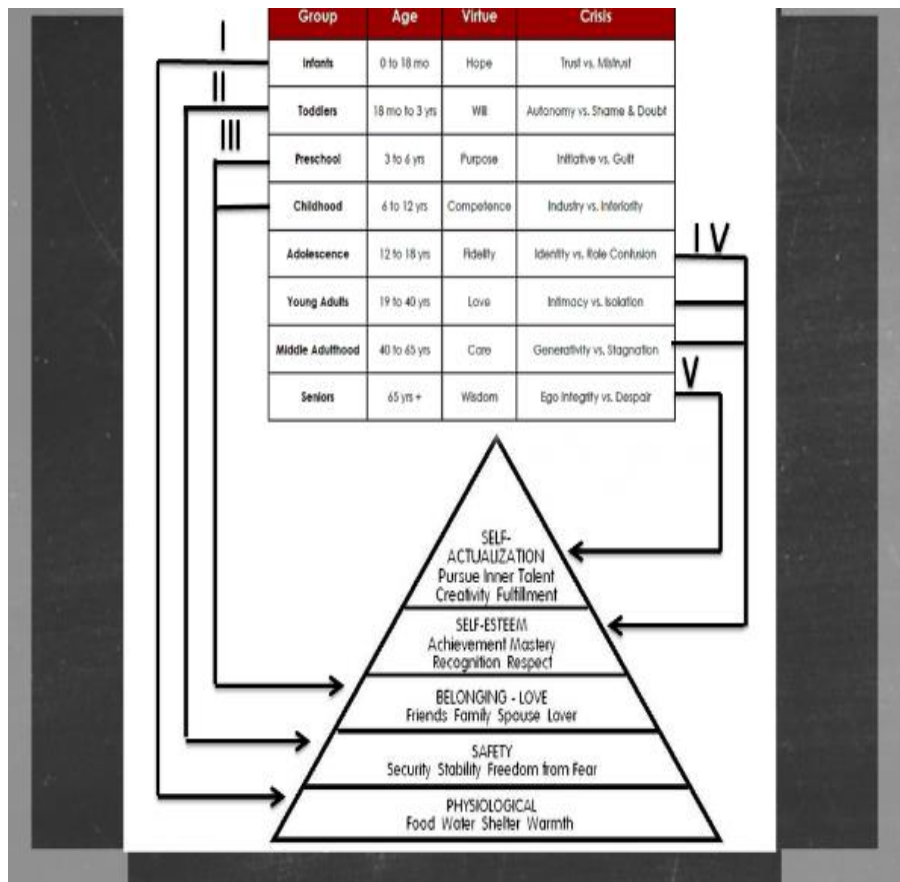


Figure 3.6. Comparison between Erikson and Maslow (Loh et al., 2014, n.p.)

Note: Reproduced from *Maslow and Erikson: Compare and contrast*. (n.p.), by Tiffany Loh et al., 2014, August 20(prezi.com/3yg-n3q0a8wn/maslow-and-erikson-compare-and-contrast/).

I have built on the work of Loh et al. (2014) by including the eight stages conceived by Eric Erikson (1982) and the additional ninth stage articulated by Joan Erikson (1997). I have integrated their work with Maslow's amended hierarchy (1970) in Figure 3.7 in order to synthesise existing scholarship in this field and to strengthen the conceptual framework of this study. The Eriksons' theories are depicted in italics above Maslow's hierarchical needs.

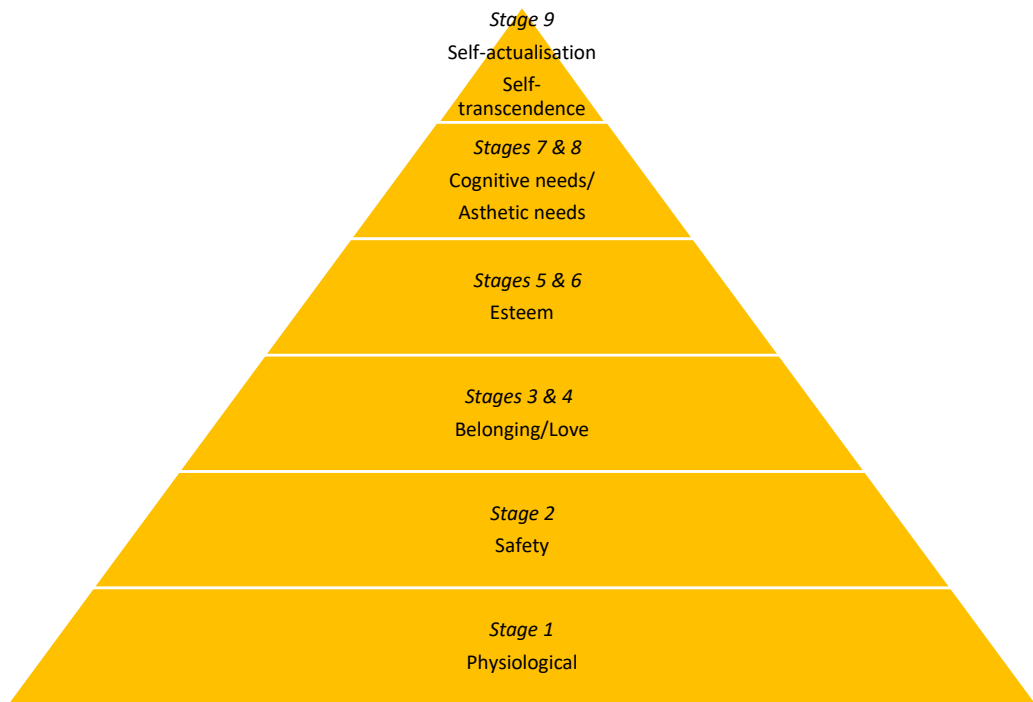


Figure 3.7. Revised integrated hierarchy of needs

Scholars have differed in defining the ultimate goal of achievement. Erik Erikson (1997) was more flexible with goal attainment in that it varied from stage to stage. Maslow (1970) based his theory on the dual goals of self-actualisation followed by self-transcendence, the latter being unattainable for some individuals (Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

3.2.2. Conclusion.

Section 3.2 introduced the reader to the first theory of needs to be discussed in this thesis, and I established that Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs was an important philosophical foundation and model for the founders of TOMNET. Section 3.2 compared linked Chapters 2 and 3 with a comparison of the theories of Erik Erikson (Chapter 2 Section 2.2.2) and Abraham Maslow. The idea of needs progresses to Section 3.3, which examines the work of Howard McClusky (1970), who also devised a holistic view of ageing and its associated needs.

3.3. Howard McClusky (1900-1982)

A cornerstone of educational gerontologist McClusky's (1976) research was his belief in an older adult's "potential, vitality and resiliency" (p. 111). He theorised a

“life span view” (1974, p. 324) of ageing and argued that ageing was something that happened not only to elderly people but also to people of every age, including childhood. He claimed: “...everyone is aging and everyone has a stake in its opportunities and consequences. Aging then is an inclusive process. Whatever it means, it has meaning for persons of all ages and whatever it does, it does to all” (p. 324). This view was revolutionary for its time as it contradicted the previously accepted notion of ageing as being primarily a process of physical and mental deterioration. The lifespan view was also at odds with the assumption that ageing occurred at a certain time in an individual’s life, which was commonly accepted to be when deterioration begins in old age. McClusky (1974) believed that ageing occurred from birth and continued throughout development, and that it was a lifelong process and not just something that happened to the “aged” (p. 325). This philosophy challenged the stereotypical thinking of the time, and it has much to offer our contemporary assumptions about ageing.

3.3.1. Margin Theory.

McClusky was a tireless advocate for lifelong learning and, as he himself aged, he explored avenues through which older people could act as their own constructive agents of change through continuing education. McClusky (1976) believed that the acquisition of scholarship in older adulthood led to a more fulfilling life:

...if we approach the field of gerontology from an educational standpoint, we constantly see evidence of the fact that older people are learning and can renew their faith in their ability to learn. As a consequence, we must find ways to help people rediscover, reinvigorate and reactivate their latent interests and talents they never thought they had. (p. 119)

He proposed the Margin Theory of Needs, or alternatively “Margin Theory”, (McClusky, 1974, p. 329) as a formula for older people that enabled them to respond to life’s stressors.

“Load” (McClusky, 1974, p. 329) referred to the demands required by an individual to sustain a minimal degree of autonomy. He based the concept of load on an individual’s social and personal expectations and challenges. For example, an individual may carry the load of craving increased social status in the community.

Alternatively he may experience another self-induced demand based on the attainment of possessions/money.

The resources that individuals may access or tap into were referred to as “power” (McClusky, 1974, p. 329). These resources consist of individuals’ power to attain and use their own skill sets. Power may be external (e.g., financial security, mental/physical health, social skills) or internal (e.g., resilience, the ability to face social and/or personal difficulties).

The possession of additional power provided a margin of protection against the stress of the constraints of the load. Margin could be increased by reducing load or, alternatively, by increasing power. This theory was depicted as the following formula (Hiemstra, 2013): “Load ÷ Power = Margin” (n.p.).

Scholars have used this theory as a research framework in a wide range of disciplines to address varied research problems. The following examples demonstrate how widely Margin Theory has been applied to investigate a wide range of contemporary educational and social issues. Gessner (1979) used this principle as a theoretical framework for studying nurses’ participation in continuing education. Benedict (2002) investigated the relevance of Margin Theory when applied to adult learning and welfare. More recently, Salyer-Funk (2012) has explored the potential applications of Margin Theory to women with tenure in higher education. She examined the tenuous work/life balance of motherhood and career advancement by considering family support (power) and career demands (load). Lu and Chen (2012) have adapted Margin Theory to study older adults’ learning experiences in Hangzhou, China.

When applied to my study, Margin Theory provides a conduit to the challenges and stressors that may affect older men within their communities. In this case, “load” may refer to the negative stereotypes in our society surrounding older males that may promote feelings of worthlessness. A number of these men may even subconsciously agree with the commonly held assumption that old age leads to a decline in status and competency. The glorification of youth promoted by the media is antithetical to the notions of the acceptance and appreciation of old age. Load may also refer to the isolation that older men impose upon themselves when their spouses die or if they are estranged from their family through divorce or ill health. The results of this marginalisation could be expressed in the financial, physical and emotional load that communities carry when attending to the needs of this cohort.

“Power” may be forthcoming in an older man’s willingness to join community organisations such as TOMNET or a local Men’s Shed. The positivity experienced through interacting with peers and feeling included in a group of like-minded peers reduces the personal load of isolation and feelings of valuelessness.

McClusky (1974) claimed that: “...older people are constantly engaged in a struggle to maintain the margin of energy and power they have enjoyed in earlier years. They may be fighting a losing rearguard battle for survival” (p. 329). He asserted that it was crucial for older people to acquire coping skills in order to preserve extra power in the form of “...wellbeing and continuing growth toward self-fulfilment” (1974, p. 329). McClusky (1974) cited the example of the older person forgoing the load of stress in maintaining social status and replacing this quest for prestige and social prominence with an act of community service. He posited that a diminished load of stress would adjust the margin and could be more satisfying and “growth inducing” than any previous experience (p. 330).

3.4. Contributive Needs

McClusky (1974) hypothesised that older adults are in need of five factors that enable them to live fulfilling lives and to “...satisfy the basic requirements of aging” (p. 331). He qualified a need as being “a requirement for survival, growth, health, social acceptance, etc.” (p. 331). These needs were: coping (related to loss of power and influence); expressive (concerning leisure endeavours); contributive (related to feeling useful within the community); influence (to do with leadership and respect); and transcendence (to do with selflessness).

Coping needs focus on basic literacy skills, physical health and financial matters.

Expressive needs have to do with engaging in an activity for pleasure and the intrinsic value that it provides. McClusky (1974) argued that a large proportion of our sense of wellbeing consists of enjoying our leisure activities. He suggested that older people enrich their lives through the “...liberation of expressive needs” (p. 334).

Underlying the notion of contributive needs is the supposition that older people have a need to offer their acquired wisdom to the community. This combines the need for feeling valuable with the need for feeling valued. This need has four branches that involve: the “need to give”; a “desire to be useful and wanted”; a “desire to be of

service”; and a “desire to share the cumulative experience of one’s life with others” (University of Wyoming, 2018, n.p.).

The need for influence responds to older people’s waning power within the community. Influence declines with less income, less resilience and generally less power than their younger counterparts. However, McClusky (1974) noted that, “although older persons may be less powerful, they are not powerless...” (p. 336). In fact, they create an agency for social change in the form of constructive interactions with those around them.

Transcendence manifests itself in the need to attain a higher state of being – specifically, the need for older individuals to rise above their inevitably declining physical power and preoccupation with thoughts of death.

I have synthesised these needs (McClusky, 1974, pp. 332-338) and represented them pictorially in Figure 3.8.

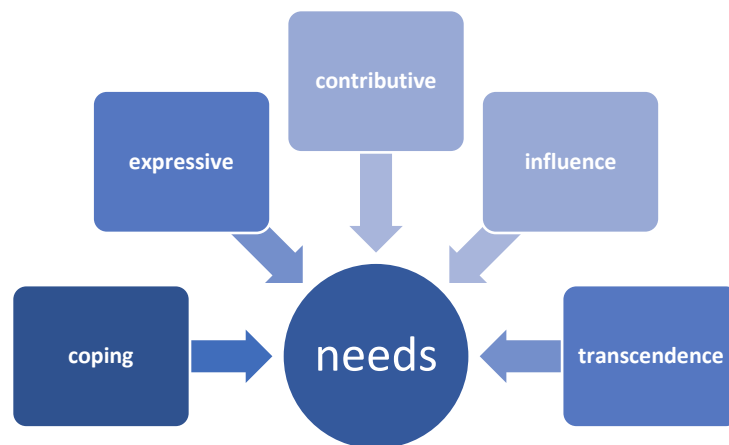


Figure 3.8. McClusky’s (1974) needs of older adults

Although McClusky was an educational gerontologist and focused on older adults as learners, his Margin Theory (1974, p. 329) and its associated contributive needs (1974, pp. 334-335) have a wider application when investigating the quality of life for older men. Mindframe (2016) has disclosed data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2016), which revealed that, as was noted also in Chapter 1, the highest age-specific suicide rate for males in 2015 was in the 85 years and over age group. This was significantly higher than the age-specific suicide rate observed in all other age groups, with the next highest age-specific suicide rate being in the 45-49, 40-44 and 50-54 year age groups. As was discussed previously in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4.2), this is not a recent phenomenon, with 1975 figures revealing males 75 years and over as having the highest age-specific suicide rate in Australia (ABS,

4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 1994). With the promise of a longer lifespan for males in the future, it behoves researchers to expose this 'silent statistic' related to older men and suicide. It would be beneficial not just to acknowledge its tragic nature but also to offer practical solutions for an ongoing national problem. One of these solutions can be found in the fulfilment of all of older men's contributive needs, as was shown in Figure 3.8.

A number of these needs can be met by assorted organisations that are already set up within contemporary society. Coping needs arise through experiencing the loss of self-esteem owing to a reduction in income or to a decline in physical strength. These can be remediated by various government-funded counselling services available within the community such as Lifeline (an Australian national charity that provides a telephone counselling crisis support prevention) and Beyondblue (an Australian national anxiety, depression and suicide support service). Expressive needs can be facilitated by seeking out social groups of like-minded people such as the University of the Third Age (U3A), Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs. In Australia, U3A is a global organisation that promotes lifelong learning in an informal university setting that provides leisure courses such as yoga, and educational classes such as creative writing (www.u3aqld.org.au/about-us). It is staffed by volunteers from the local community and is open to people over the age of 50. Each major metropolitan area and regional centre in Australia has a branch. Lions (lionsclubs.org.au/) and Rotary (rotaryaustralia.org.au/) Clubs are mixed gender, worldwide community service clubs open to any age. They are project-based and work to improve a community's resources whether it be local or overseas. Their core beliefs are fellowship and a shared responsibility to make the world a better place. Projects may range from building a playground in the local community to providing disaster relief in a third world country.

The other three needs, which are more complex and interwoven, have been largely ignored by the media, politicians and the wider community even though they are just as important. Contributive, influence and transcendence needs have to do with feelings of inclusivity and recognition within a community. Contributive needs constitute the centre of the framework around which this chapter is positioned, and involve older men establishing strong, purposeful, identity-affirming links within their communities. These links include friendship, networking and volunteerism.

The concept of positive interaction within the community as the pivotal factor in good psychological health was also emphasised by Junger (2016b). During an interview, he stated that "...community really is the key...", and that it provided a "buffer" against psychological distress. Junger's book *Tribe: On homecoming and belonging* (2016a) discussed the necessity of a welcoming and supportive community for returning combat veterans. He said that the lack of this kind of community is a major suicide precursor. Junger (2016b) believed that the absence of a "tribe" to which to belong promoted isolation and depression and could lead ultimately to suicide: "They can be surrounded by others and yet feel deeply, dangerously alone" (p. 18).

Parallels can be drawn between the implications of this philosophy and the marginalisation of older men. Junger's (2016a) theory was that contemporary society has reduced the role of community and has elevated an anonymous individualism. He lamented the lack of a "shared public meaning" of war that "...gives the soldiers a context for their losses and [whereby] their sacrifice is acknowledged by most of the society" (p. 97). As with war, our society has no "shared public meaning" of the concept of old age. We dwell on the power of youth and beauty, and we inadvertently give older people 'use-by dates' or 'shelf lives', after which they become at best useless and at worst pitied and reviled. Junger (2016a) described this lifestyle as being "...deeply brutalizing to the human spirit" (p. 93).

A subcategory of the contributive need to feel valued (McClusky, 1974) can include the need to feel connected with others in the form of friendship. This construct generally results in a natural flow-on effect of acceptance into a group. Shaw et al. (2014) defined friendship as "...a personal, voluntary relationship without obligation or control which exists in a social context" (p. 34). The critical issue of social context and connectedness has been examined in this study through the lens of older men's participation in implementing the programs and philosophies of TOMNET and Men's Sheds.

The issue of gendered friendship has been explored by Kimmel (1994), who claimed: "Following the pioneering research of feminist scholars over the past two decades, social scientists have come to recognize gender as one of the primary axes around which social life is organized" (pp. vii). He called attention to the fact that gendered studies of older men and their multiple masculinities were largely absent from the research literature. Thompson (1994) raised the issue of the "metaphorical

older man” (p. 9). He posited that this dearth of investigative inquiry through the lens of the older male failed to recognise older men as a discrete societal group and, as such, it “...may have homogenised not only adulthood but also theory on masculinity” (p. 12). Adams (1994) further stated:

The discrepancy between the number of studies focusing on older men and those focused on older women is larger in the subfield of friendship than in many other gerontology subfields, perhaps because of the perception that friendship is less central to the lives of older men than to those of older women. (p. 159)

He then cited a number of reasons for this situation, including: the difference in the longevity of men and women; the prevalence of older women as compared to older men; and gender bias in research (p. 160). Examples of the latter were revealed in popular media, in student presentations, and in journal articles. A writer for the English newspaper *The Telegraph*, asserted that: “Women have greater social needs than men - they may feel loneliness more acutely, crave connection and seek out and nurture friendships in a way men don’t” (Lally, 2017, n.p.). Further, in his student assessment Bodle (2013) claimed that male friendships are “less rewarding than female friendships” (n.p.). Paradoxically, in a journal article written by Australian scholars Ricciardelli, Mellor, and McCabe (2012), the authors cited Courtenay (2000, p. 1397) when addressing men’s health needs: “Naming and confronting men’s poor health status and unhealthy beliefs and behaviours may well improve their physical wellbeing, but it will necessarily undermine men’s privileged position and threaten their power and authority in relation to women” (n.p.).

It would appear that these conceptual and methodological limitations regarding scholarship around men’s friendships have not been addressed. This is despite the fact that they were raised late last century by Adams (1994), who argued: “In a sense, we do not ‘know’ anything about the friendships of older men; we only have clues” (p. 161). This discrepancy was exemplified by the number of historical and ongoing scholarly studies carried out specifically into older women’s friendships (Armstrong & Goldsteen, 1990; Finchum, 2005; Moreman, 2008a, 2008b; Roberto & Scott, 1984) as opposed to those of older men (Shaw et al., 2014; Tesch, Krauss Whitbourne, & Nehrke, 1981).

The acknowledgement of the differences between male and female friendship patterns is not a recent phenomenon. Wright (1982) referred to United States research conducted by Weiss and Lowenthal (1975) that investigated friendships in

four age groups, ranging from high school through to pre-retirement. Their findings indicated that female friendships emphasised reciprocity in the form of mutual assistance, emotional support and shared confidences, whereas male friendships highlighted commonality in the form of shared activities and shared experiences.

However, as men publically voice their opinions on this topic through communities such as the Australian Men's Health Forum (amhf.org.au/), The Good Men Project (goodmenproject.com) and Growing Bolder (growingbolder.com), populist media is beginning to acknowledge its relevance to contemporary society. The United States sociologist Geoffrey Greif spoke to Brett McKay (McKay, 2017) about the common myths of male friendships and suggested that "...we should stop judging the quality of male friendships based on how women do relationships". A Google search of "friendship and older men" revealed one article published in the *Wall Street Journal* (Halpert, 2015) written exclusively about friendship and men over 50. Other articles referred to "middle-aged men" in the 30 to 65 age range only (Baker, 2017; O'Keeffe, 2016). A Google Scholar search did not yield any more results, with only one article that focused exclusively on older men in an institutional setting (Tesch et al., 1981).

"If you want to have something affect your self-esteem – retire", United States comedian and commentator David Letterman stated when he was not recognised by another guest at a White House dinner party. In an article published by the online *Startsat60* magazine, an anonymous contributor, "John", described retirement as being "...the end of your value. You have become so caught up in your work identity or your worth as a parent that the idea of losing those identities can fill you with dread" (n.p.). John described the necessity of rewriting "...your daily script. It's crucial that you make sense of the change and how it will affect you" (Author unknown, 2016c).

One avenue that has provided an opportunity for older men to become what McClusky (1974) referred to as "agents of social change" (p. 336) is volunteerism: "Older people have a vital need for [opportunities] that will enable them to exert influence in protecting and improving their own situation, and in contributing to the wellbeing of the larger society..." (p. 336).

Findsen (2006) agreed with McClusky (1974). He also advocated the beneficial nature of volunteerism for older people and the promotion of a civil society, especially through inter-generational interactions such as mentoring.

Australian researchers Earle and Fopp (1999) indicated that older people are socially disadvantaged in three ways in that they are marginalised, they are negatively stereotyped and they tend towards self-isolation (p. 388). Their “Universal Needs” (p. 389) theory hypothesised that there were essential socio-psychological factors to do with “successful ageing” (p. 389):

- “Involvement”, to do with ongoing social interaction
- “Satisfaction”, to do with quality activities and social connections
- “Autonomy”, to do with independence
- “Integration”, to do with choosing a wide range of significant activities and relationships
- “Creativity”, to do with stimulating personal challenges (p. 389).

Although these factors did not align directly with McClusky’s (1974) theory of contributive needs, there were shared underlying principles such as the importance of purposeful social relevance and the need for an authentic sense of self-worth.

3.4.1. Conclusion.

Section 3.3 has explored Howard McClusky’s (1974, 1976) view of ageing as a continuum throughout an individual’s life. He developed Margin Theory (1974), which formularised an equation involving load and power. This formula focused on the manner in which individuals may satisfy their needs and gain control and autonomy over their lives as older citizens. I have provided examples of the manner in which Margin Theory is applicable to my study. With this formula in mind, Section 3.4 examines contributive needs and develops McClusky’s needs-based theory for older people more closely in order to investigate the circumstances and experiences of older men more comprehensively.

3.4.2. Older men’s contributive needs.

I have adapted McClusky’s (1974) concept of contributive needs and combined it with the concepts regarding the relational needs of the individual as described by Earle and Fopp (1999), Findsen (2006) and Junger (2016a, 2016b). This provides a more comprehensive review of the principles of the underlying contributive needs as they apply to older men. It also orientates the reader to the philosophy underpinning

this thesis, which is that identity affirming behaviour leads to the fulfilment of contributive needs and purposeful living for older men.

Figure 3.9 represents an amalgamation of these ideas in a synthesised conceptual framework for this study that I have called the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework.

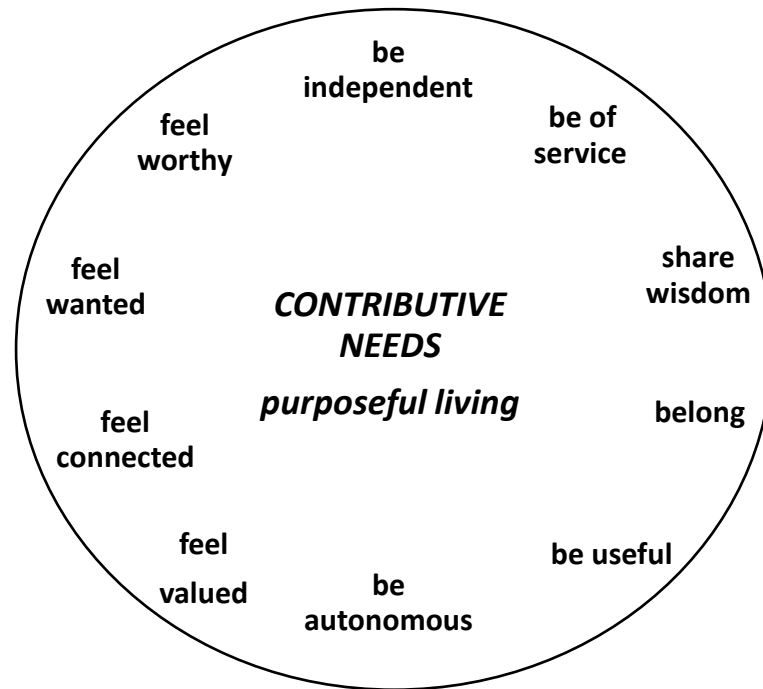


Figure 3.9. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework

These individual needs cluster into three separate but interdependent categories. Feeling worthy, wanted, connected and valued all speak to the concept of self-esteem: “Trait self-esteem is related to people’s feelings about and actions in their relationships with other people” (MacDonald & Leary, 2012, p. 364). Intrinsic motivation such as being independent, autonomous, useful and of service reflects an ability and a willingness to enact “self-determined activity” (Ryan & Deci, 2012, p. 227). The acts of sharing wisdom and belonging require a degree of self-efficacy in that they are concerned with “...what people believe they can do with their skills and abilities under certain conditions” (Maddux & Gosselin, 2012, p. 199). Figure 3.10 depicts graphically the clusters associated with the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework.

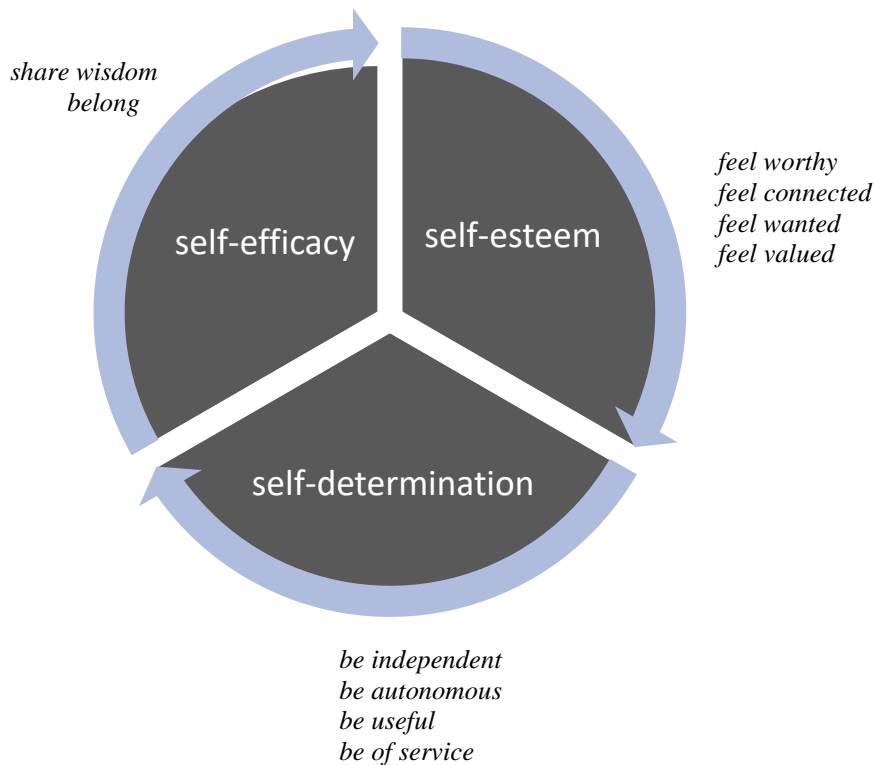


Figure 3.10. The clustered contributive needs of older men

It should be noted that contributive needs are significant only for older men who wish to contribute to, and interact purposefully with, their community. Not all older men seek this endeavour. Additionally, in order for these contributive needs to be met, certain preconditions must exist that include a number of specific elements based on ethos, structure and membership ideals.

Firstly, four components related to ethos must be addressed:

- 1) Successful entry into an organisation that celebrates masculinity and that provides a space for men (male-only culture);
- 2) Successful entry into an organisation that emphasises equality (grassroots focus);
- 3) Successful entry into an organisation that ignores stereotypes and that respects ageing (anti-deficit positioning);
- 4) Successful entry into an organisation that provides opportunities for its members to share their wisdom with the community (community capacity building).

Secondly, organisational structure must concentrate on shared aims and goals, appropriate leadership and effective programming.

Thirdly, membership considerations such as wellbeing and connectedness must be recognised as crucial components of a cohesive and individualised organisation.

Older men, regardless of their social or economic circumstances, must be given the choice to access the following:

- an all-male environment that is both non-confrontational and welcoming
- a democratic grassroots organisation where a lifetime of skills and knowledge is appreciated
- a community that values the wisdom inherent in ageing and that does not pathologise or negatively stereotype older men
- an opportunity to connect with a community where they can be of service.

3.4.3. Conclusion.

Section 3.4 has focused on a major theme of this thesis- contributive needs. The Older Men's Contributive Needs and Identity Framework was presented as an amalgam of the scholarly writings of several theorists, and it is utilised in Chapter 6 to summarise the effectiveness of the application of members' contributive needs.

3.5. Salutogenics

Contributive needs thrive in a salutogenic setting. McDonald (2005) referred to salutogenics as "...the successful interaction/relationship which individuals and communities have with their environment" (p. 98). These interactions are multifaceted and include a person's psychological, physical, social, cultural and spiritual needs. McDonald derided the deficit view taken by academic journals when considering men's health: "Maleness, in a salutogenic perspective, would not be something to be apologised for and 'controlled', but honoured and encouraged in positive ways" (p. 103). He described the importance of a salutogenic agenda for men's health in which they were acknowledged and supported for the value that they have in their family and their community (p. 107).

3.5.1. Conclusion.

The concept of health-giving and health-promoting environments has been discussed as a precursor to the detailed investigation of TOMNET and Men's Sheds.

3.6. Sustainability

A useful and meaningful analytical framework to link with the data collection and analysis in this study is Jackson's (2017) four steps that enable a sustainable business venture. Two social sustainability models were examined for their relevance to the two organisations investigated for the thesis. "A city for all: Towards a socially just and resilient Sydney" (The Council of the City of Sydney, 2016) promoted strategies such as inclusivity, connectedness, liveability and engagement (p. 8). "Social sustainability" (Global Compact Network Australia, 2016) followed the United Nations global principles of supporting human rights, engaging Indigenous peoples, gender equality, children's rights and security of human rights. While both these models have merit, they lack the contextualised specificity and the analytical utility that Jackson's (2017) business model of sustainability was found to exhibit in this study.

Jackson's (2017) business model and the steps that he outlined pertained directly to the TOMNET and Men's Sheds models when examined from a non-profit business perspective. These steps provided a basic roadmap for a practical and viable model of sustainability that could be adopted by any small or large organisation.

The first step was founded on the creation of "a sustainable ethos and vision that demonstrates its commitment to supporting the environment and improving its processes" (Jackson, 2017, n.p.). Jackson's second step required the implementation of "fixed goals" and "shared values across the company, no matter how many local sites or international locations there might be" (n.p.). The notion of operational efficiency was embedded within the third step. Jackson referred to this step as "streamlining wider processes" (n.p.), and as involving sourcing renewable or sustainable practices by suppliers and efficiently simplifying imports and exports. The fourth step involved working with, and investing in, the resources found within the local community. This included its residents. Jackson expanded this idea by suggesting: "This could also help with regional development..." (n.p.). These steps are explained, and their usefulness demonstrated, in Chapter 7 to answer **Research Question 3**: To what extent are TOMNET and Men's Sheds important vehicles for the sustainable delivery of the contributive needs of older men in the community?

3.6.1. Conclusion.

Section 3.6 has laid the theoretical foundation for Chapter 7, which focuses on the sustainability of small local organisations such as TOMNET and individual Men's Sheds. This section explained the use of Jackson's (2017) business model as an applicable and practical guide for analysing the sustainability of the two groups.

3.7. Summary of the Chapter

Ageing is a multifaceted experience. This chapter has discussed major theories related to individuals' needs throughout a lifespan. I have placed particular focus on the needs of older males. Maslow's (1943, 1970) hierarchy of needs was addressed in Section 3.2, along with criticisms made by other scholars debating its relevance to today's society. Enkelmann's (2012) application of Maslow's needs theory as it applied to TOMNET was also examined. A graphic interpretation by Loh et al. (n.d.) of the similarities between Erik Erikson's (1997) original stages and Maslow's (1943) original hierarchy was then presented. Section 3.3 discussed aspects of Howard McClusky's theory of ageing. In addition, McClusky's Margin Theory (1974) was examined (Section 3.3.1) as a means of measuring the balance or imbalance of life's stressors as individuals age. Section 3.4 discussed the concept of needs as described by McClusky (1974), Earle and Fopp (1999), Findsen (2006) and Junger (2016). This section culminated in the confluence of these theories to develop a more comprehensive Older Men's Contributive Needs and Identity Framework on which this thesis is based. Section 3.5 emphasised the importance of a salutogenic environment in which contributive needs are encouraged to flourish. Section 3.6 addressed the issue of sustainability and presented Jackson's (2017) business model as an applicable approach to assessing the ongoing viability of TOMNET and Men's Sheds.

Figure 3.11 presents a synthesised overarching conceptual framework of Chapter 3. The graphic combines each of the major theories and research ideas linked in the construction of clarifying the phenomena of ageing and the associated contributive needs of older men.

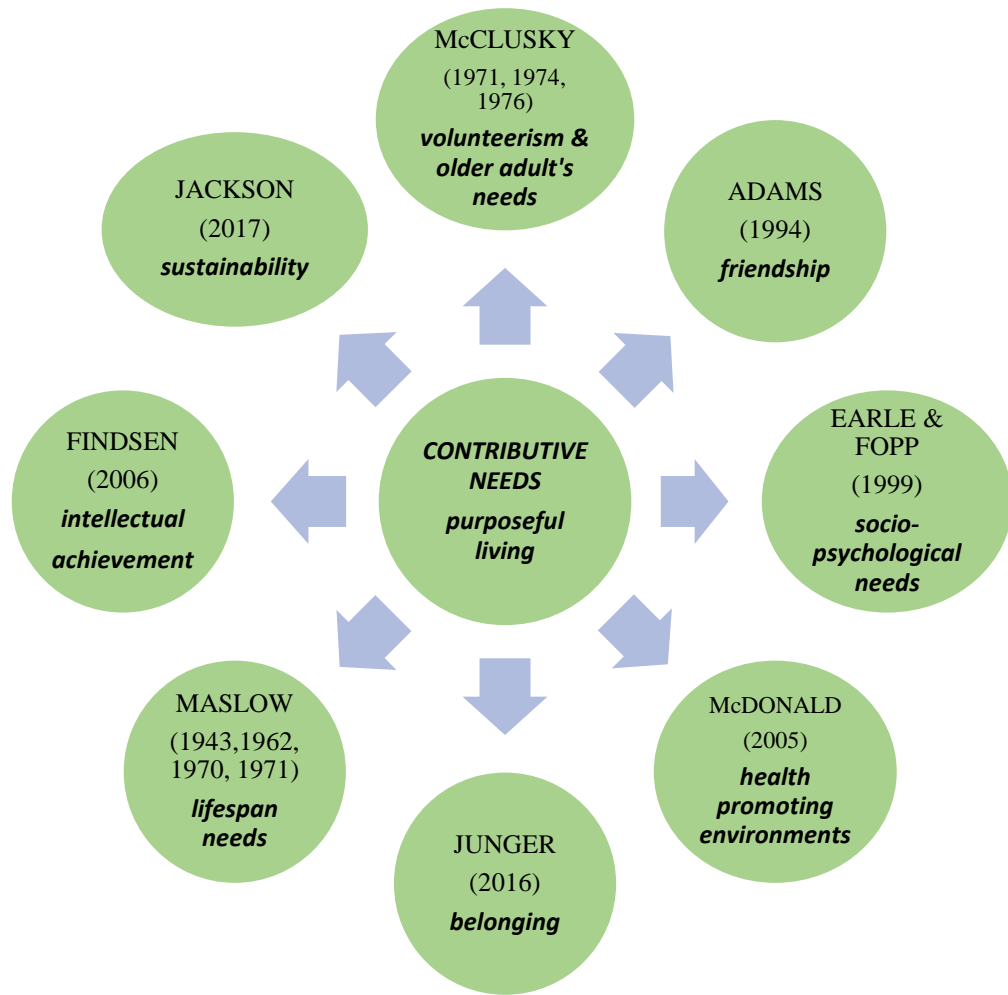


Figure 3.11. A summary of the chapter's exploration of contributive needs

Chapter 4 presents the research design and examines the strategies used to conduct my research in a logical and authentic manner whilst acknowledging the ethical considerations particular to the participants.

CHAPTER 4: THE RESEARCH DESIGN

“We certainly need more money spent on research about older men.”

Gordon (Ex-Member)

4.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 situated the research within the contextual framework. The chapter began with a discussion about population growth and the alleged rise of the gerontocracy. Ideas based on the phases of life, along with more contemporary philosophies that advance the notion of ‘successful ageing’, were then provided. The importance of the traditional notion of masculinity and generational identity was also examined as a significant facet of the contextual framework. I then narrowed the focus from a general discussion about ageing and masculinity to a more specific interpretation of the ways that older men are positioned in society. Next I discussed four major specific mental health issues experienced by older men as a result of this marginalisation. Following this, I provided an outline of the separate published histories and academic literature pertaining to TOMNET and Men’s Sheds, two organisations established specifically for men.

Chapter 3, the conceptual framework, included an exploration of the key concepts in the theoretical structure of the thesis. The concept of ‘needs’ was explored by comparing and contrasting the work of two eminent scholars in the field of psychological health, Abraham Maslow (1943, 1962, 1970, 1971) and Howard McClusky (1971, 1974, 1976). McClusky’s “Margin Theory” (1974) was presented as a precursor to his five principles of needs. This set of principles is pivotal to my research and my assertion that the fulfilment of contributive needs is essential for robust mental health in older males. Utilising the scholarship of Maslow (1943, 1970), McClusky (1974), Earle and Fopp (1999), Findsen (2006) and Junger (2016a, 2016b), I introduced a new framework for older men’s contributive needs and identity (Figure 3.9).

Figure 4.1 depicts the progression from the broader discussion about ageing (presented in Chapter 2) to narrowing down the specifics of older men’s contributive needs (presented in Chapter 3).

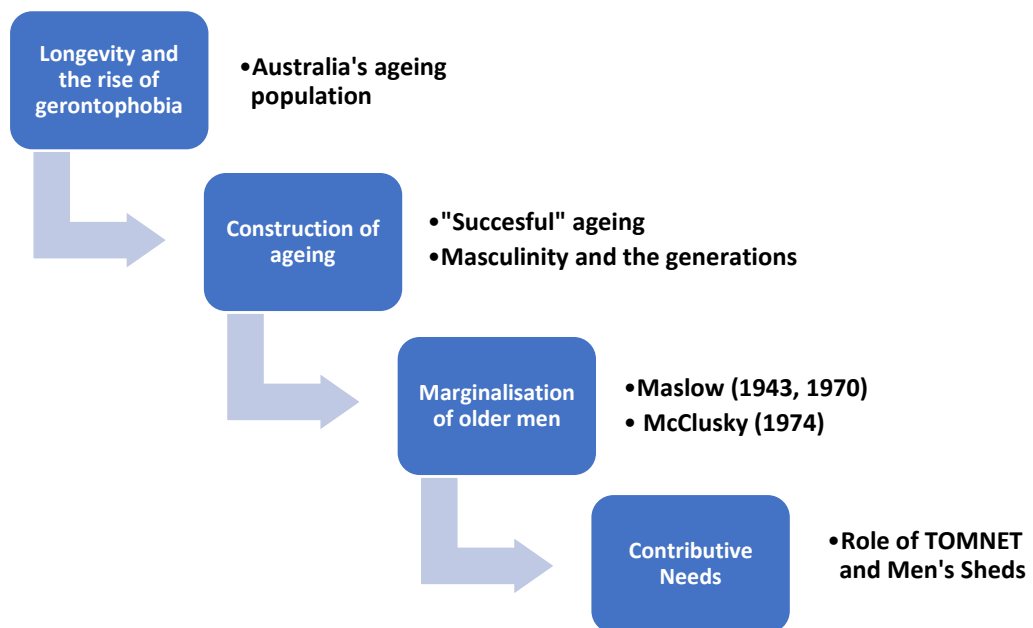


Figure 4.1. Progression of the discussion from Chapter 2 to Chapter 3

At the outset, after having decided on my initial topic of investigation, I was cognisant of a number of considerations. I needed to acknowledge, understand and respect the philosophy behind each of the organisations that I wanted to examine. Similarly, I needed to immerse myself in the meaning and the role of contributive needs as they are applied more generally to the wider community as well as to the marginalised group at the centre of my research. In so doing, I applied an “inductive” reasoning based on Gray’s (2014) definition: “...induction moves from fragmentary details to a connected view of a situation” (p. 16). Finally, and most importantly, I had to utilise an investigative technique that was sensitive to the character and circumstances of the participants with whom I would have most of my interactions in the study.

The purpose of this chapter is to show the interconnectedness of the relationships among the elements of the research design. Each of my methodological decisions has been based on facets of my research questions presented below:

- **Research Question 1:** How does the TOMNET and Men’s Sheds’ organisational leadership seek to implement the design of their programs and philosophies so that they best fit the contributive needs of older men?

- **Research Question 2:** How have the members of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds experienced and engaged with their programs and philosophies vis-à-vis members’ contributive needs?
- **Research Question 3:** To what extent are TOMNET and Men’s Sheds important vehicles for the sustainable delivery of the contributive needs of older men in the community?

A diagrammatical representation of the interconnected elements of the study’s research design is provided in Figure 4.2.

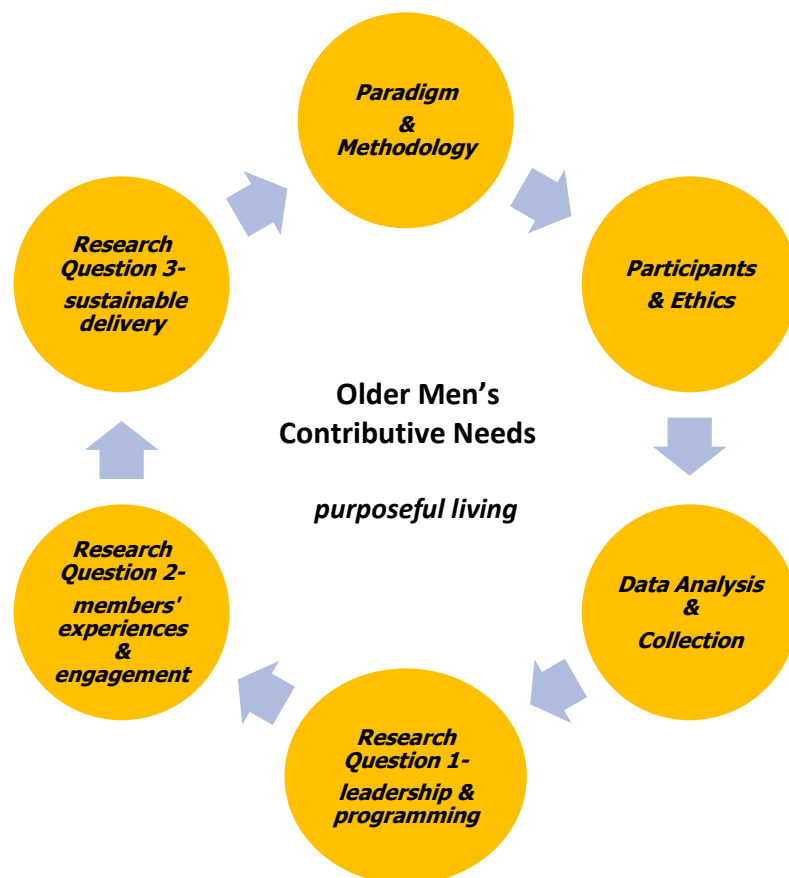


Figure 4.2. A visual representation of the interconnected elements of the study’s research design

O’Leary (2010) referred to the methodological design as being the study’s “blueprint” and argued that it provided “...legitimization for knowledge production” (p. 89). From that perspective, I begin by describing the rationale and the philosophical underpinnings behind the decision to utilise an interpretivist paradigm (Section 4.2). From there I discuss the qualitative orientation of my research (Section 4.3). I then go on to explore the nature of case study and why it was chosen as the

preferred research method of this investigation (Section 4.4). Site and participant selection are then reviewed (Section 4.5), while data collection and analysis techniques are examined in Sections 4.6 and 4.7 respectively. Following these sections, the ethics and politics of the study are presented (Section 4.8), including a consideration of the sensitive nature of the juxtaposition of a middle-aged woman conducting research into the lifestyles of older men. Finally, a summary of the chapter reviews the processes involved in an investigation of this nature (Section 4.9). This chapter progression is presented in the flowchart in Figure 4.3.

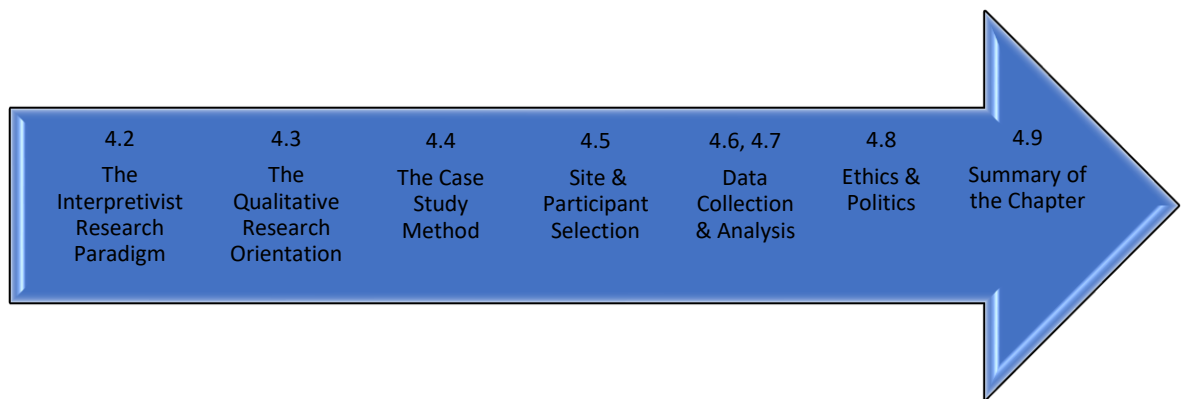


Figure 4.3. A flowchart of the progression of Chapter 4

4.2. The Interpretivist Research Paradigm

4.2.1. Introduction.

“Interpretivist positions are founded on the theoretical belief that reality is socially constructed and fluid. Thus, what we know is always negotiated within cultures, social settings, and relationship with other people” (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, n.p.). Rigorous research is based on philosophical assumptions to do with the authentic pursuit of the development of knowledge and suitable methodological processes. Interpretivist researchers strive to understand the experiences and commonalities that are grounded within the contexts of people’s lives. Particularised research questions that relate to existence (ontology), ethics (axiology) and truth (epistemology) are posed and reflected upon by the researcher throughout the investigative process. Each of these strands of philosophy is directed at understanding human decision-making and the consequential actions arising from those decisions. This applies to participants as well as to the researcher. This section

provides insight into the philosophical underpinnings of the interpretivist paradigm upon which my research was based.

4.2.2. Ontological assumptions.

Interpretivists adopt a relativist ontology. The assumption is that reality is subjective or individual, and that it is reliant upon making meaning of our social world through experiential undertakings (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Ontology, as defined by O’Leary (2010), refers to “The study of what exists, and how things that exist are understood and categorized” (p. 5). The ontological assumption of multiple truths and multiple realities is embraced by the researcher. This notion of individuality underpins the belief that “... persons understand reality in different ways that reflect individual perspectives” (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013, n.p.). My research position is one that disavows the theory of a ‘grand narrative’ that assumes the existence of one all-encompassing existential truth that can be applied to old age. The disruption to the socialised identity category of ‘older men’ and the negation of the ‘one size fits all’ approach are fundamental to the philosophical perspective of this investigation. Also, as an older female researcher investigating older men, I am fully aware that the concepts and experiences that I hold to be true may be quite dissimilar to those of the male participants in the study.

4.2.3. Axiological assumptions.

Somekh and Lewin (2011) defined axiology as referring to “...philosophical questions relating to the nature of values” (p. 320). The notion of ‘values’ is an important facet of my research. It is an ‘easy fix’ for society and politicians to assume that all older men are the same and have the same life values. Traditions, family circumstances and personal histories are just three of the components that play an integral role in the formation and the reformation of values for every older male individual. Conversely, an issue arises around the value of older men within society - that is, the degree to which society values its older men. At face value, the suicide statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017b) reinforce the supposition that men over 85 years old are dispensable (please refer to Chapter 1, Figure 1.3), not least because these statistics are largely ignored by politicians and the media. Another question arises about the cohort of older men themselves and the degree of value that

they apply to themselves and to their peers. Do men value themselves after retirement age? Do older men need or value the company of other older men? The values that the researcher brings to the study are also important. How do I position myself as an older (over 60) woman of Irish/English heritage investigating men over 50 years of age with diverse backgrounds? What are my unconscious biases and values, and how do I allow for them as I conduct my research?

4.2.4. Epistemological assumptions.

Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). Interpretivist research assumes a subjectivist stance and ascribes to the theory that "...we cannot separate ourselves from what we know" (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, n.p.). Knowledge is seen to be socially constructed. The existence of multiple truths is dependent upon the individual's interpretation of reality. The researcher becomes an empathetic observer who is encouraged to immerse herself fully in the process in a subjective manner (Gough, 2002, p. 6). The idea of social constructs is a compelling one and relevant to my inquiry into older men and how they position themselves within the community and how they interpret societal truths/norms. Timonen (2016) argued that: "social constructs are not ephemeral but, rather, they have real consequence" (p. 8). For instance, the socially constructed notion of power is reflected in the relationship between older men and the cultural assumptions surrounding them that are prevalent within society (such as negative stereotypes). These assumptions are presumed to be reality by some groups in the community. I see that my role as researcher is to unpack the truths behind these assumed realities as they relate to older men as individuals and also as a marginalised societal group.

4.2.5. Interpretivism.

Cohen and Crabtree (2006) claimed that, as part of an interpretivist paradigm, "...truth is negotiated through dialogue" (n.p.). It is via this dialectical process that a more knowledgeable and comprehensive perception of the social world can be established. These interpretations are fluid, and they are located as being contextually particularised within time and place. Conversation invites the re-interpretation and negotiation of truth.

Interpretivism is hermeneutic in nature in that it seeks to understand or make meaning of context (Merriam, 2009, p. 32). It embraces the complexity of the human psyche and, in so doing, it allows the researcher an avenue through which to probe and comprehend more fully the cultural capital that each person brings to an experience. I strongly align myself with Gall, Gall, and Borg (2005), who characterised interpretivism as an exploration of shared reality that has a set of meanings that are continually reframed by the individuals who are participants (p. 551). The aim is to reveal and interpret the multifaceted world of lived experience from the perspectives of those who live in it. The importance of individualism highlights the fact that research design must be responsive to the proposition that humans are “reflexive beings” (Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 7) and therefore prone to self-analysis. The researcher must illuminate the process of meaning construction and explain how meanings are exemplified in an individual’s actions (Schwandt, 1998, p. 222).

4.2.6. Conclusion.

Table 4.1 summarises the philosophical underpinnings of my research, derived from my application of the interpretivist paradigm. O’Leary (2010) stated: “...good research should be seen as the thinking person’s game” (p. 7). My research was grounded in an interpretivist enquiry that adhered to the notion of the social construction of reality (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Gall et al., 2005) where knowledge was explored and interpreted through lived experiences. Assumptions can be made from this research facilitated through meaning-making of human agency – i.e., “The capacity of a human being to take action and exercise control in formal or informal social groups” (Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 320). I recognise that qualitative research is subjective (Cook, 2015), but I have adopted a reflexive research approach (O’Leary, 2010), and I have done my best to honour and respect the participants and their contributions to knowledge in this area.

Table 4.1

The Philosophical Underpinnings of the Study

Interpretivist inquiry	Truth is negotiated through dialogue.
Ontological assumptions	Reality is an individual construct and is subjective.
Axiological assumptions	Inherent values are significant.
Epistemological assumptions	Knowledge and truth are constructed through social interactions. The existence of multiple truths is acknowledged.

4.3. The Qualitative Research Orientation

4.3.1. Introduction.

“Up until the 1960s, the ‘scientific method’ was the predominant approach to social inquiry, with little attention given to qualitative approaches such as participant observation” (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, n.p.). Prior to that, social research findings were principally based on empirical, provable data in the form of graphs and statistics based on an “either/or” approach (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, n.p.). Scholars then began to argue against the dominance of this form of inquiry, and they posited that qualitative methods were better suited to dealing with people in social inquiry.

A wide variety of social and emotional components frames the psychology of the human landscape. In order to comprehend and cater for these variances, research methods must respond to the complexities of human behaviour and exceed the scope of numerical and statistical data collection. Merriam (2009) outlined nine basic differences between qualitative and quantitative research centred around research focus (quality vs quantity); philosophy (constructivism vs realism); lexicon (fieldwork vs empirical); investigative goals (discovery vs control); design (flexible vs structured); participant selection (small vs large); data collection (interviews vs tests); analysis techniques (inductive vs deductive); and research conclusions (holistic vs precise) (p. 18).

4.3.2. **Subjectivity.**

“Subjectivity is the quality that makes human beings most interesting. It’s what differentiates them, as subjects, from the inanimate, unthinking objects of the world” (Cook, 2015, n.p.). The essential difference between qualitative and quantitative research lies in the subjective nature of qualitative research as opposed to the objectivity required of quantitative research. Qualitative investigators seek to establish an understanding and the meaning of phenomena. Researchers ask “How?” and/or “Why?” questions (McGill Qualitative Health Research Group [MQHRG], 2018, n.p.). I contend that subjectivity explores our innate ‘humanness’. Berkal (2015) agreed. His viewpoint was that qualitative research is “...not a cold functional tool in a kit. It’s a human pursuit with all of the idiosyncrasies and irrationalities of the real world” (n.p.).

Qualitative investigations are in-depth, and they allow the individual voices of participants to be heard in their own words, in an otherwise silent and marginalised world. “Qualitative research studies begin with the identification of a problem” (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010, n.p.). My study focused on the problematic themes of gendered ageism, and on the resultant social isolation and marginalisation of older men in particular. Buried within these themes is the problem of ‘otherness’. This concept has been discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4) when referring to contributive needs. Zevallos (2011) stated that the issue of “otherness...is central to sociological analyses of how majority and minority identities are constructed” (n.p.).

The ‘otherness’ experienced by older men is reflected in the silent statistic of their nearly century old excessive suicide rate (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2000), as was discussed in previous chapters and around which my research has been based. These topics are controversial, and they require investigative sensitivity and a holistic approach to the inquiry process. O’Leary (2010) stated that “The qualitative tradition...accepts multiple perspectives and realities, recognizes the power of research on both participants and researchers, and does not necessarily shy away from political agendas” (p. 113).

The notions of “lived experiences and belief systems” (O’Leary, 2010, p. 114) are fundamental to the process of knowledge gathering. Qualitative studies dive below the surface of a particular phenomenon, and they attempt to understand its

richness and complexity. Qualitative researchers seek “thick description” (Merriam, 1998, p. 43) to illuminate the complexities of the many interwoven layers of meaning that exist in any given situation. The aim is to examine these layers for patterns in order to comprehend the phenomenon being studied fully.

O’Leary (2010) argued that qualitative research authenticity is embedded in the seeking of truth whilst at the same time acknowledging the existence of “multiple truths” (p. 43). Thus it is ever so for a study such as mine, where the participants come from diverse backgrounds and where their personal histories impact profoundly on their world views. For example, this was a multi-generational study and the historical differences within this cohort were considerable. Moreover, the variances in social circumstances – e.g., status, education, ethnicity, domestic situation and geographical location – impacted on individuals’ perceptions of truth. Rather than creating barriers to establishing truth, these men lived their individual truths on a daily basis and as such added a richness and legitimacy to the study as a social inquiry, thus augmenting the acquisition of the rich data and the authenticity of the multiple truths embedded in a qualitative investigation.

4.3.3. Conclusion.

My study aligned with the characteristics ascribed to qualitative research by Liamputtong (2013, p. xiv). Natural settings were sought out and adhered to; individual interpretations and realities were requested and respected; contextualised issues were a major consideration; there was no predetermination on the part of the researcher; and multiple data gathering techniques were employed. Conversely, in my role as a qualitative researcher, I had no hidden agenda and I was committed fully to examining the issue from the participants’ perspectives. I was committed to a holistic world view, and I employed reasoning, reflexivity and sensitivity when interacting with individuals and data.

Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey (2005, p.1) claimed that qualitative research should meet a certain set of criteria when aiming for proficiency. Table 4.2 sets out these criteria and distils my application of each criterion.

Table 4.2

The Application of Qualitative Research Criteria to the Study

CRITERIA	APPLICATION
The investigation should pose a question.	I have articulated the research questions in Chapter 1.
The investigation should utilise a systematic and established set of procedures to answer the inquiry.	This three-phase investigation consisted of a Likert scale survey in Phase 1; semi-structured interviews in Phase 2; focus groups in Phase 3; and fieldwork observations in Phases 2 and 3. The examination of the archival and current data was conducted throughout the process.
Data should be gathered during the investigation.	I employed a range of data gathering techniques, including a Likert scale survey, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations, and a review of historical and current documents.
Data should yield outcomes that were not predetermined.	I acknowledged my values and preconceptions and also listened actively to the disclosures in the interviews.
The investigation should produce findings that are relevant and can be applied beyond the boundaries of the study.	I will raise awareness politically as well as within the community about these hitherto silent statistics.
The research should seek to articulate answers to the question from the perspectives of the social group whom it targets.	I will publically acknowledge the perspectives of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds, and the individual men themselves.

This set of criteria is depicted in Figure 4.4 as it applied to my research.

R Q 1. Organisational leadership: programs and philosophies?
R Q 2. Members' experience and engagement?
R Q 3. Sustainable delivery?
CONTRIBUTIVE NEEDS?

What are my research questions?

I will identify data sources, decide on the proportion of different data sources (mainly interviews), and seek access to data sources (participants and archival and current documents).

How will I utilise a systematic and established set of procedures to answer the research questions?

I will utilise a three-phase approach.
I will examine archival and current documents; implement a Likert scale survey; and conduct interviews, focus groups and fieldwork observations. I will keep a reflective journal throughout.

How will I gather my data?

I will acknowledge my values and preconceptions and also listen actively to what the men say in the interviews. I will transcribe immediately and fully.

How will I ensure that my outcomes are not predetermined?

I will raise political awareness.
I will unmask the silent statistics.

How will I produce relevant findings that can be applied beyond the boundaries of the study?

I will acknowledge the perspectives of my study to TOMNET and Men's Sheds, and to the individual men themselves.

How will I articulate answers to the research questions from the perspectives of the older men?

Figure 4.4. Research considerations

4.4. The Case Study Method

4.4.1. Introduction.

“Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue...and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research” (Soy, 1997, n.p.).

My case study research method sought to delve beneath the surface of facts and figures regarding “successful ageing” (Timonen, 2016, p. 13). I strove to uncover meaning and to understand the lived experiences of the older men and the associated others who participated in the case study. This hermeneutic tradition of research lends itself to the assumption that there are many authentic realities, as opposed to only one ‘grand narrative’.

4.4.2. Multi-site case study.

Case study scholarship in the area of Men’s Sheds is gaining momentum as the importance of this organisation is recognised by the wider community. Case studies related to Men’s Sheds include leisure activities (Ormsby et al., 2010); older men as learners (Carragher & Golding, 2015; Golding, Brown, Foley, Harvey, & Gleson, 2007); men’s health and wellbeing (Culph, Wilson, Cordier, & Stancliffe, 2015; Ford et al., 2015; Milligan et al., 2013); rurality (Waling & Fildes, 2017); community development (Golding, 2011; Roger, Nurmi, Wilson, Mackenzie, & Oliffe, 2016); and masculine discourse (Mackenzie et al., 2017). Few of these case study investigations have focused explicitly on older men. To date, there are no published case study data about TOMNET.

Merriam (2009) noted that qualitative case study has three distinct facets. It is “particularistic” in its targeting of a specific phenomenon; it is “descriptive” in that its end result is replete with a rich description of the process; and it is “heuristic” in that it enlightens the reader’s knowledge of the phenomenon (p. 46). My study meets these three criteria. A multi-site investigation involved the analysis and interpretation of the branches of two local male only organisations with a large membership base of men aged over 50 years. The study focused on the unique situation of older men with divergent social histories and world views who chose to belong to these groups. Rich description of the process was reflected in the data collection processes in the form of

archival literature, surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observational fieldwork and a reflection journal. Readers of my thesis are provided with a comprehensive knowledge base of past practice, current practice and future sustainable practice to meet the requirements of older men's contributive needs.

Multi-site case studies focus on the same research questions in a variety of locations. "They consciously seek to permit cross-site comparison without necessarily sacrificing with-in site understanding" (Herriott & Firestone, 1983, p. 14).

My study targeted three branches of TOMNET and 10 Men's Sheds. They were categorically similar in that TOMNET and the Men's Sheds that I studied were male-only domains and the predominant membership age was over 50 years. They differed operationally and had separate, discrete philosophies. The same data collection and analysis measures were utilised in each location. I particularly chose the sites of my case study with a view to comprehending "the character of a setting and what it means for participants in that setting" (Danaher et al., 2013, p. 54). In other words, I endeavoured to understand the nature of an all-male environment and why it appealed to older men.

Critics of the case study method focus on beliefs about the inadequacies of this type of research. Soy (1997) presented three main concerns based on the following: a) a lack of credibility of findings based on a small number of cases; b) the bias of the findings owing to the researcher's concentrated contact with the participants and subject matter; and c) a lack of depth of the study that renders it useful only as an "exploratory tool" (n.p.). Idowu (2016) stated that: "Case study research is often charged with causal determinism, non-replicability, subjective conclusions, absence of generalizable conclusions, biased case selection and lack of empirical clout" (p. 185).

Allowance was made for these criticisms when conducting my case study research. Table 4.3 demonstrates how these concerns were addressed during the research process.

Table 4.3

The Study's Strategies for Addressing Concerns about Case Study

CONCERN	HOW THE CONCERN WAS ADDRESSED
lack of credibility of findings	The use of multiple sites and multiple interviewees reinforced academic rigour and credibility.
bias of the findings	Unintentional biases were acknowledged and accounted for prior to the commencement of the study and throughout the whole process.
lack of depth of the study	The depth of the study was ensured through the process of multiple phases of the research, beginning with a Likert scale survey of 268 older men.
“causal determinism”	Significant differences exist in how men engage with the same influences. There is no ‘grand narrative’.
“non-replicability”	A different context occurred between the organisational structure of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds, and between each individual Shed. Replicability was not the goal of this research.
“subjective conclusions”	Subjective conclusions can be rigorous and authentic.
“absence of generalizable conclusions”	The idea of purposeful living applies to every human. Each human experiences his/her life in a unique manner and multiple truths are a by-product of this.
“biased case selection”	Critical friends (male and female) examined my writing for the existence of socially constructed prejudices such as gender bias and preconceived ideas such as stereotypical ideation.
“lack of empirical clout”	Descriptive statistics were included in the data analysis. I was a sole social researcher and a smaller sample size did not invalidate my research. Rather, it provided a useful springboard for a wider investigation in the future.

4.4.3. **Conclusion.**

Yin (2009) cited “sloppy” (p. 14) procedures as a major impediment to rigorous case study research. I have taken steps to ensure investigative rigour in the form of a systematic, three-phase approach utilising five distinct data gathering tools: a Likert scale survey; semi-structured interviews; fieldwork observations; focus groups; and the analysis of archival and current data. The collection of the data at each location

was transparent, and the participants were fully informed of each step in the process. Ongoing and frequent dialogue about my research between Shed coordinators and the “Shedders” (mensshed.org, n.p.) themselves ensured equality of treatment between Sheds.

4.5. Site and Participant Selection

4.5.1. Introduction.

“It is recognised that[,] when selecting sites, researchers have to consider the time, financial and personal costs involved in conducting fieldwork in what might be distant and inconvenient locations” (Walford, 2010, p. 151). As recommended by Walford, a number of factors were taken into consideration when deciding on sites to approach. These were related to location, size, membership, recommendation and agreement to participate in the study. Location was a consideration owing to geographical issues. Walford (2010) warned about the implications of choosing sites primarily on the premise of convenience and easy access (p. 151). I wanted to be able to revisit sites when the need arose, so they had to be within a reasonable driving distance. This was a conscious decision on my part as I sought to include a balance between metropolitan and regional and rural locations.

4.5.2. Site selection.

Figure 4.5 indicates the study’s data gathering sites. TOMNET sites are indicated in red and Men’s Sheds are indicated in blue. A map of the whole of Australia is provided to act as a location point for the state of Queensland. TOMNET centres visited included Dalby, Oakey and Toowoomba. Men’s Sheds visited included Allora, Carina (located in Brisbane), Dalby, Highfields, Noosa, Oakey, Pittsworth, Toowoomba City and Warwick. Please note that Clermont Men’s Shed was not visited by the researcher. It is included on the map to locate the Men’s Shed interviewee who happened to visit Shed 1 during an interview session and who kindly participated in the conversation.

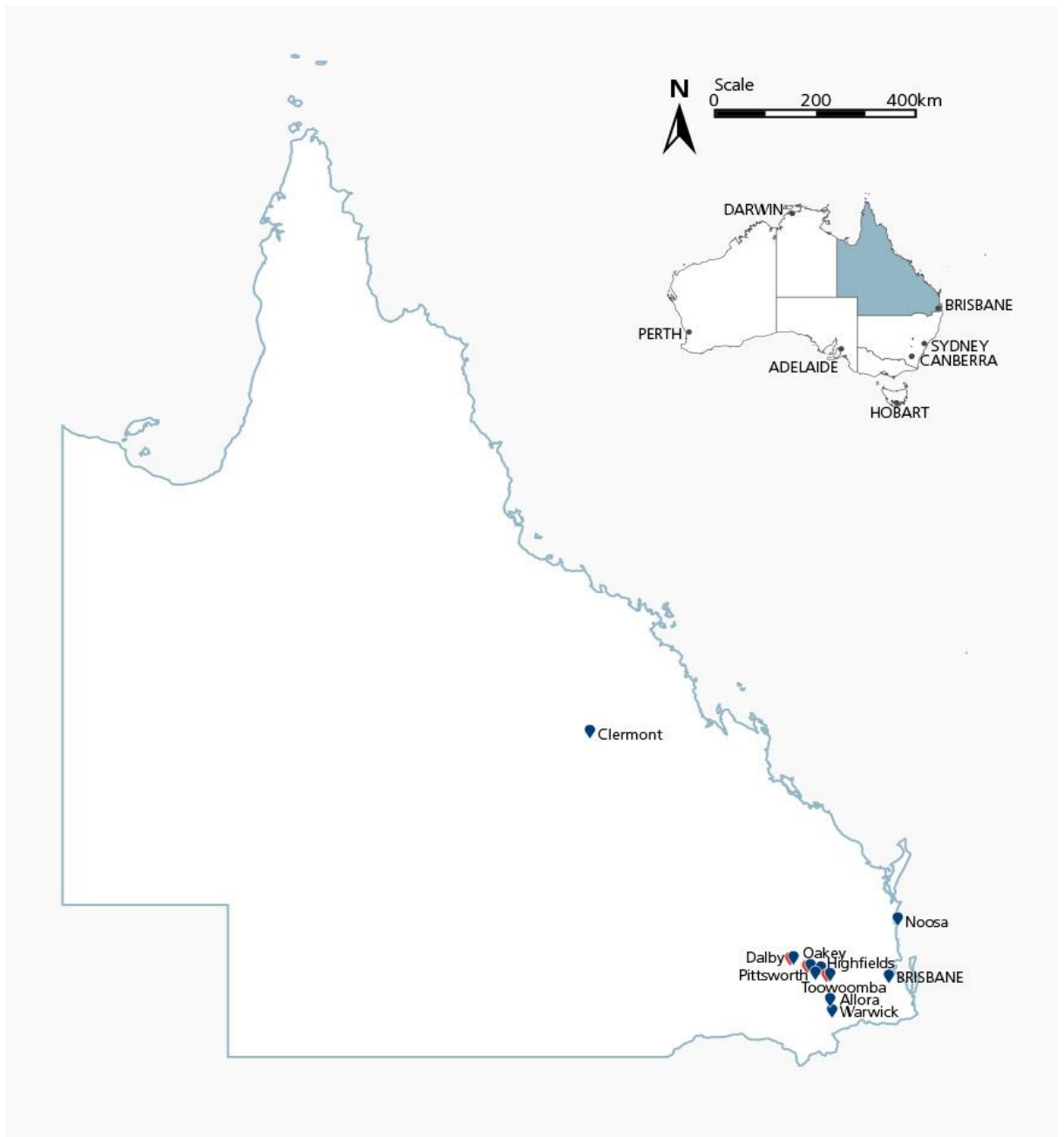


Figure 4.5. Research locations

TOMNET’s headquarters were located within the Toowoomba urban area. Two branches of TOMNET, situated within the Darling Downs, also participated in the study. I was refused entry to two other regional branches. No reason for the refusal was given. Nine Men’s Sheds were approached and accepted my request for on-site data gathering.

Membership size was a consideration as I wanted to include both large and small endeavours. Member numbers in TOMNET branches varied greatly at any given time from four (TOMNET Affiliate 1) to 350 (TOMNET Centre). Men's Sheds memberships were also widely ranging, from 12 (Shed 2) to 150 (Shed 4).

The gender requirements of the study were adhered to. No Men's Sheds with women members were approached as I wanted to concentrate on all male membership. An incidental meeting with a Shed member, Grant (a pseudonym), from Clermont (the Mackay region in Queensland) led to an interview about the participation of female members in his Shed. Grant happened to visit Shed 1 as I was conducting an interview there. Shed 4 was recommended to me by the patron of TOMNET as a thriving and successful men's community space. Shed 5 was recommended by the TOMNET Centre manager.

4.5.3. Participant selection.

There was no pressure exerted by myself or any other stakeholder to participate in any part of the study. The survey was conducted upon the conclusion of the TOMNET meetings. Those who wished to fill in the Likert scale did so. Similarly, Men's Sheds surveys were conducted during their morning tea breaks, and declining to complete the survey was accepted and respected. Assistance to complete the survey was offered at each site by peers.

In keeping with Morris' (2015) premise that participants should be chosen with a view to the provision of "rich data" (p. 51), TOMNET interviewees were selected by the positions that they held within the organisation such as past and current general managers, past and current counsellors, past and current program coordinators, and past and current members. Most Men's Sheds interviewees consisted of men from the individual Shed's executive committees, although it was publicly open to any of the men. Word of mouth was employed, and interested parties from both within and outside the organisations were welcomed into the process. Interested others were also invited to participate in the interviewing process.

A fact sheet was sent or delivered to the interviewees prior to each interview session. It outlined the research questions; presented the aims of the study; provided a very brief context of the study; included some sample interview questions; and provided my contact details. This was designed to serve multiple purposes. Firstly, it

provided a background to the study. Secondly, sample questions ensured that the interviewee was not caught unawares during the interview, as well as providing food for thought prior to the interview. Finally, if, after reading the fact sheet, the interviewee decided not to participate in the study, he/she could contact me directly.

Focus group participants were selected by the researcher. They ranged from two to 15 participants. Focus group sessions were conducted with members of both TOMNET and Men's Sheds separately.

4.5.4. Conclusion.

Section 4.5 detailed the research site and participant selection. Likert Scale participants self-selected, and the survey was conducted on a voluntary basis. Interviewees and focus group participants were mostly selected by the researcher for their position in the organisation and their interest in the project. Some interviewees were invited into the process based upon recommendations from various sources. Figure 4.6 represents a state-wide view of the regions located within the state of Queensland. South East Queensland encompasses the Brisbane (the capital city of the state of Queensland) and Moreton Region. South West Queensland generally includes the Darling Downs Region and the South West Region.



Figure 4.6. The regions of Queensland

Note: Reproduced from [wikipedia.org/wiki/Darling Downs](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darling_Downs) by Wikimedia Foundation Inc March 2018. Material used as supplied.

Table 4.4 presents a breakdown of the locations of the data gathering that was conducted.

Table 4.4

The Locations of the Data Gathering Sites

REGIONAL LOCATION	TOMNET	MEN'S SHEDS
South East Queensland (Darling Downs, Brisbane and Moreton)		Sheds 2, 4, 5, 9, 10 Focus Groups 2 and 3
South West Queensland	The TOMNET Centre Focus Groups 1 and 2	Sheds 1, 3, 6, 7 Focus Groups 1 and 4

4.6. Data Collection

4.6.1. Introduction.

“...case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection...” (Meriam, 1998, p. 28). In keeping with the integrity and the qualitative nature of the research, a multi-method data collection was applied. Three phases of data collection occurred. Sources consisted of the examination of archival and current data, and an initial Likert scale survey (Phase 1); semi-structured interviews (Phase 2); focus groups (Phase 3); notes derived from fieldwork observations (Phases 2 and 3); and a reflection journal kept throughout the process (Phases 1, 2 and 3). In keeping with the holistic nature of data collection in the case study, and to keep up to date with current theory in this area, document analysis occurred from the conception of the idea and was ongoing throughout the investigative process (Phases 1, 2 and 3). Please refer to Appendix A for relevant documentation related to data collection. Through these techniques being utilised, the holistic nature and uniqueness of the program were honoured.

Before physically approaching TOMNET or the Men’s Sheds, I telephoned or emailed the co-ordinators of each organisation and asked if they and their members would be interested in participating in the research project. Contact details were obtained using publicly available information on the TOMNET and AMSA websites.

The one exception to this procedure was Shed 3, which I visited directly as I was in the neighbourhood at the time conducting a focus group with a TOMNET affiliate, and the men urged me to “pop on over; they won’t mind”.

I then arranged a mutually convenient time to visit the sites. I did not place any restrictions on participant inclusion criteria at the Men’s Sheds, as there were very few men under the age of 50 at those particular Sheds. I simply specified to the men that they had to be over 18 years old. I did not wish to exclude anyone who was enthusiastic about the research. Whilst there, I conducted the Likert scale survey and interviewed those who had volunteered. In the interest of the integrity of the study, date of birth was included on the form, and I discounted the five age-ineligible respondents.

4.6.2. The Likert scale survey.

Likert scale surveys are designed to “...measure social attitudes” (Likert, 1934, p. 5) and to generate notable demographic findings in the form of social capital and generational differences. More specifically, the survey focused on attitudes towards the programs/philosophies of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds. Key outcomes to do with generational assumptions around the importance of the organisations vis-a-vis socialisation allowed the researcher to obtain some understanding and background knowledge.

Particular importance was placed on the respondents’ capabilities when compiling the statements and the survey itself. Simplicity of access, wording, setting and layout were paramount. Computer surveys were not deemed to be appropriate owing to the considerations of the literacy and technology skill levels of the participants. As such, each participant was provided with a pen and a two-page survey. Each statement was read aloud to the group by the researcher and/or an older male as we progressed through the survey. This allowed the clarification of the meaning of any aspect of the wording. Statements were brief and worded carefully to avoid an excess of detail. Wording of questions and the length of the questionnaire itself were important design considerations, particularly given the various academic backgrounds and physical challenges of the participants. The purpose of the questionnaire was clarified in situ, and it contained open-ended, unambiguous statements that were non-judgmental in delivery. Font size and type were chosen for

aesthetic and visual simplicity. Pages were stapled together to ensure ease of handling. Surveys were conducted in the informal setting of the Sheds or meeting rooms familiar to the respondents. The survey was piloted extensively in small groups before being undertaken with larger cohorts of men. This ensured rigour and dependability.

O’Leary (2010) listed the advantages of using a survey. These included increased numbers and representation of respondents, increased comparative data, confidentiality and the generation of qualitative data through open-ended questions (p. 183).

The survey was conducted in three TOMNET groups and 9 male-only Men’s Sheds set in urban, regional and rural locations. Even though every effort was made to enable survey completion, not every respondent answered every question. This is explained more fully in Section 4.8.2. Table 4.5 provides a location and numerical breakdown of the survey respondents.

Table 4.5

The Numerical Breakdown of the Likert Scale Survey Respondents

TOMNET	MEN’S SHEDS		TOTAL SURVEY
63 respondents	205 respondents		268 respondents
TOMNET Centre = 47	Shed 1 = 17	Shed 2 = 9	
Focus Group 1 = 4	Shed 3 = 26	Shed 4 = 39	
Focus Group 2 = 12	Shed 5 = 14	Shed 6 = 6	
	Shed 7 = 23	Shed 9 = 25	
	Shed 10 = 46		

4.6.3. Archival and current documents.

The analysis of archival and current documents produced by individuals within the organisations allowed the researcher to gain an insight into a previously unexplored world view/philosophy. O’Leary (2010) discussed two advantages of using existing texts in research. She noted that they enabled the investigator to examine the realities of the research issues, and that they were ideal to capitalise on the extensive numbers of data available (p. 218). From my perspective, they also allowed me to gauge the historical progress of each organisation. The formation of

TOMNET and Men's Sheds was a relatively recent phenomenon, and research about them is at the fledgling stage. Reading only respected journal articles and documents produced by well-known researchers or familiar authors ensured the authenticity and credibility of sources.

4.6.4. Observations and reflection journal.

Observational evidence was collected throughout the study at each venue and consisted of quotations from the participants as well as annotations about the environments. These data were a rich source of insight for me, as a woman, entering an all-male domain. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) stated: "Observational data are attractive as they afford the researcher the opportunity to gather 'live' data from 'live' situations" (p. 305). Detailed handwritten observations were recorded during some meetings or straight after their conclusion. This strategy ensured that the quality and the integrity of the research were maintained. Notes were typed and made available to all stakeholders at any time during the study. This showed open and honest communication between the researcher and the participants, as well as allowing avenues for discussion and reflection.

A reflection journal was kept throughout the research. This enabled me to ask questions of myself and to access new understandings of how I positioned myself as a researcher. This "critical self-reflection" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695) prompted me to reflect on emotional responses to new situations (such as entering a Men's Shed for the first time) and interpretations of new experiences (such as trying to explain the survey to a room full of older men). It also challenged me to review previously held ideation. Conversations around these entries with critical friends allowed me to air uncertainties and to check any lingering subconscious gender bias that I may have harboured.

4.6.5. Interviews.

Twenty-nine semi-structured interviews were conducted in total. Each interview was digitally recorded at a venue of the interviewee's choice. For the benefit of balance and depth, the 'interested other' was not a member of either organisation. He was an older man with whom I wanted to discuss the issues raised in my readings and to clarify my thoughts prior to conducting the interviews.

Table 4.6

The Numerical Breakdown of the Semi-structured Interviews

TOMNET	MEN'S SHEDS	INTERESTED OTHER	TOTAL
15 interviewees	13 interviewees	1 interviewee	29 interviewees
Administrators = 3	Shed 1 = 1 Shed 2 = 1		
Office Holders = 2	Shed 3 = 1 Shed 4 = 1		
Ancillary Staff = 2	Shed 5 = 1 Shed 6 = 1		
Current Members = 8	Shed 7 = 1 Shed 8 = 1		
	Shed 10 = 1		
	Ex-Members = 4		

Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to verbalise and clarify, as well as they could, their philosophical views concerning the research topic. Morris (2015) claimed that these interviews "...allow the researcher to probe beyond the surface findings of the survey" (p. 9). This practice also provided a forum for participants to articulate their perceptions of a situation privately, in a non-judgmental, conversational setting. This type of one-on-one data collection enabled the participants and the researcher to get to know each other in an environment that was familiar to the participants. This, in turn, enabled genuine contact to occur between the parties. Venues were selected by the interviewees, and they ranged from office settings to domestic dining room tables. Practice interviews were conducted prior to beginning in earnest to ensure ease of recording and conversational flow.

Older men (over 50) who were members of a branch of TOMNET or a regional Men's Shed within a 500 kilometre radius of Toowoomba city were sought for data gathering. Geographically, this positioned the study for access to information-rich participants from both urban and rural areas. Participants represented characteristics that can be applied more broadly to the general population. Figure 4.5 represents a more detailed view of the areas studied as located within the regions of Queensland. Each of the organisations can be situated on the map below, except the township of Allora, which is located approximately half-way between Toowoomba and Warwick.

Two interviews were conducted by email. One participant had recently retired and currently resides overseas. The other participant was unable to be interviewed face to face. Morris (2015) claimed that the advantages of the email interview include geographical convenience; inexpensive and expedient access to the interviewee; the

removal of any social barriers such as gender; and that the interviewee is allowed time to answer the questions posed, thereby "...potentially enhancing the quality of their responses" (p. 95). I found these advantages to be applicable to this study, the single disadvantage being one of the interviewee's limited access to his Internet service provider.

4.6.6. Focus groups.

A total of six focus groups was conducted. Each session was digitally recorded on the organisations' premises. Table 4.7 provides a numerical breakdown of the focus group data.

Table 4.7

The Numerical Breakdown of the Focus Groups

TOMNET	MEN'S SHEDS	TOTAL
Focus Group 1 = 4 men	Focus Group 1 = 12 men	6 focus groups with a total of 48 participants
Focus Group 2 = 12 men	Focus Group 2 = 15 men	
	Focus Group 3 = 2 men	
	Focus Group 4 = 3 men	

Danaher et al. (2013) defined focus groups as discussions or interviews "...involving a number of participants with shared characteristics or experiences brought together to obtain ideas about a research topic" (p. 65). My study consisted of six formalised focus groups (please refer to Table 4.7). I found these quite powerful and a rich source of information gathering as the men openly discussed aspects of my research with their peers. These informal yet deliberate gatherings elicited a range of voices and perspectives in relation to an otherwise disempowered minority who may not have felt comfortable or inclined to share their views about masculinity and ageing in a large group. Thus, additional considerations were elicited through individuals discussing their "understandings, opinions and views" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 187).

4.6.7 Conclusion.

The research process was exemplified by collaboration with and inclusion of stakeholders in any decision-making or problem-solving, thereby ensuring that the data collection was dynamic and that it evolved alongside the study. Table 4.8

presents an overview of the data collection scope and sequence as applied to answering the research questions.

Table 4.8

The Scope and Sequence of Data Collection

RESEARCH QUESTION NUMBER/S	PHASE/S	INSTRUMENT/S	PURPOSE	SELECTION AND NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	DATA COLLECTION PROCESS/ES
1	1	Likert scale	To ascertain the significant issues identified by stakeholders over time.	Total population N=268	Total population survey questionnaire - participants self-selected
1	1, 2, 3	Archival and current document analysis	To collect background information to be used in the interviews and to provide a framework upon which to build the research.		Documents collected from the TOMNET and AMSA archives TOMNET and AMSA websites
2, 3	1, 2, 3	Observations Reflection journal	To understand the context over a period of time.		Field notes
2, 3	2	Semi-structured interviews	To negotiate the meanings of concepts and ideas identified in the document analysis and the issues identified in the survey.	N=29	One-on-one recorded interviews lasting between 30 minutes and two hours
2, 3	3	Focus groups	To use discussion as a means of delving more deeply into a topic to elicit opinions not previously mentioned. Also to clarify initial interpretations and to check data analysis credibility.	N=6	Small and large group recorded discussions with two to 15 participants

Table 4.9 presents the connection between the participants and the organisations. Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the participants and the organisations.

Table 4.9

The Intersection of Participants and Organisations in the Study.

TITLE	TOMNET	MEN'S SHEDS
Administrator (paid position)	Lucy (TOMNET Centre) Andrew (TOMNET Centre) Claire (TOMNET Centre)	
Office Holder (unpaid position)	Gary (TOMNET Centre) Adam (TOMNET Centre)	Neville (Shed 1) Sam (Shed 2) George (Shed 3) Ivan (Shed 4) Evan (Shed 5) Leo (Shed 6) Ron (Shed 7) Grant (Shed 8)
Ancillary Staff (paid position)	Victor (TOMNET Centre current counsellor) Laurence (TOMNET Centre past counsellor)	
Member	Barry Ben Brad Jack Paddy Peter Ray Walter	Greg (Ex-Member) Gordon (Ex-Member) Mark (Ex-Member) Peter (Ex-Member) Oscar (Current Member)
Focus Group	TOMNET Focus Group 1 TOMNET Focus Group 2	Shed Focus Group 1 (Shed 6) Shed Focus Group 2 (Shed 9) Shed Focus Group 3 (Shed 10) Shed Focus Group 4 (Shed 7)
Interested Other	Paul	

TOMNET Centre refers to the main TOMNET headquarters in Hume Street, Toowoomba. The TOMNET focus groups comprise the only two regional affiliates that were willing to participate in this research project. TOMNET Focus Group 1 is no longer in operation.

Shed 9 meets once a week and serves mainly as a social group for its members, most of whom are over 70. Younger members operate a limited amount of machinery, which is housed at the back of the Shed. None of the members was willing to be interviewed individually; however, some of them were enthusiastic about a group session.

4.7. Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) stated that “Qualitative research is not a linear, step by step process” (p. 165). She stressed that data analysis should be conducted throughout the research project and not be left until its conclusion. Data collection and analysis are a dynamic, simultaneous practice that begins with the first step of the data collection. The heart of academic rigour in qualitative research lies in the researcher’s ability to engage the participants in the investigative journey in order to elicit rich descriptions. These can then be ascribed a meaningful interpretation to create new understandings.

Consideration of research questions and methodological limitations should be taken into account to avoid unnecessary confusion and misleading or unsubstantiated interpretation. O’Leary (2010) outlined the process required for the reflective analysis of data in five steps. The first step is the organisation of raw data in which bias is identified and general ideas are noted. This is followed by coding and exploring patterns and relationships; charting and developing themes; interpreting and verifying hypotheses; and, finally, conclusion drawing. This “organic process” (p. 257) of analysis is iterative and inter-related.

4.7.1. Bias.

Somekh and Lewin (2011) defined bias as “an in-built tendency to see the world - and hence to interpret data - in a particular way” (p. 320). They warned that researchers should account for it during the project through reflexivity and acknowledgement. “If you do not acknowledge preconceived notions and actively

work to neutralize them, you are likely to find exactly what you expect to find!” (O’Leary, 2010, p. 268).

Unconscious cultural and social bias on the part of the researcher was reflected upon throughout the project. Based on the work of Rajendran (2001), I employed a number of strategies to mitigate the effects of these assumptions and preconceived notions. Because the data were interpretive, I constantly questioned my own prejudices. My unconscious biases revolved around the feminist doctrines of the privileged position of masculinity and the dominance of gender inequality. I was worried that the men would not consider my study worthy as it was being conducted by a woman. However, I did not find this to be true at all, and the men were quite willing to participate and to treat the matter seriously. Also, as a university-based scholar, I was ever mindful of coming from a position of respect when dealing with men who were not as privileged as I was in terms of formal education.

I adhered assiduously to the dictum, “The researcher’s primary goal is to add knowledge, not to pass judgement on a setting” (Rajendran, 2001, p. 3). Daily memos/observational fieldwork notes allowed me to self-reflect throughout the data collection and analysis phases. I reminded myself of the holistic nature of the study, and that the collection of the data did not constitute the whole of the project. I asked a critical friend to review my analysis and to point out any instances of my own subjectivity. I sought credibility through the discussion of my findings in an academic forum where biases could be revealed and examined in a peer review situation. “The human factor is the great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis” (Rajendran, 2001, p. 3).

4.7.2. Coding and themes.

The identification of themes is one of the central undertakings in qualitative research. “It is also one of the most mysterious” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 85). Scholarship about this topic has been prolific (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Somekh & Lewin, 2011; Yin, 2009). O’Leary (2010) identified that coding using themes creates a series of categories of “understanding” (p. 264). Prior to conducting a checklist examination of my data, I reminded myself of the dangers of preconceived assumptions. I attempted initially to allow for the inductive emergence of concepts but, to maintain academic rigour and

authenticity, I then discussed my findings with my supervisors and my critical friends.

When exploring themes initially, I followed the comprehensive checklist compiled by Ryan and Barnard (2003). This checklist comprised several significant indicators. These included checking for the following (where appropriate, the examples provided were taken directly from my transcripts):

- “word repetitions”
(e.g., “identity”);
- “indigenous categories” - themes that characterise the experience of informants
(e.g., “loss”);
- “keywords in context”
(e.g., “See me first before you go topping yourself”);
- “compare and contrast” - compare pairs of texts and ask hypothetical questions
(e.g., “What topics are similar in both?”/ “How is this text different from the ones I’ve read?”/ “What if the respondent had been an older woman instead of an older man?”);
- “social science queries” - evidence of social conflict or cultural contradictions
(e.g., “Women always want to take over”);
- “searching for missing information” - search for themes that are missing in the text
(e.g., the impact of farmers’ spiritual connection to the land);
- “transitions” - naturally occurring shifts in thematic content
(e.g., older women);
- “connectors that indicate relationships”
(e.g., “networks”);
- “unmarked texts” - examine any text that is not already associated with a theme
(e.g., boys and their role models);
- “pawing” - marking sections of text with differently coloured highlighter pens to indicate patterns in the text (pp. 94-100).

After I amassed information from the checklist, I then created cognitive maps (Griffin, 2006; Tolman, 1948; Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) that provided a bridge between the data and my theoretical assumptions. This practice allowed me to organise visual patterns and relationships between words and phrases. Figure 4.7 depicts a sample of one of the maps that I created based on rural men and retirement after speaking with Victor (TOMNET Centre Current Counsellor).

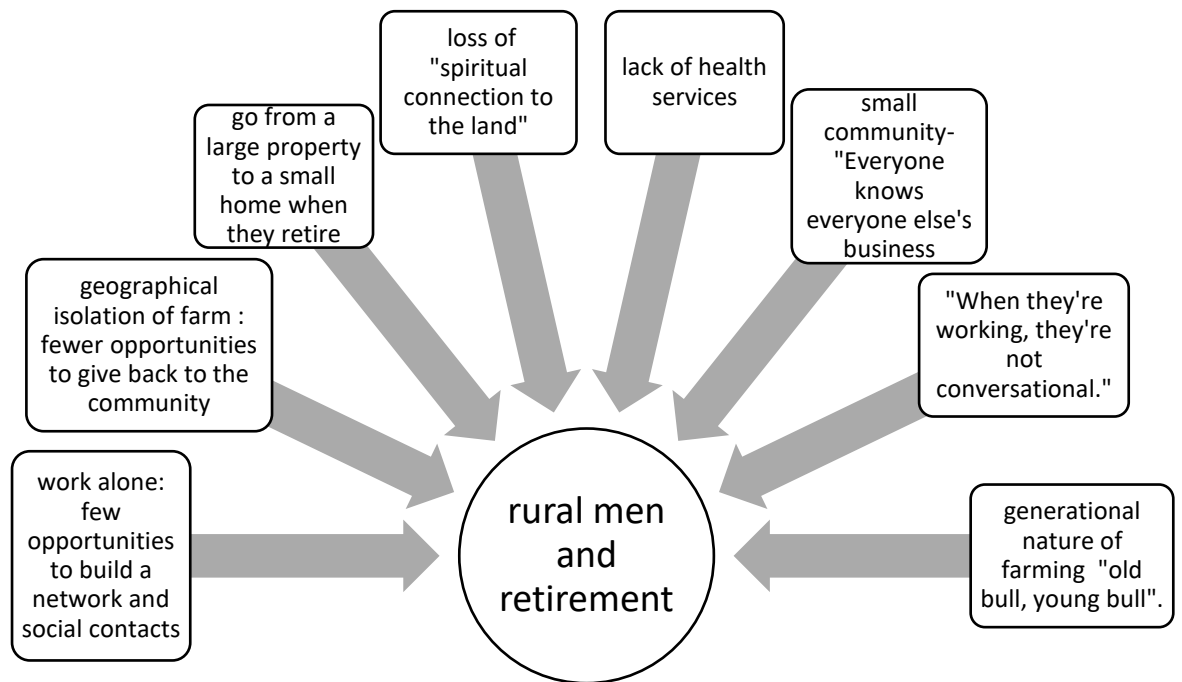


Figure 4.7. Cognitive map based on rural men and retirement

4.7.3. **Transcriptions.**

Conversations over 60 minutes long were sent to Pacific Transcription Services. Those not sent away were transcribed by hand and recorded in a notebook. I logged when and where the interview was conducted, and I made side notations as I transcribed. I followed the conversation verbatim, and I did not correct any grammar or terminology. Whenever possible, I began the transcribing process straight after the conclusion of the interview. Morris (2015) recommended that the researcher “...approach the interview material with an open mind” (p. 128). He warned that “strong preconceptions” (p. 128) may cause the researcher to miss vital data.

4.7.4. **Verification of data analysis.**

Cross verification from more than two sources tested the rigour and consistency of my findings (Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 330). Four different perspectives were sourced. These included TOMNET men, Men’s Shed men, TOMNET programmers and an interested other. I employed six distinct data gathering techniques. These consisted of a search of archival and current documents, the Likert scale survey, semi-structured interviews, fieldwork observations, a reflection journal and focus groups. Triangulation of these sources enabled me to check for data irregularities

and/or consistency. A reflection journal allowed me to review data interpretation (Roller, 2018).

When seeking data verification, I employed three strategies of triangulation: data source, theoretical and methodological (Thurmond, 2001, p. 254). Data source triangulation consisted of utilising evidence from six different data sources: the Likert scale survey; the review of archival and current documents; semi-structured interviews; fieldwork observations; journaling; and focus groups. Theoretical triangulation was catered for through the application of Groysberg, Lee, Price, and Cheng's (2018) "Integrated culture leader statements" (p. 48) in Chapter 5; "The Older Men's Contributive Needs and Identity Framework" conceptualised in Chapter 3 and applied in Chapter 6; and Jackson's (2017) four elements when building a sustainable business venture, which were used as a framework for Chapter 7. Each of these frameworks was directed through the different lenses of programming and leadership, members' contributive needs and sustainability. Methodological triangulation involved the utilisation of a qualitative research orientation that interpreted multiple methods of data gathering such as recorded one-on-one, semi-structured interviews and focus groups as well as a paper-based survey tailored to the needs of the participants (large font, etc.). These were iterative and were conducted at different times and in different places to suit the needs of the participants. A heuristic methodology ensured continued reflection during the study from both researcher and participants. These triangulations are represented diagrammatically in Figure 4.8.

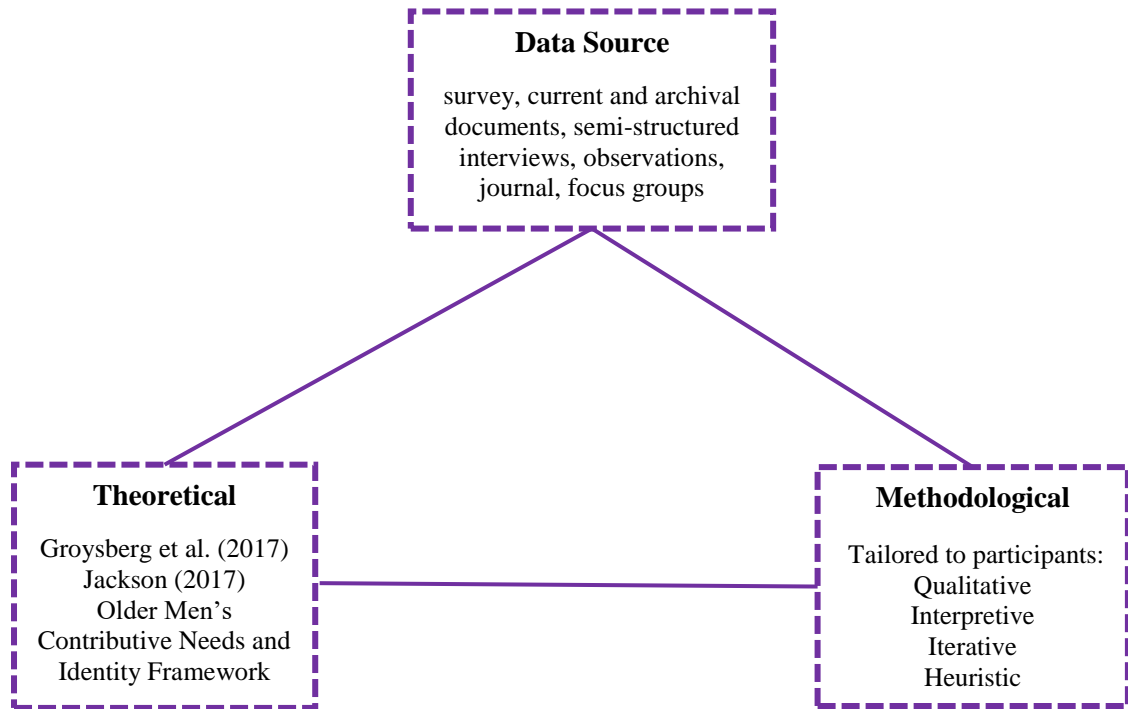


Figure 4.8. Data analysis verification through three separate triangulation devices

4.8. Ethical and Political Considerations

Danaher et al. (2013) outlined reasons why a researcher may wish to study marginalised groups. One reason is to strive to provide a voice for a previously silenced community through the process of a systematic and comprehensive investigative process (p. 111). After the needs of the group are ascertained, they are then revealed to the wider community upon publication. In this case, I wanted to address the effects of the unconscious marginalisation of older men by the community. This included the community in our local area as well as the wider community involving media and politicians. The crux of the study was the alarming statistic that revealed the ongoing, historical, inflated suicide rate of men over 85 years of age. I believe that this silent statistic has gone unnoticed for too long and that it should be brought to the public's attention.

This was a potentially risky endeavour. Ethical challenges exist and irresponsible methodology could lead to serious ramifications. The impact of the investigative process on the participants must be considered during and after the completion of the academic process. Danaher et al. (2013) warned that lack of authenticity and academic rigour could lead to misunderstandings and misrepresentations, and

damaged reputations, and could harm the very group that it was supposed to assist (p. 125). Cohen and Crabtree (2006) listed three considerations when seeking to ensure ethical rigour. The researcher should ask herself the following questions:

- Is the research beneficial to the targeted group?
- Are there alternative explanations for findings and have these been challenged and acknowledged?
- Have you actually contributed to the subject knowledge base? (n.p.)

Please refer to Appendix B for relevant documentation related to ethics documentation. The following subsections address the concerns around the ethics and politics of the study.

4.8.1. **Ethical researcher positioning.**

In her essay on researching with academic women in a hostile terrain, Moore (2004) discussed the notion of “reciprocity” (pp. 108, 111). She argued that mutuality should be a key feature of the researcher–participant relationship in order to “create a fertile and supportive environment” (p. 111) that was conducive to the generation of rich data. The researcher has a responsibility to create an environment in which the participant feels comfortable. In so doing, a level of mutual trust is engendered. Trainor and Bouchard (2012) advanced the argument of reciprocity when they posited that researchers are reliant on participants to inform and shape the study by volunteering their “...time, effort, experiences and wisdom” (n.p.). Alternatively, “...researchers are susceptible to variable involvement and apathy from participants” (n.p.).

I attempted to engender a positive and ethically responsible researcher–participant relationship when conducting surveys, interviews and focus groups through the following avenues:

- **I assured the participant of my serious intent** by making appointments at least a week beforehand and at a time convenient to the participant. Appointments were made over the phone, in person or by means of email – however the respondent felt comfortable communicating;
- **I ensured the comfort of the interviewees** by allowing them to select the venue. I made myself flexible enough to cater for individual/group needs as I wanted the participants to feel comfortable in a familiar/non-

threatening environment. Several of my interviews were conducted at the participants' kitchen tables. If the participant(s) wished to meet on neutral territory, I made arrangements for a meeting room to be booked and available at the local library, which was centrally positioned in town. I also went to work offices and buildings situated within the Men's Sheds grounds;

- **I maintained professionalism** by arriving at least 15 minutes before the allotted interview time to ensure that the venue was suitable in terms of ease of conversation. During this time, I checked the efficacy of my recording devices;
- **I always adhered to the ethical requirements** of the university and I explained my research proposal, provided and discussed the participation information sheet and elicited a signature on the interview consent form. I did not coerce any individual into participating, and I emphasised the anonymity of each respondent. Transcripts were securely stored;
- **I established rapport** during the interview by beginning with generalised conversation. Prior to the formalised interview, I also presented the participant with chocolates as a thank you gift for their time and any inconvenience that I may have caused them;
- **I supported the interviewees** throughout the conversation by enabling them to reflect and continue with a train of thought for as long as they needed. I did not shut the conversation down at any allotted time;
- **I followed the protocols** of each organisation. When interviewing members of TOMNET, I sought permission from the general manager before I approached the prospective interviewees. When conducting the Likert scale survey, I applied to the management board for a convenient time at which to attend one of the general meetings. I waited until I was invited to present my survey, and I left upon its conclusion, thereby honouring the privacy of the meeting;
- **I upheld the integrity and impartiality of the research process** by not accepting gifts from any of the participants. I dressed appropriately, and I was aware of my personal conduct at all times.

4.8.2. Phase 1: The Likert scale survey.

Phase 1 of my investigation was the implementation of a Likert scale survey. This was conducted with men from both TOMNET and the Men's Sheds that I visited. Part of the survey statements were altered to fit the respective organisation, but each section of the survey was formulated around five themes. These were peer support, understanding goals, wellbeing, community involvement and community awareness.

The compilation and administration of the survey focused on the target social group and the variabilities within. These included education levels and physical challenges as was discussed previously in this chapter. Somekh and Lewin (2011), along with other scholars (Danaher et al., 2013; Simons & Usher, 2000), argued that situated ethics "...acknowledges the uniqueness and complexity of each situation" (p. 27). In other words, ethical decisions by the researcher are situated in particular circumstances.

The delivery of the Likert scale survey was an example of situated ethics in action. The complexity of the situation demanded an alternative ethical code to the one applied in the interview situations. The age of the participants and the location of the implementation of the survey were considerable mitigating factors in delivery. To complete the survey task, the researcher had to account for the following:

- Some men were illiterate and did not want anyone to know, so they just ticked any box;
- Some men had disabilities - blind, deaf, dementia - and had to have peer support. This consisted of speaking loudly to one another for clarification and secondary explanations from the supporting male;
- Some men were rowdy and spoke over the top of one another and/or the facilitator - explanations were ignored or lost;
- Some men completed it before the facilitator had finished the explanation and filled it in incorrectly;
- Some men did not understand the degrees of agreement and were confused by the survey itself;
- Some men wrote words in the boxes instead of ticking them;
- Some men who needed help filling in the survey may not have revealed their true feelings in front of another male;

- Some men came in late and disrupted the flow of completion of the survey;
- One of the participants was consumed with his mortality and thought that he would die before finishing the survey and complained loudly throughout the survey implementation;
- It took a substantial amount of time to become settled before beginning the survey as it was either their morning tea time (Men's Sheds) or they had moved to a position in which to complete the survey comfortably (TOMNET);
- Some men threw pens at one another when they had finished.

It should be noted that I detected no intent of malice directed towards me from the men. They simply appeared to be enjoying one another's company in a familiar and comfortable environment. After the initial introduction and explanation, they acknowledged at the outset the importance of my study and that they were willing participants, to the best of their abilities, in completing the survey. I acknowledged and respected the fact that they had allowed me into their social group for that length of time.

4.8.3. **Phase 2: The semi-structured interviews.**

Morris (2015) discussed the impersonal nature of an interview, particularly when the researcher and the interviewee are strangers and have no prior relationship on which to build a comfortable interview environment: "The interview often involves the asking of questions that are personal and which the interviewee may have never discussed with anybody or even thought about. Also, the interviewer is likely never to see the interviewee again" (p. 4). These sentiments are pertinent to the ethical dilemmas included in a middle-aged, white female interviewing a previously unknown older male about his perception of himself and his reality.

The following aspects of contact were experienced in the interviews:

- Initially, the formality of the situation seemed awkward for some of the interviewees, so we chatted about inconsequential subjects before beginning the interview proper. This extended the contact time, which in some cases was inconvenient for the interviewee if he had a prior engagement.

- Owing to the subjective, self-reflective nature of the interview questions, ‘wait time’ for the answers to some of my questions was a protracted experience. At times, it necessitated the researcher to prompt in the form of the repetition of words/phrases or affirmations such as “You’re doing really well. Thank you again for giving up your time.” This usually broke down conversational barriers and assisted to recapture the conversational flow.
- Another by-product of the personal nature of the questions was that some of the men did not have the skills or temperament for self-reflection and the associated use of expressive lexicon. It was not that they did not want to give an honest answer; it was that they did not have the vocabulary to do so.
- A few of the older men preferred not to speak about their experiences of ageing directly but would cite examples of incidents that had occurred to their friends. They were happy to critique situations as from a distance.

I dealt with the above limitations by transcribing the interviews straightaway and by recording any observations that I may have made during the interview. I did not take observational notes during the actual interviews as I did not wish to distract or offend the interviewee. These transcriptional notes were then placed in a secure location. I assured each interviewee of his anonymity, and during the transcription process I applied a pseudonym to each participant.

4.8.4. Phase 3: The focus groups.

The focus groups were attended by between two and 15 men. At times, a group was in progress and other men decided to join the discussion. In these situations, I did not limit participation. The behavioural characteristics of the men presented during the implementation of the Likert scale survey were not in evidence. The focus groups were a clearly defined and valuable source of rich data. Each of the ethical protocols around integrity and authenticity was observed by the researcher.

4.8.5. Conclusion.

Cohen and Crabtree (2006) listed three key points when evaluating the “substantive validity” (n.p.) of interpretivist research. This refers to the work’s “substance or content” (n.p.). Firstly, the evaluator requires the substantiation of the interpretive choices made by the researcher. Secondly, inherent biases must be assessed throughout the research project. Thirdly, the researcher must constantly self-reflect throughout the process.

During the course of the investigation, I was sensitive to the existence of my own personal biases and subjectivities to do with lifestyle practices. As a female researcher conducting an exploration of ‘a man’s world’, I was aware of gender assumptions to do with stereotypes, masculinity and ageing. I was also aware that the male participants may have possessed gender assumptions of their own to do with stereotypes, power and socio-economic status/education, although I did not detect these in any data collection. Occasionally, I was conscious that there were dominant voices that could have detracted from my appreciation of the diversity of the group. I was cognisant of the differences in skill sets to do with articulating thoughts and meanings.

4.9. Summary of the Chapter

Chapter 4 commenced with a reference to the contextual and conceptual frameworks that I employed when developing my argument. I then moved on to explain the sequential components of the study’s “blueprint” as discussed by O’Leary (2010, p. 89). I began by describing the rationale and the philosophical underpinnings behind the decision to utilise an interpretivist paradigm (Section 4.2). Section 4.3 highlighted the application of the study’s qualitative orientation. I then presented the case study method and why it was chosen as the preferred research method of this investigation (Section 4.4). Section 4.5 reviewed site and participant selection, followed by the data collection and analysis techniques presented in Sections 4.6 and 4.7 respectively. Following these sections, the ethics and politics of the study were outlined (Section 4.8). Figure 4.9 is a diagrammatic representation of the holistic nature of the research design investigating older men’s contributive needs. It demonstrates the cyclical nature of the investigative process and my serious intent to

conduct a reflexive, organic investigation that considered each of the study’s major elements.

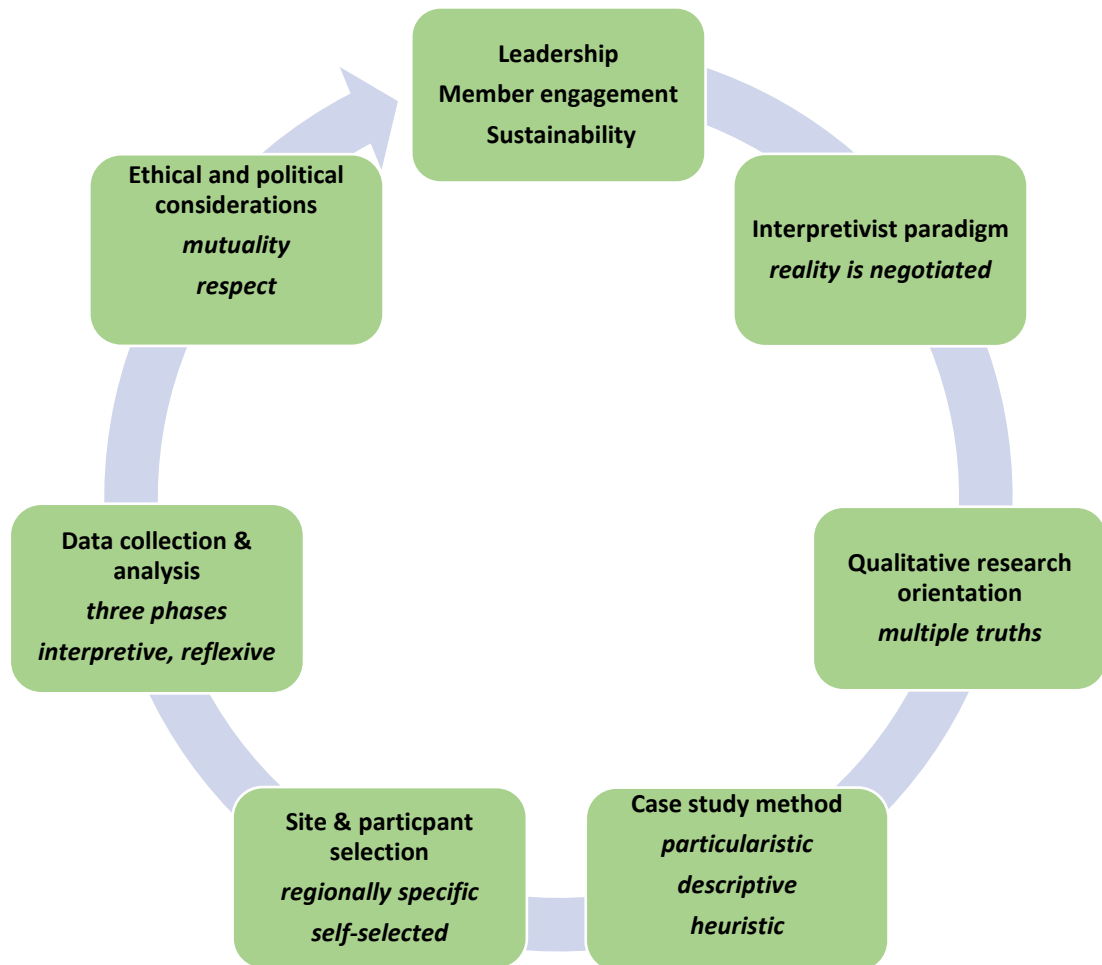


Figure 4.9. A summary of the chapter’s exploration of the research design as a cyclical process

The next chapter (Chapter 5) is the first of the three discussion chapters that answers the research questions proposed in Chapter 1 (Figure 1.5). Chapter 5 investigates **Research Question 1**: How does the TOMNET and Men’s Sheds’ organisational leadership seek to implement the design of their programs and philosophies so that they best fit the contributive needs of older men?

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH QUESTION 1

“These guys are more than capable of doing this stuff and it’s their show. We walk along beside them. We don’t pull them along.”

Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator)

5.1. Overview of the Chapter

Just as this research is not designed to pit one gender against another (please refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.2), it is also not designed as an evaluative tool to be used when determining which organisation better suits the contributive needs of older men. As masculine identity is multidimensional, this study illuminates the operational designs and philosophies of each organisation and the manner in which they both, quite differently, suit the contributive needs of a hitherto ignored, undervalued and marginalised cohort in society.

At this stage of the thesis, it is timely to revisit the three research questions that framed this qualitative, interpretivist enquiry:

- **Research Question 1:** How does the TOMNET and Men’s Sheds’ organisational leadership seek to implement the design of their programs and philosophies so that they best fit the contributive needs of older men?
- **Research Question 2:** How have the members of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds experienced and engaged with their programs and philosophies vis-à-vis members’ contributive needs?
- **Research Question 3:** To what extent are TOMNET and Men’s Sheds important vehicles for the sustainable delivery of the contributive needs of older men in the community?

Table 5.1 sets out the definitions of pivotal terminology used throughout Chapters 5, 6 and 7 as I answer the research questions. This orientation is crucial to understanding the program designs and philosophies.

Table 5.1

Pivotal Terminology and Definitions

TERMINOLOGY	DEFINITION	SOURCE
AMSA	Australian Men's Shed Association	mensshed.org
Baby Boomer Generation	Demographic cohort born between 1946 and 1964	McCrindle (n.d.)
Builder Generation	Demographic cohort born between 1925 and 1945	McCrindle (n.d.)
Contributive needs	opportunities for older men to be of service and contribute to the needs of others as well as self	Author's definition
Gender	"The cultural meanings that are ascribed to the biological distinctions between the two sexes."	Kimmel (1994, p. viii)
Leadership	"...persuading members of a group to strive for a shared goal that is thought to be crucial for the responsibilities and welfare of the group."	Southcombe et al. (2015, p. 974)
Older man	A male over 50 years of age	Cusack & Thompson (1999, p. xi)
Programs	Scheduled activities with a common theme	Author's definition
Philosophies	An attitude that acts as a code for beliefs and behaviours	Author's definition
QMSA	Queensland Men's Shed Association	
Seniors	Demographic cohort born between 1900 and 1924	McCrindle (2014)
Sex	"The biological dimorphic division of male and female."	Kimmel (1994, p. viii)
TOMNET	The Older Men's Network	tomnet.org.au

Chapter 5 addresses **Research Question 1:** How does the TOMNET and Men’s Sheds’ organisational leadership seek to implement the design of their programs and philosophies so that they best fit the contributive needs of older men?

The programs and philosophies connected with TOMNET and Men’s Sheds are presented and then deconstructed to demonstrate their alignment, or otherwise, with the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework (Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1, Figure 3.9).

This chapter consists of three sections of clustered themes, with subheadings and topics appropriate to each theme. These are depicted in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

Chapter 5 Themes, Subheadings and Topics

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
5.2 ETHOS	5.2.1 Male-only culture	*Gendered community organisations
	5.2.2 Grassroots organisations	*Mateship
	5.2.3 Anti-deficit positioning	*Member driven
	5.2.4 Community capacity building	*Codes of conduct *Standards *Philosophies and expectations *Health and welfare
5.3 STRUCTURE	5.3.1 Aims and goals	*Administration and executives
	5.3.2 Leadership	*Leadership styles
	5.3.3 Program implementation	*Weekly programs and activities
5.4 MEMBERSHIP	5.4.1 Membership application	*Age limits
		*Inclusivity

5.2. Ethos

The term “ethos” (etymonline.com/word/ethos) is derived from the Greek word for belief, convention or practice. This thesis interogrates the concept of ethos as it refers to a community’s shared customs in terms of masculinised codes and

values to do with identity and belonging. As an extrapolation, it could be argued that organisational ethos may refer to the “usages, habits and traditions of one social group as distinguished from another” (Sattler, 1947, p. 55). Brahnam (2009) defined situated ethos as being “...based on repeated exposure to the public and on building trust over time...” (p. 14). Furthermore, “This recalls the meaning of the ancient Greek word ethos as ‘habitual gathering place’” (p. 14). In the valuing of agency for older men and acknowledging their generalised shared gender traits, both TOMNET and Men’s Sheds organisations have created separate but equally compelling ethea based on their fundamental values around masculine norms.

Drawing on information gleaned from multiple data sources (please refer to Figure 4.8), this section begins with a discussion of the similarities in ethos between TOMNET and the Men’s Shed movement as a whole as defined by the leadership of both organisations. However, even though the two organisations share certain commonalities in ethos, their aims and objectives are quite distinct. This facet of difference is examined in detail throughout this chapter.

Throughout each section, particular attention is paid to the extent to which the two organisations seek to address older men’s contributive needs. Table 5.3 depicts the progression of the chapter’s structure as it applies to Section 5.2.

Table 5.3

The Progression of the Chapter’s Structure: Section 5.2 ETHOS

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
5.2 ETHOS	5.2.1 Male-only culture	*Gendered community organisations
	5.2.2 Grassroots organisations	*Mateship
	5.2.3 Anti-deficit positioning	*Member driven
	5.2.4 Community capacity building	*Codes of conduct
		*Standards
		*Philosophies and expectations
		*Health and welfare

TOMNET and Men's Sheds exhibit four common characteristics. Both espouse a male-only culture; both are grassroots organisations; both groups advocate anti-deficit views of older men; and both are dedicated to building community capacity. These characteristics are discussed below.

5.2.1. **Male-only culture.**

The formation of organisations dedicated to supporting and empowering one gender is not a recent phenomenon. The Country Women's Association of Australia (CWAA), formed in 1945, aimed to speak "...with one voice on all national matters, more especially concerning the welfare of country women and children" (National Library of Australia, 2008, n.p.). Soroptimist International (SI), founded in 1921, is a women's only volunteer movement with a network base in 122 countries: "Our membership work on grassroots projects that help women and girls...have an equal voice in communities worldwide" (soroptimistinternational.org, n.p.). Zonta International, founded in 1919, is active in 66 countries "...working to improve the lives of women and girls" (zonta.org, n.p.). Each of these female-only membership service clubs has branches within the research area of this thesis.

"The question of whether and why men need a place of their own is an important one in terms of gender politics" (Golding et al., 2007, p. 21). Like the CWAA, SI and Zonta, TOMNET and Men's Sheds were formed with a gender-specific purpose. The social and emotional support and wellbeing of men, particularly older men, were paramount in the design of the ethos of the two organisations that were researched. Their designation as male-only spaces was reflected in the philosophy behind their manifestos and reinforced through the beliefs of their members.

TOMNET was specifically formed with the ethos of "reconnecting older men" (tomnet.org.au, n.p.). TOMNET founders recognised the insidious nature of the inflated suicide rates (please refer to Chapter 1, Figure 1.3) in older males, and they pioneered the establishment of an organisation dedicated to the concept of suicide prevention for men over 50 years of age. The TOMNET website stated that "Older men are the most effective at supporting one another", and that "The element of mateship is integral to the relationships that older men have with each other" (tomnet.org.au, n. p).

TOMNET administrators stressed that there was no pressure put on members to engage in any of the programs. This relaxed, welcoming approach was reflected in their online Event Calendar. Men were encouraged to: “Come in and meet some of the guys” (TOMNET.org, Event Calendar) in the Wednesday Mens [sic] Meeting, and/or to “Come in and have a cup of coffee, meet a new mate or organise a get together” in the Thursday Mens [sic] Meetings called “Chew the Fat” (tomnet.org.au/events).

Women can become associate members of TOMNET. This does not allow them to attend any of the Wednesday or Thursday TOMNET Centre meetings, or to participate in the visitation programs or the social groups formed by male members such as cards or choir singing. They can, however, offer their services alongside the men as volunteer mentors at the Toowoomba Flexi School under the auspices of TOMNET. A number of the members’ wives as well as other women from the local community were involved in this manner. As associate members, women demonstrated their support for the TOMNET Centre Flexi School volunteer program, thereby acknowledging the importance and value to the community of the men’s efforts in intergenerational mentoring.

Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator) explained that women as full-time members would be detrimental to the philosophy and practicalities of an organisation that prioritises the prevention of male suicide through meaningful conversation: “Women as members - it changes the mood. It changes the atmosphere completely. Guys don’t tend to open up as much.”

Meaningful conversations were fundamental to the TOMNET ethos. Ensuring that these conversations were effective was a priority. Gary (TOMNET Office Holder) explained: “It’s not sufficient just to get them together to have a cup of tea or coffee and have a bit of a talk. You’ve got to structure them in such a way that you help the men [to] talk.”

Adam (TOMNET Centre Office Holder) stated that TOMNET was originally formed as a breakaway group from another mixed gender association: “...because of the fact that the women were taking over. They had opinions on everything, and the male opinion just didn’t rate.” Laurence (TOMNET Centre Past Counsellor) was of the opinion that:

Older generations value their gender differences and take pride in them, and, as they continue to be contributing members of society, their preferences for

membership in gender-based organisations deserve respect and recognition. There is nothing sinister in male-only or female-only organisations.

Men's Sheds was formed with the ethos of working "shoulder to shoulder" (mensshed.org). As with TOMNET, the concept of peer connectedness was a priority: "Men of all ages go to the Shed to support other men" (mensshed.org). Ivan (Shed 4 Office Holder) described the need for friendship as: "...deep in the heart for everybody".

Connection through mateship in an informal setting was also comparable to TOMNET's principles of older men helping older men:

Becoming a member of a Men's Shed provides a safe and busy environment... in an atmosphere of old-fashioned mateship. And, importantly, there is no pressure. Men can just come and have a yarn and a cuppa if that is all they're looking for. (mensshed.org/what-is-a-mens-shed)

The importance of a relaxed atmosphere was reiterated by Evan (Shed 5 Office Holder): "There's a few that just want to sit down with the fellas and have a chat. That's very important because they'll open up to those guys more than they'll open up to anybody else."

Golding et al. (2007) cited Flood (2005) in his defence of male-only groups. He proposed that they were valuable for three reasons: 1) the positive effect that the peer group can have on men's thought processes and actions; 2) the feature of a safe place for men to talk with one another, and, 3) negatively stereotyped gendered interactions were minimised in a single sex group environment (p. 5). The two notions of positivity of thoughts and actions enacted in a nonthreatening, safe environment were exemplified in the following extract taken from a booklet published by a regional council about Shed 7:

We turn up in the morning and start with coffee and a snack to get us going, then we sit back and discuss what we're working on that day. Most of the blokes love a good chat but some of the newer guys are reserved and don't talk too much, but they soon open up. We're about equality. Here we talk about everything openly. (Toowoomba Regional Council, 2017, p. 8)

Flood's (2005, as cited by Golding et al., 2007) third point focused on a single sex group environment. Laurence (TOMNET Centre Past Counsellor) remarked: "Inoffensive and non-malicious chauvinism is culturally ingrained in the older

generations. Male-only organisations do not preclude women from various forms of involvement. This does not equate to these women being regarded as inferior in any way.”

A recurring theme throughout the Men’s Shed interviews was the detrimental effect that women would have on the male membership of Men’s Sheds if they were to join. Gordon (Ex-Member) believed that, if women were invited to participate, the dynamic of a Men’s Shed would change: “Men would stay away. Women want to take over the Shed and boss the men around.” Evan (Shed 5 Office Holder) was adamant about maintaining the male-only space of the Men’s Shed and not allowing women to become members: “We’re dead set against it here. We love to have our wives come for morning teas and things like that but not to take part in the Shed. That’s getting away from what we’re about.” George (Shed 3 Office Holder) felt that women would hamper men’s discussions about health topics:

I can come here some mornings...and we sit here and talk about our prostates and other men’s health things...and you can get advice...whereas I think, if you got someone from the opposite sex, you’d probably find they’d be disinclined to talk. I know they would be. It’s a Men’s Shed and that’s the way it’s going to be.

Another equally noteworthy facet of the potentially negative effect that the presence of women may have on Shed dynamics was reported by Golding et al. (2007): “Men who need more training on the shed equipment are significantly less likely to feel comfortable if women participate in the shed” (p. 8). Sam (Shed 2 Office Holder) concurred: “You get more out of men without women being present.”

5.2.2. Grassroots principle.

Schneider (2011) referred to grassroots as “...local people working together to find solutions to problems in their communities” (n.p.). Grassroots may lend legitimacy and add kudos to a group/organisation that “...will probably be even stronger if the group is credibly composed of individuals who are relatively disadvantaged - unlikely, in other words, to be able to use other mechanisms of influence to accomplish their purposes” (Barber, 2011, n.p.).

By definition, both TOMNET and the Men’s Shed movement were grassroots organisations. A marginalised membership cohort (older men) drove the

philosophies and the programs in order to advance the wellbeing of their members and to lift their profile in a positive manner within their community.

The TOMNET website stated that “Old age can also place restrictions on men and their connections to groups and networks that once provided support” (tomnet.org.au, n.p.). The culture of connectedness and mateship was provided through the provision of a supportive environment in which to meet, as well as highlighting sharply defined goals and aspirations for its members and administration: “Our job is to help them [to] engage and reengage in their confidence.... They take ownership and then they take responsibility and then they get their independence and their confidence back and off they go” (Lucy, TOMNET Centre Administrator).

The TOMNET management committee comprised 11 elected members who liaised with the administration on members’ behalf. The members were able to establish their own subgroups (such as the Barbeque Team, Choir, etc.) and were wholly responsible for their operation once they were formed. Members also controlled the content of weekly meetings. The TOMNET website reinforced this fact in its calendar of weekly programs: “Member driven - every week is different” (tomnet.org.au/#whatson).

The 7th National Men’s Shed Conference (2017) website stressed the importance of the grassroots origins of the Men’s Shed Movement. Conference convenor and Australian Men’s Shed Association (AMSA) Executive Officer, David Helmers, wrote: “From humble beginnings, the 7th National Australian Men’s Shed Association Conference recognises the evolution of the Men’s Shed movement with a focus on grassroots shed operations and sustainability – to support the continued growth and success of your shed” (dconferences.com.au/mensshed2017/home).

Each Shed was an autonomous entity, and the independence of the Sheds was promoted by AMSA. The overarching aim was that the Sheds were member driven to suit the particular needs of the community in which they were located. Milligan et al. (2013) argued that this “organic” (p. 8) grassroots mentality at a local level provided Sheds with an ease of accessibility to all older men. Shed members or “Shedders” (mensshed.org/about-amsa/) voted for their leadership team (the size of which varied from Shed to Shed), and were active voices in the day to day operations of their Shed.

5.2.3. Anti-deficit positioning.

Negative and ageist stereotypes are perpetuated by some authors of social media with political intent. In his 2015 novel entitled *Make Me*, internationally acclaimed author Lee Child's protagonists encountered a volunteer at a local library:

He was a thin old specimen, with pleated no-iron khaki pants and a full head of white hair, neatly brushed, and a tucked-in plaid shirt, like a retired person's uniform. Retired from an executive position, probably, full of spreadsheets and data, still needing to feel wanted, or wanting to feel needed. (pp. 202, 203)

TOMNET and Men's Sheds provided an alternative reality to the grim and overbearing characterisation in Child's (2015) novel. The expectations underlying their individual philosophies and the programs that each organisation undertook ensured that they were demonstrating to the wider community that older men deserve respect and can play beneficial roles within the community when provided with the opportunity to do so.

The TOMNET mission statement as outlined in the *Code of Conduct* booklet (TOMNET, n.d.) highlighted four principles: "Value older men, regardless of their circumstances; Provide peer support networks that respond to and reflect individual needs; Promote the role of older men supporting older men; and Respect each other's differences" (p. i). These principles clearly communicated TOMNET's dedication to respecting the rights and the individualistic nature of older men.

The *Code of Conduct* (TOMNET, n.d.) then provided standards expected of all TOMNET stakeholders. Each criterion represented a detailed paragraph describing the underlying philosophy, followed by a comprehensive checklist outlining practical ways in which members could demonstrate the lived reality:

"Standard 1 - Respect and Dignity" (TOMNET, p. 2) described appropriate conduct when interacting with TOMNET members (including the Administration) and the wider public.

"Standard 2 - Working with Integrity" (TOMNET, p. 3) outlined professional conduct practices.

"Standard 3 - Privacy and Confidentiality" (TOMNET, p. 4) provided guidelines around the protection of personal information.

"Standard 4 - Legislation/Funding/Standards" (TOMNET, p. 5) outlined Federal and State legislation relevant to services provided by the organisation.

“Standard 5 - Due Diligence” (TOMNET, p. 6) discussed the responsibilities of stakeholders in understanding and acknowledging personal bias and not allowing such bias to impinge on professionalism when representing TOMNET. “Standard 6 - Stakeholder Relationships” (TOMNET, p. 7) addressed the value of relationships within the organisation and the wider community and the appropriate maintenance of those relationships. “Standard 7 - Use of Technology” (TOMNET, p. 8) examined the correct and lawful application of access to technology.

A copy of the *Code of Conduct* (TOMNET, n.d.) was provided to each member and was available online. These ethical principles were based on TOMNET’s core values and legitimised the professional standards to which the organisation was held by stakeholders and the wider public.

Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) emphasised the beneficial aspect of having these philosophies and expectations clearly defined for the men:

By saying to a bloke that’s come in the door, “When you’re ready, this is our expectation. You will support older men; this is what we do here. You will be asked to get involved in our volunteering; you will be asked to pick up a dish and contribute to the group.” You’re telling him that [his] skills and [his] abilities are still valuable.

The intention of the generic *Men’s Shed Handbook* (Australian Men’s Shed Association [AMSA], 2015) was to focus on particular principles that were central to the integrity of each individual Men’s Shed. As with the TOMNET mission statement and set of standards, the rights and responsibilities of the members were outlined clearly.

In order to expand and clarify the definition of a Men’s Shed (please refer to Chapter 1, Table 1.1), a set of guidelines was supplied in the “Member Code of Conduct”. These were as follows:

- “Certain restrictions may be placed on participation for physical safety reasons or if a member requires the assistance of a carer (must be provided by the participant) or be deemed a prohibited person
- Act in the best interests of the shed and not pursue personal agendas - think collectively through a democratic process, not individually
- Provide a safe physical environment

- Provide a safe and supportive social environment
- Be able to guide members to other services or agencies when appropriate or requested.” (p. 22)

In line with the above guidelines, a set of criteria outlining the expectations of members was also supplied. “AMSA members are expected:

- To remain consistent [with] the definition of a Men’s Shed as outlined in AMSA Membership By Law
- Not compete on a commercial basis with local industries in the production of products for sale
- Not refuse membership [of] the shed on any basis of race, sexual preference, religion or ethnic background
- Not bring into disrepute the membership of any shed or the AMSA or the corporate brands or images [with] which it is associated
- Not make any unauthorised representation on behalf of the AMSA
- Maintain that an operational shed is open for the use of its members as often as the membership requests and is physically, financially and logistically possible
- To the best of the sheds management’s ability, meet the identified and justified needs of the shed membership
- Operate in accordance [with] the associated rules and regulations of the Incorporations Act of the State in which the shed is physically located
- Comply with all local, state and federal legislations that may apply to the operation of a Men’s Shed.” (p. 23)

Table 5.4 presents a distillation of the comparisons between the Codes of Conduct for TOMNET and the AMSA.

Table 5.4

Codes of Conduct Comparison

TOMNET (n.d.)	AMSA (2015)
Standard 1: Respect and Dignity (p. 2)	“To the best of the sheds management’s ability, meet the identified and justified needs of the shed membership” (p. 23).
Standard 2: Working with Integrity (p. 3)	“Not refuse membership [of] the shed on any basis of race, sexual preference, religion or ethnic background” (p. 23). “Not compete on a commercial basis with local industries in the production of products for sale” (p. 23).
Standard 3: Privacy and Confidentiality (p. 4)	“Provide a safe and supportive social environment” (p. 22).
Standard 4: Legislation/Funding/Standards (p. 5)	“Operate in accordance [with] the associated rules and regulations of the Incorporations Act of the State in which the shed is physically located. Comply with all local, state and federal legislations that may apply to the operation of a Men’s Shed” (p. 23).
Standard 5: Due Diligence (p. 6)	“Maintain that an operational shed is open for the use of its members as often as the membership requests and is physically, financially and logistically possible. To remain consistent [with] the definition of a Men’s Shed as outlined in the AMSA Membership By Law” (p. 23).
Standard 6: Stakeholder Relationships (p. 7)	“Not bring into disrepute the membership of any shed or AMSA or the corporate brands or images to which it is associated. Not make any unauthorised representation on behalf of AMSA” (p. 23).
Standard 7: Use of Technology (p. 8)	The AMSA Handbook (2015) did not address this topic.

5.2.4. Community capacity building.

This subsection examines the concept of community capacity building as it applied to the organisational leadership of TOMNET and Men’s Shed. As demonstrated in Figure 5.1, I propose that there were two simultaneous arenas of community operating within (internal) and outside (external) the physical boundaries of the TOMNET Centre and the individual Men’s Shed premises. Internal community capacity building occurred with member interactions as they followed the programs and the guidance of the leadership within the physical boundaries of

the organisation. External community capacity building occurred with the members' interactions in the wider community- i.e., beyond the physical boundaries of the groups' headquarters. This may take many forms.

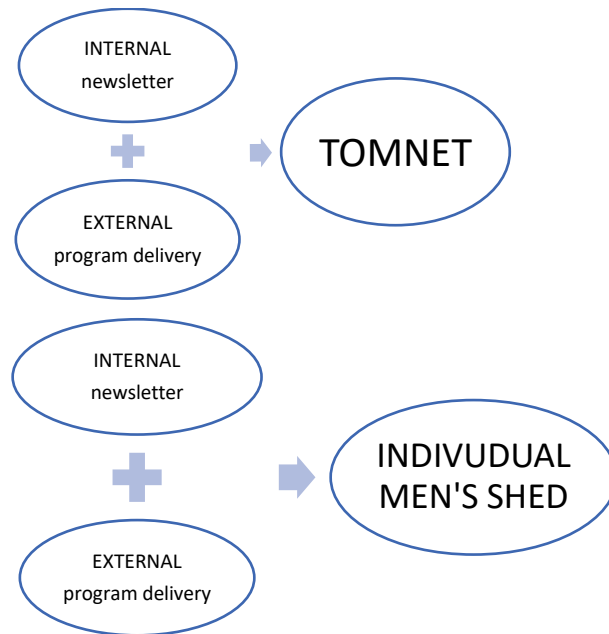


Figure 5.1. Community capacity building through the lens of organisational leadership

Danaher, Postle, and Burton (2014) discussed the multiple meanings of the term “community capacity building” (pp. 7-12). They warned against acceptance of a ‘one size fits all’ definition, preferring to cite specific examples of successful instances of practice and the “recurring dimensions” (p. 8) illustrated in each example. These “dimensions” (p. 8) included, among other facets, having an: “identified purpose” and, a “sense of togetherness”, and “enabling communities to work together to address specific common perceived concerns and fulfil collective aspirations” (p. 8). Organisational leadership in both of the groups studied exemplified and enabled these components of community capacity building.

Newsletters can promote a sense of belonging within a community in that they reinforce the organisational ethos and encourage a sense of unity and purpose. This can be especially effective in groups such as TOMNET and Men’s Sheds where leaders were cognisant of the widely ranging geographical nature of the membership.

The *TOMNET Telegraph* was published monthly by the TOMNET administration and was available online and as a hard copy at TOMNET’s headquarters. It contained information from the administration and the management committee. The content of the newsletters kept members up to date with funding,

staffing, events and program availability. The management committee provided a monthly report that included information about the committee members and a general overview of activities carried out by the membership over the prior month. In keeping with TOMNET's ethos of supporting men to engage in meaningful conversations, each newsletter included an article on the topic of emotions - e.g., "How to Navigate Difficult Conversations" (2017b, September) and "Want to Help a Mate with Anxiety?" (2016, March).

AMSA published two monthly newsletters online: *The Shedder* and *Spanner in the Works*. *The Shedder* focused on activities and events within the Men's Shed community - e.g., "Majura Men's Shed Helping to Create Mates and Moments Worth Remembering" (2017a). It also featured a section written by AMSA Executive Officer, David Helmers. Other topics included articles about men's health as well as funding opportunities.

Both the *TOMNET Telegraph* and *The Shedder* included multiple photographs of the members, thereby further engendering "a sense of togetherness" (Danaher et al., 2014, p. 8).

Effective program delivery, driven by successful and flexible leadership, fulfilled the third element of community capacity building as defined by Danaher et al. (2014): "...enabling communities to work together to address specific common perceived concerns and fulfil collective aspirations" (p. 8). The "collective aspirations" (p. 8) of both groups were to reduce the stigma around ageing and older men.

TOMNET contributed to community capacity building through its active encouragement, and its implementation and positioning, of multiple volunteer programs throughout the local community. This had a twofold beneficial result in that it positively fostered both independence and interdependence within the men themselves, and it also helped disadvantaged community groups such as 'at risk' teenagers and socially isolated older men:

The volunteering program is about helping them [the men to] get back in to the community. We set everything up in teams, so people work together better and build better relationships when they work alongside each other. But it's also about: "Oh, I'm part of something bigger than just myself." They've also got a purpose because they're going and making a difference in a life to someone who hasn't got much going on in theirs. (Lucy, TOMNET Centre Administrator)

Programs designed to participate in community events also raised the profile of older men: “We roll out the bbq with other volunteers, have a chat whilst talking to the community about older men’s issues - we love it!” (tomnet.org.au). TOMNET banners and a stall manned by four or five members at local shopping centres periodically as well as attendance at regional events such as Senior’s Week ensured that the organisation maintained a visual presence within the community. Such endeavours also served to muster new members.

The weekly Wednesday afternoon meetings, the “Chew the Fat” meetings held on Thursday mornings and the monthly interest groups (photography, cards, chess, singing and the art group) also built community capacity within the group. They offered connectedness and life enrichment to men who would otherwise be socially isolated.

It was not specifically part of the Men’s Sheds’ ethos to do volunteer work outside the Shed. The AMSA handbook (2015) stated that:

Most ‘shedders’ see themselves as having a strong sense of belonging and ownership of their shed, share fellowship, [and] camaraderie and devote most of their time to worthwhile community projects. Men’s Sheds play important roles in the overall improvement of health and wellbeing and also [in] positively engaging within their community for the benefit of their community. (p. 17)

Each of the Men’s Sheds that were researched was undertaking building or restoration projects to be donated to various groups within their local community.

Shed 3 (rural locality) members were concerned that one of the local aged care homes offered little in the way of activity for the male residents (mostly farmers), so they built a designated, men-only work bench on site. They have since completed an interactive ‘touch me board’ with numerous items of farming equipment such as gate hinges, locks, nails, hammers, wire, tap handles and horse paraphernalia (such as buckles and reins) in the hope that this would stimulate interest and memory in the male patients. They also secreted secured bottles of turpentine around the bench to evoke familiar smells.

Evan (Shed 5 Office Holder) explained how his Shed conducted annual garage sales with the help of the local community: “...we make more than enough money to keep us going and it allows us to do jobs for the community at no cost and we’ve given about \$14000 in the last 18 months.”

Projects were also cited by individual Sheds in the former Queensland Men's Shed Association (QMSA) newsletter, *Shed Chatter*:

Every year we have had the Early Childhood Services Project where the Gladstone Men's Shed makes approx. 650 items of furniture and toys per annum for over 40 kindergartens and pre-schools in the region. This quarter has been no different and the mud kitchens remain very popular and the new Calliope Kindergarten has taken many items from us.

(qldmensshed.org/SiteFiles/qldmensshedorgau/shed-chatter-april-2016.pdf)

Even though their practices differed, fundamentally the philosophy of community capacity building applied to both TOMNET and Men's Sheds. Both were formed in recognition of the issues surrounding men – in particular, older men. Both promoted a sense of togetherness and unity within their members by wearing corporate shirts and upholding common organisational aspirations. They aspired actively to build a positive profile of masculinity and ageing through community service. Programs and initiatives provided members with a conduit to the public and vice versa, thereby strengthening links within the community at large. The positive interactions generated relationships that were beneficial to combatting ageist stereotypes and biases.

The TOMNET Centre did not have a designated welfare officer per se. Instead, a member of the administrative team was responsible for the coordination of a list of programs that included volunteering, peer support, phone support and aged visiting. Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator) explained the phone support role:

...somebody who might come to the Wednesday meeting and, all of a sudden, we don't see them for a while, they get put on the list for a phone call....

Someone who goes into hospital, they get put on the list...

After someone was "put on the list" for an unexplained absence or an illness as noticed by a member or an administrator, a TOMNET Centre member volunteer rang the man for a "social chat". Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator) stated that, depending upon the outcome of the chat, the recipient of the phone call may be listed for a phone call from one of the onsite counsellors.

The larger Men's Sheds included a Welfare Coordinator or a Welfare Officer as part of their committee. Shed 7 had approximately 50 members. Their Welfare Officer was appointed because "...quite often weeks would go by and Joe Blow

wouldn't turn up and there was no or very little follow up to see if Joe was in hospital or whether he was still with us, or sick or whatever" (Ron, Shed 7 Office Holder). Shed 7 had two forms that the men were required to fill in. One was a signature in the daily attendance sheet, and the other was a document to be completed if a member were going away on an extended (more than a long weekend) holiday. The Welfare Officer perused both sheets to determine unexplained absences, "...and, if someone hasn't shown up for a while, he'll ring them and see how they are" (Shed Focus Group 4).

The Welfare Coordinator at Shed 4 provided multiple services to its membership of around 150 men. Oscar (Current Member) listed these services as the following:

- Identifies professionals or ambassadors with expertise in pathologies of interest to men of our age and invites them to attend and present a one hour session to the men on a bimonthly basis.
- Manages and conducts our International Mens [sic] Health day at which 8 allied health professionals, 8-10 health-based organisations, primary health network, [and] local and regional health-based organisations attend and provide information to the 50-60 men who come along in search of information about health-related matters.
- Follows up men who have been identified at increased risk to ensure they are seeking medical support.
- Supports the Co-ordinator of General Interest presentations.
- Provides input to the Grants Committee when applications are being crafted which might involve support of men's health.

TOMNET's current and archival online and hard copy documents reinforced their doctrine of "Older Men Supporting Older Men" by providing programs that offered: "...opportunities for mateship, the chance to reconnect with the community and cope positively with life after loss. TOMNET is a non-religious and non-party political organisation, and all men are considered equal" (tomnet.org.au).

Nominally, the ethos of TOMNET and Men's Sheds aligned precisely. Both organisations offered older men the opportunity to connect with likeminded men in a welcoming and nonthreatening location. The differences lay in the manner in which they went about implementing their respective philosophies.

5.2.5. Conclusion.

TOMNET and Men’s Sheds shared common philosophies to do with masculinity and ageing. Affording opportunities for a man to practise his masculinity in a nonthreatening, support environment created agency for older men to feel accepted. A sense of belonging and purpose drove the programming and facilitated the effective delivery of contributive needs. Table 5.5 presents a summary of the similarities and differences between each organisation regarding Ethos.

Table 5.5

Summary of the Similarities and Differences of Ethos

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
Both demonstrated a dedication to supporting and empowering men.	TOMNET practised multiple volunteer programs within the local community. Volunteering outside the Men’s Shed premises was not formally part of the Men’s Shed ethos.
Both emphasised the need for a designated space of their own.	TOMNET did not maintain an official Welfare Coordinator/ Officer position. The larger Men’s Sheds provided a designated Welfare Coordinator or Welfare Officer.
Both exhibited a common ethos of men working together.	TOMNET programs did not include activities around construction. The community approached the Shed as the point of contact for construction tasks.
Both upheld a commitment to connecting older men with their peers.	TOMNET set out deliberately and purposefully to educate men and the wider community about older men’s mental health needs. Men’s Sheds did not do so.
Both fostered a culture of connectedness and mateship.	
Both stressed the importance of grassroots organisation.	
Both delivered an alternative reality to the negative stereotypes surrounding older men.	
Both had clearly defined philosophies and expectations.	

5.3. Structure

Section 5.3 discusses the similarities and differences of the organisational structure of TOMNET and the Men’s Sheds that were researched as applied to leadership. Section 5.3.1 describes the enactment of both of the organisations’ aims and of their goals. Section 5.3.2 examines the hierarchical positions of leadership within each organisation. Section 5.3.3 presents a description of each of the organisations’ leadership styles. Section 5.3.4 focuses on specifics about the programs offered by each organisation. Section 5.3.5 concludes this portion of the chapter. Table 5.6 depicts the progression of the chapter’s structure as it applies to Section 5.3.

Table 5.6

The Progression of the Chapter’s Structure: Section 5.3 STRUCTURE

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
5.3 STRUCTURE	5.3.1 Aims and goals	*Administration and executives
	5.3.2 Leadership	*Leadership styles
	5.3.3 Program implementation	*Weekly programs and activities

5.3.1. Aims and goals.

From a researcher’s perspective, there was one outstanding difference in the manner in which TOMNET and Men’s Sheds enacted their aims and goals. Both organisations were immeasurably valuable in the promotion of the health and wellbeing of older men and were dedicated to peer support, but their programs offered alternative perspectives on the previously cited “recurring dimensions” of community capacity building posited by Danaher et al. (2014, p. 8).

TOMNET retained an administrative headquarters, referred to as the TOMNET Centre (tomnet.org.au/), which was used periodically throughout the week by various member groups such as the Thursday morning “Chew the Fat” cohort. However, the heart of TOMNET lay in its volunteering program conducted not at the Centre but within the local community (please refer to Section 5.3.4 Programs). One of the main aims of TOMNET was to send its members out into the wider

community to support older men. This was illustrated by the card group that met weekly at the TOMNET Centre. Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) recounted the occasion when she reminded them of the TOMNET philosophy: “You can play cards here but once a month you have to go and play there [aged care facility]. It’s a real pay it forward. They’re starting to be part of something bigger than themselves.”

A number of TOMNET men volunteered at the Toowoomba Flexi School in an alternative education program for at risk youths aged 15-17 years (please refer to Section 5.3.4 Programs). Adam (TOMNET Centre Office Holder) posited that it was not just the TOMNET volunteers who benefited from the intergenerational mentoring:

A lot of these kids have been bastardised physically, mentally or sexually by someone older. So naturally they think all old people are the same. We’ve shown that they’re not. I think the important thing that comes out of it, more than anything, is that we’re showing them that the community cares about them as individuals. Not as a class of people or a group of people, but as individuals and it’s so important for their mental health.

Men’s Sheds provided one locational space that welcomed its members into a nonthreatening, safe environment. Generally, the men did not, under the Men’s Shed auspices, go out into the community to volunteer. Rather, the community came to them in the form of seeking assistance and advice to do with constructing items (such as bird feeders), purchasing ready-made items (such as minor bird traps) or restoring items (such as historic wagon wheels). At times, restoration or construction work incurred predesignated, negotiated fees with the proviso that their completion would adhere to “Men’s Shed time” (Neville, Shed 1 Office Holder), not a finite due date.

From 2012 through to 2017, Shed 5 hosted a kiosk attached to the federally funded “Broadband for Seniors” program (dss.gov.au/grants/broadband-for-seniors). Courses were conducted by trained members of the Shed. The kiosk was open to the general public on Shed days. In accordance with the program stipulations, clients (male and female) had to be over 50 years of age. Seemingly, this course was an initiative of Shed 5 only, as the secretary knew of no other Sheds that offered the same service. None of the other Sheds that were researched conducted this program.

TOMNET set out deliberately and purposefully to educate men and the wider community about older men's mental health needs: "The network works to enhance the social connections of older men, and in turn, to address the risk factors for suicide" (McGowan et al., 2014, p. 105). This sentiment was illustrated in the fact that the organisation had produced nine "Factsheets for Older Men" (tomnet.org.au). These were entitled: "A Story of Retirement"; "About Positive Ageing"; "Being Alone"; "Grief and Loss"; "The Tasks of Grieving"; "Helping Men Grieve"; "Moving into Care"; "Story of Being a Carer"; and "A Story about Suicide". These factsheets were available online as well as being presented in hard copy form at the TOMNET Centre in Hume Street, Toowoomba. TOMNET Centre Administrator, Lucy, emphasised that this was not pathologising older men: "We're not here to 'fix' them." She stressed that "...the essence of it all..." was acceptance through the implementation of an "...ethos of creating a culture of older men who support each other".

Funding partnerships with a variety of federal, state and local health care providers such as Quitline (quithq.initiatives.qld.gov.au), the Cancer Council (cancer.org.au), Beyondblue (beyondblue.org.au) and the Heart Foundation (heartfoundation.org.au) necessitated that men's physical and mental health was at the forefront of AMSA aims and goals. The AMSA handbook (2015) stated: "Men's Sheds are encouraged to deliver health related activities for their members" (p. 17). As each Men's Shed was an autonomous entity, it was up to the individual Shed to disseminate the information contained in these programs. This was not always met with enthusiasm:

We get a heap of bumph – well, I call it "bumph" – sent through the mail. You get a heap of brochures that you know you're not going to do anything with...and I reckon that's just Head Office saying, "Well, look at all the stuff we're distributing for all these different, good organisations". Nobody bothers to check on the ground whether they're being utilised or what effect they're having or follow up. (Sam, Shed 2 Office Holder)

This sentiment was echoed by Ivan (Shed 4 Office Holder): "I really don't need someone to come here and tell me about men's health."

The concept of repairing or 'fixing' members was featured in the AMSA handbook (2015): "Men's Sheds are not just fixing furniture and building toys[;]

they are fixing men and building communities” (p. 6). As was demonstrated above, this philosophy contrasted starkly with that of the TOMNET Centre Administrator, Lucy, who believed that older men did not require ‘fixing’ (please refer to the prior quotation).

5.3.2. Leadership.

The TOMNET Centre administration consisted of three full-time paid employees – a General Manager, a Manager of Programs and a Service Manager – as well as an Administrative Assistant who was employed two days a week. The volunteer Management Committee comprised a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer and five other members. A paid counsellor attended the premises one day per week, and an afterhours counsellor conducted a telephone counselling service. A team of approximately 70 volunteer members provided over 40 hours of support to members per month.

The General Manager was employed to write grant applications, liaise and coordinate with funding bodies, and advise the Management Committee in matters of day-to-day and longer-term operational procedures. The Manager of Programs coordinated and oversaw the implementation of the major programs, including membership musters, home/aged care facilities visitations and the Flexi School. The Service Manager was employed to help members with governmental assistance forms (such as transport options). The tasks of the TOMNET Centre Administrative Assistant were varied. She was employed to update the TOMNET Facebook page, book buses for outings, attend and assist at the Wednesday afternoon meetings and undertake other sundry tasks.

The first official Men’s Shed was opened in 1998 in the town of Tongala in the state of Victoria (Golding, 2015, p. 114). By 2005, there were approximately 200 Men’s Sheds spread throughout Australia. Currently there are approximately 1000 Men’s Sheds nationally. An overarching body, AMSA, was established in 2007 with headquarters in Newcastle, New South Wales. It was formed to disseminate information between state organisations and membership bodies: “...for the development and effective operations of Men’s Sheds” (mensshed.org/what-is-amsa/). In 2010, the Australian Federal Government launched a National Male Health Policy and initially allocated \$3 million to AMSA: “...to provide practical

support to sheds, especially those in areas of high need” (mensshed.org/what-is-amsa/). Generally, each individual Men’s Shed was insured through AMSA.

State representative bodies such as the QMSA were established to voice the needs of their individual state membership at the annual AMSA meetings. By 2018, four state bodies (Western Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland) had withdrawn from AMSA and become autonomous entities in their own right.

Zone (area) representatives were elected by Sheds and formed to relay information to and from AMSA, governments and corporations. These “Zone reps” also assisted in identifying the need for new Sheds and helped with their establishment. According to the (now defunct) QMSA website, there were nine designated zones in Queensland at the time. These were Metro North (25 Sheds), Metro South (24 Sheds), Downs South West Queensland (15 Sheds), Gold Coast Scenic Rim (15 Sheds), Fraser Coast (13 Sheds), Sunshine Coast (18 Sheds), Capricornia (16 Sheds), North Queensland (13 Sheds) and Far North Queensland (17 Sheds). These numbers fluctuated and were not static as Sheds opened and closed over time. Also, at the time of the completion of this research, the website referred to was controlled solely by AMSA and had not been updated for two years. QMSA was very recently (January 2018) estranged from AMSA, and lack of time and lack of personnel have not allowed the newly formed QMSA body to create a new website as yet.

It should be noted that it was not obligatory for individual Sheds to belong to AMSA or to a State body. Additionally, state bodies did not have to belong to AMSA. However, the importance of being associated with a national or state branch was emphasised by a Focus Group 3 participant: “If you disappear from AMSA or QMSA, who are you? You’re just a bunch of old farts.” Each organisation was completely independent. Figure 5.2 visually depicts the leadership positions available within the Men’s Shed structure.

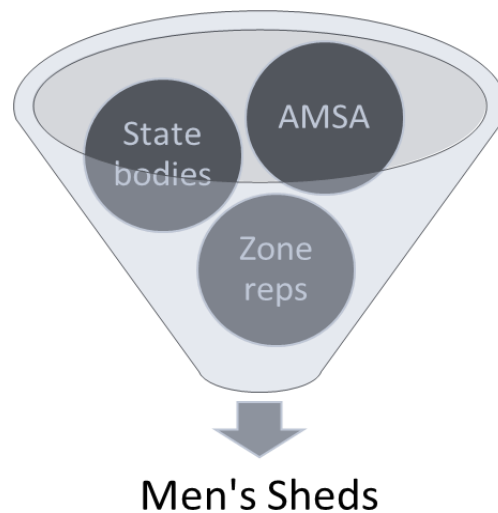


Figure 5.2. A visual depiction of the leadership positions in Men's Sheds

Leadership positions within the Australia-wide Men's Shed Movement were complex and controversial. As the Men's Shed Movement evolved, some Shedders and their state organisational representative bodies became increasingly dissatisfied with AMSA's distribution of information and funds.

The operational composition of Men's Sheds varied widely. Each Shed serviced the needs of its membership size, so the scope of the administration ranged considerably. Shed 4 was the largest researched Shed in area (1 acre), programs/activities offered (approximately 15) and membership (150 men). As a result, their hierarchical structure was more complex. Their committee comprised a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Metal Shop Coordinator, a Woodwork Coordinator, a Men's Health Coordinator, a Garden Coordinator, a Bee Coordinator, an Infrastructure/Studio Coordinator, a Grounds Maintenance Coordinator, a Membership Registrar, a Major Fund-Raising Project Convenor, a Donations/Shed Safety Convenor and a Kitchen Supervisor/Cook. They also supported a team of men who were not on the leadership committee but who had "special responsibilities" (Ivan, Shed 4). These were the Welfare Officer, the Grant Writing Officer, the Bunnings Bar-b-que Coordinator and the Sailing Coordinator.

Conversely, Shed 3 had a membership of approximately 40 men. Their executive consisted of a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer and four members "off the floor". Shed 6 serviced approximately 20 members and had an executive of four, comprising a President, a Vice President, a Secretary and a Treasurer.

5.3.3. Leadership styles.

Groysberg et al. (2018) explored leadership in terms of linking the “levers” (p. 46) of strategy with culture. They argued that strategy provided a “clarity and focus for collective action and decision making”, and that culture expressed: “goals through values and beliefs and guides activities through shared assumptions and group norms” (p. 45). The authors focused on cultural norms as drivers of attitudes and unspoken social behaviours within a group, and promoted the importance of culture as having the ability to: “unleash tremendous amounts of energy toward a shared purpose and foster an organisation’s capacity to thrive” (p. 46). They posited that an effective leader ignored the cultural elements of an organisation at his/her peril because: “culture eats strategy for breakfast” (p. 46).

Eight distinct leadership culture styles have been identified by Groysberg et al. (2018): Caring (positive relationship building); Purpose (driven by commitment); Learning (educational idealism); Enjoyment (sense of pleasure); Results (goal oriented); Authority (strong, assertive decision making); Safety (cautiousness); and Order (shared values) (p. 48).

I have adapted Groysberg et al.’s (2018) figure entitled “Integrated Culture Leader Statements” (p. 48) to reflect the organisations that were researched. TOMNET and Men’s Sheds were prime examples of successfully implemented culture driven groups. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 reflect and explain this leadership style.

TOMNET

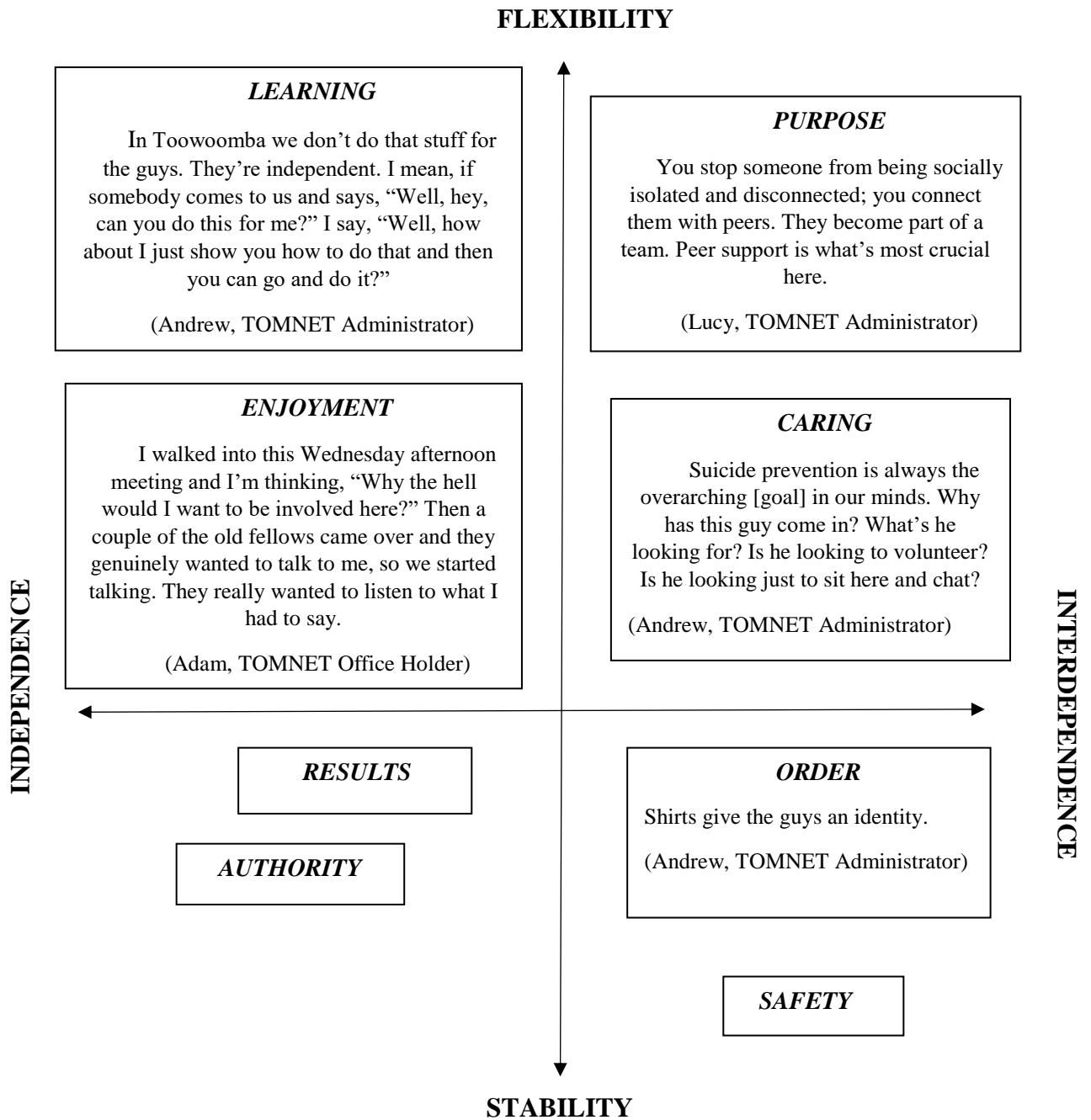


Figure 5.3. TOMNET as a culture driven leadership style

MEN'S SHEDS

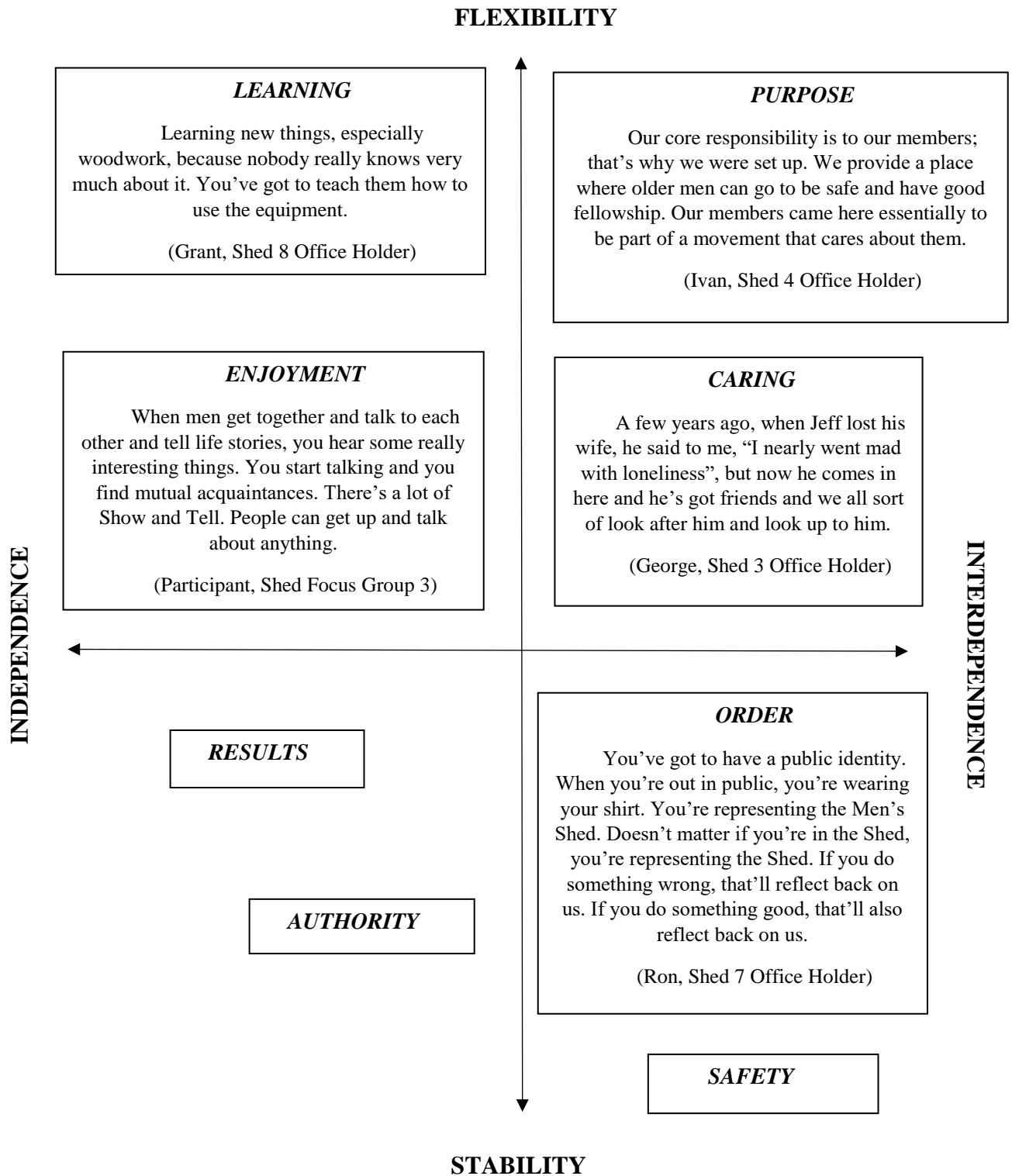


Figure 5.4. Men's Sheds as a culture driven leadership style

The cultural elements were the same in TOMNET and Men's Sheds. Flexibility was highly rated, as would be expected in grassroots organisations. Groyberg et al. (2018) noted the advantages of each culture. A caring culture included a sense of belonging. Organisations with purpose led to improved viability, and they emphasised social responsibility. Cultures that acknowledged the importance of learning led to less stagnation within the group. Enjoyment of tasks led to improved self-esteem and creativity. Order, as in the wearing of group apparel such as caps and t-shirts, led to increased community spirit. By contrast, an over-emphasis on results, authority and safety produced feelings of anxiety and created a stressful environment (p. 49). According to this framework, both groups exhibited a more pronounced interdependent culture. This was also to be expected in psychosocial groups such as TOMNET and Men's Sheds where the ideal of mateship was a dominant philosophy.

5.3.4. Programs.

The TOMNET programming model was based on the provision of volunteering opportunities that provided their members with "...a greater capacity to participate in and contribute to their local communities, helping members to lead rich and fulfilling lives" (McGowan et al., 2014, p. 107). Golding (2015) summarised a survey conducted by AMSA in 2013 that reported on reasons why Shedders joined their Men's Shed. It was revealed that "fixing and making items" (p. 386) were as important to the members as interacting positively and supporting their local community.

5.3.4.1. TOMNET.

From the outset, TOMNET founders believed that older men could play a positive role within the community if they were granted agency to do so: "It was the observation of the developing and increasingly well-defined culture that gifted me a vision of the dignity and value of older men and... their potential and resourcefulness that [were] beneficial to them personally and to others" (Laurence, TOMNET Centre past counsellor).

TOMNET addressed the concept of esteem by distinguishing between the man and his behaviours. Self-respect and the dignity of the individual, regardless of past successes or failures, were paramount. The value of the recognition of past

achievements, listening to individuals' life stories and boosting members' confidence were considered key features of the implemented programs. Self-actualisation was realised within the group by facilitating and supporting meaningful involvement through purposeful activities and interests. Maintaining leisure activities and encouraging creativity either within or without the TOMNET organisation provided satisfaction. Allowing for the autonomy of thought and action based on a lifetime of acquired skills and knowledge was also regarded by TOMNET as a valuable principle in achieving self-actualisation.

Table 5.7 presents the alignment of Earle and Fopp's (1999) theory with the practice at TOMNET and Men's Sheds.

Table 5.7

Earle and Fopp's (1999) Theory in Practice as Applied to TOMNET and Men's Sheds

EARLE & FOPP'S (1999) CONCEPTS	TOMNET'S AND MEN'S SHEDS' ENACTMENT OF THESE CONCEPTS
Involvement	Involvement was fostered through a sense of acceptance and belonging within a peer group.
Satisfaction	Satisfaction was gained through a sense of purposeful engagement either as a volunteer in the wider community (TOMNET) or within the group (Men's Shed).
Autonomy	Members felt autonomous by being given agency to choose their level of interactions with other members and with the programs offered.
Integration	Each member was integrated and supported as a valuable member of the team, such as in the form of wearing an identifiable uniform.
Creativity	Achievement in volunteering (TOMNET) or in learning new skills (Men's Sheds) led to a sense of creativity and self-worth.

TOMNET Centre Administrator Lucy referred to their programs in terms of the principles of change management:

If you think about third world countries and the way they run projects over there, where they go in and help a community to identify the problem and solve it, exactly the same principles work [with] 85 year old blokes.

Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator) explained TOMNET's programs in practical terms:

Our programs are designed around two things. It's about the guys who are volunteering getting benefit and sometimes without them realising they're getting benefit, and the men that they are helping. They're getting some benefit as well. So always for us it's older men supporting older men.

The TOMNET Centre opened five days a week, Monday to Friday. Even though programs were focused on providing peer support for members, the beneficial flow-on effect of being active and visible within the community went some way to reducing the community's negative stereotypical thinking associated with ageing and older men.

The volunteering program consisted of approximately 70 volunteers involved in five different Community Care Programs. These included aged care visitation, home visitation, peer group support, telephone support and mentoring disadvantaged youth. The importance of this program was emphasised on the website:

“Volunteering is at the heart of TOMNET. By working together, our team of volunteers make a positive difference to the wellbeing of isolated and lonely older men in the community” (tomnet.org.au).

The aged care visitation program involved a regular schedule of TOMNET volunteers visiting older men in nine local aged care/nursing home facilities. The volunteers engaged the recipients in “meaningful conversation” (tomnet.org.au/communitycare/) for the purpose of emotional and social support. “Our biggest volunteering is our aged care program...and I would think that, in terms of older men supporting older men, in terms of our ethos, the aged care program would be our flagship” (Andrew, TOMNET Centre Administrator).

The home visitation program provided regular contact and conversation with socially isolated older men and their carers (if applicable). Peer Group Support programs were designed to allow likeminded older men to gather socially and to discuss issues of concern with their peers. These programs also provided support for TOMNET's affiliate groups located in rural (e.g., Oakey) and remote (e.g., Goondiwindi) regions. The telephone support program was available for members who may have had health or transportation issues or who may have been self-

isolating owing to grieving over a spouse who had passed away, and as such were unable to attend weekly peer group support meetings.

Each of these four programs aimed to address directly the issues arising from the social isolation that occurs with marginalisation, particularly suicide ideation:

Volunteering helps men to keep in touch with what's real. I think it also helps men to realise that, you know, maybe they've got it good. It sort of gives them a bit of grounding and there's that baseline of where we are and what life's all about. (Ben, TOMNET Centre current member)

The mentoring disadvantaged youth program occurred at the Toowoomba Flexi School. This school supplied an alternative, flexible delivery of education on an offsite campus of one of the major mainstream state high schools located in Toowoomba. TOMNET Centre men provided intergenerational mentoring for the students (aged 14 to 17 years) by sharing their skills and their life experiences. They provided academic and emotional support as well as supplying onsite breakfast and lunch weekly to the 'at risk' student body. Jack (TOMNET Centre Member) described his mentoring experience as actively fulfilling the need to contribute and feel valued by the community:

My view was I had to have some self-worth. I do things to maintain my own self-worth. If I become worthless, it's hopeless, right? I maintain a network of friends, family and then volunteering. Flexi's good because you get as much out of it as you put into it. I get on well with the kids and I enjoy that because I feel as though I'm contributing something.

Gary (TOMNET Centre Office Holder) observed that there was more than just interaction with the teenagers occurring: "It's not just the mentoring. After they've finished, the men get together for a cup of tea and they talk about what they've done, what they're doing." This social interaction provided the added dimensions of cohesion and connectedness within the group.

Along with the intergenerational mentoring that occurred at the Flexi School, 10 TOMNET Centre volunteers were also involved in the "Braking the Cycle" program, an initiative of Queensland's Police-Citizens Youth Clubs (a not for profit charity that services the local community). This program offered another avenue for older men to be productively engaged with younger generations. Volunteer drivers mentored disadvantaged young learner drivers (16 to 25 years old) to help them to

complete their mandatory 100 hours of driving for their driver's logbook. Research conducted by the Police-Citizens Youth Clubs indicated that:

The 100 hour requirement has placed enormous stress on young people and acts as a significant barrier to getting a licence and engage in employment.

Secondary to this is the impact of poorly educated or unlicensed drivers on the roads and the devastating impact this can have on a community. (Police Citizens Youth Club, 2013, n.p)

Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) reinforced the crucial relationship between volunteering and connectedness:

When you first say to this individual, "Well, you're going to be part of our volunteering program", you're really saying to them, "We value your skills and abilities; even though you're not ready at this point in in time, you will get back to a point [when you will be ready]". So you give them the hope as soon as they walk in the door but to watch them transition from that to being part of a team, to being part of somewhere where they are giving back to the community and they work in a world that's bigger than just themselves.

The TOMNET Centre "Men at Work" sessions were held fortnightly at a local church hall and were facilitated by the onsite counsellor. They were intended to help men to talk through unresolved issues such as ongoing family disputes or enforced retirement. Participation rates fluctuated from four to 13 men. Victor (TOMNET Centre Administrator) stated that this group was:

...designed to help men talk about deeper issues, not just hunting, shooting, fishing. It's about how you're coping with life. We've talked about everything from Medicare [federally funded health care in Australia] to health issues to dying to funerals. Suicide comes up quite often, in fact.

"Chew the Fat" meetings were held weekly at the TOMNET Centre. Participants were mainly from the Baby Boomer generation (born 1946 to 1964). Generally, there were around 20 to 30 attendees. Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator) described the group as highly interactive and as comprising men who were TOMNET Centre volunteers: "They don't want to sit around and be entertained once a week at a meeting. They want to come in and they want to talk to other guys. They want to learn about their histories and their stories."

Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) remarked on the value of using life experiences to connect with others:

We had a bloke who was actually only 64ish, had been in retirement by force; he didn't choose. Came in here; he would never come out from behind the desk. He was a truck driver so he didn't have the skills to talk to people; he would not come out from behind the desk. Then someone said, "Well, how about you tell us your life story one day?". He'd go, "No one's going to want to know about my life story". He got up there and told his life story, and that was the defining moment. He never went back behind the desk. He'd found four other people who'd been in the same region at the same time, so all of a sudden they accepted him for who he was and that was what the trigger point was. Connectedness.

"TOMNET on Wednesday" was held weekly in a conference room in the grounds of a local football club. These meetings were mostly patronised by the TOMNET Centre older members who belonged to the Builder and Senior generations, and averaged around 50 attendees. Each meeting was chaired by a different member. After general announcements were made and administration was dealt with, the meetings took the form of an entertainment model, generally with a guest speaker.

Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator) explained the difference in clientele between the two weekly meetings. He posited that the older men who attended these sessions had "...lost the ability to communicate with each other". The entertainment model employed on a Wednesday required them to sit together but did not force them to have meaningful conversations with one another. Adam (TOMNET Centre Office Holder) reflected on the key factor determining an effective Wednesday session: "It's a good meeting if no one falls asleep. We've got blokes in their mid-nineties, you know, and you put them in a warm room..."

The TOMNET website publicised the availability of formal training and development sessions accessible to the following groups: TOMNET members and associate volunteers; other men's groups such as Men's Sheds; older persons' organisations such as National Seniors; community organisations such as Rotary; and professional staff members of government and non-government organisations. Community Men's groups were provided with an opportunity to participate in selected modules or topics of the training and development program, or other areas

of interest. This training generally consisted of discussion groups of one or two hours' duration. Workshops or presentations from the training and development program were also available to professional and lay community workers in government and non-government organisations who worked directly or indirectly with older men. The content and timing of the sessions were negotiable. TOMNET liaised closely with Lifeline Darling Downs in the delivery of ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) workshops as well as SafeTALK workshops. Both of these programs were designed to raise awareness about suicide in the community (tomnet.org.au/professional-training). These activities have been somewhat curtailed in the last few years owing to a lack of funding. Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator) lamented: "We just don't have the money or the resources to keep these going." Table 5.8 presents the weekly programs and activities offered to TOMNET members.

Table 5.8

TOMNET Centre Weekly Programs and Activities

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
*Cards with mates	*Volunteer aged care facility meeting	*Cards with mates	*Chew the Fat	*Volunteer aged care facility meeting
*Volunteer aged care facility meeting	*Retired farmers meeting	*Volunteer aged care facility meeting	*Volunteer aged care facility meeting	*Volunteer Flexi school
*Volunteer Flexi school	*Volunteer Flexi school	*Chess	*Volunteer Flexi school	
		*TOMNET on Wednesday		
		*Volunteer Flexi school		

Volunteering for the "Braking the Cycle" program was not listed in Table 5.7 as participation times were at the discretion of the volunteer.

When asked what he would say to the Federal Minister for Health, Lawrence (TOMNET former counsellor) stated:

I would spell out the significance of older men supporting older men and that they represent an enormous resource going to waste culturally and economically. Their knowledge, skills and life experience [do] not cease in retirement. Their actual and potential capacity to enhance their own lives, that of their families and their community needs serious exploration to benefit all

Australians. There is an army of older men, retirees, that could be called into this workforce with comparatively little training and cost.

5.3.4.2. Men's Sheds

In stark contrast with TOMNET programming, Golding (2015) remarked that Men's Sheds avoided focusing solely on one deficit aspect of ageing:

While shedders have come to acknowledge the risks of depression, suicide and inevitable ailments associated with ageing, both for themselves and the men in their midst, they strongly resist their Shed being just or mainly about "doing health problems" or being a conduit for health information, or an alternative office for paid health workers. (p. 381)

When asked whether he thought that the Shedders in his Shed would participate in a mental health program, Sam (Shed 2, Office Holder) replied that they "...are more likely to collectively deride it than consider being involved." This seemed to be a shared opinion among most Sheds that were researched, with the exception of Shed 5, which invited TOMNET Centre administrators to their Shed to conduct suicide workshops in 2016. Andrew (TOMNET Centre Office Holder) explained:

They came to us and said, "We like what you're doing. We're not doing what you're doing in terms of the conversations and the deeper meaning. We're doing stuff. We're having coffee and that, but we don't know how to talk on that deeper level, because it feels weird. Show us how to talk like that."

Some of the Sheds were open to formalised activities to do with physical health issues. Members from Shed 6 attended a talk at Shed 9 about prostate cancer.

Of the Men's Sheds that were researched, the general feeling was that they did not need or want any formalised interaction with professional service providers beyond that of maintaining safety in the Shed. A number of the larger Sheds ran accreditation certificate courses for woodwork and metalwork as these were the main activities in the Sheds. Shed 4 stipulated that members must have completed this course before they were able to use the machinery. Shed 7 had run inhouse courses on using wood and metal lathes as well as a first aid course that was open to the public.

Men's Sheds' opening hours and programs were at the discretion of the individual executive committees, and varied from Shed to Shed. Activities were mainly centred around woodwork and metalwork; however, Shed 4 offered a greater

range of programs owing to the size of their membership and premises. Shed accessibility can be fluid for members, as was demonstrated by this extract from the AMSA website on the opening hours of Shed 9: “Normal meeting time is on Thursdays from 9.00 am to around 12.30 pm, but the Shed is available and is used by members at any time” (mensshed.org/profile/AMSA101075/). Table 5.9 provides a schedule of weekly programs and activities. These were amended by the Sheds as interest fluctuated but were accurate as at June 2018.

Table 5.9

Sample of Men’s Sheds’ Weekly Programs and Activities (2018)

SHED	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Shed 1		09.00-12.00 woodwork metalwork		09.00-12.00 woodwork metalwork	10.00-13.00 woodwork metalwork	
Shed 2				08.30-11.30 woodwork metalwork		08.00-11.30 woodwork metalwork
Shed 3		08.00-13.00 woodwork metalwork		08.00-13.00 woodwork metalwork		
Shed 4	12.30-15.30 woodwork	08.00-09.00 walking group 08.00-12.00 woodwork metalwork bee keeping gardening arts and crafts 10.45-12.45 (health or general interest talks [2 nd Tuesday of the month])	12.00-15.00 pool and lunch (1 st Wednesday of the month) 12.00-1400 health or general interest talks (3 rd Wednesday of the month)	08.00-12.00 woodwork metalwork bee keeping gardening arts and crafts		08.00-10.00 gardening
Shed 5	08.00-12.00 woodwork metalwork gardening		08.00-12.00 woodwork metalwork gardening			08.00-12.00 woodwork metalwork gardening
Shed 6		09.00-12.00 woodwork metalwork		09.00-12.00 woodwork metalwork		

Shed 7	09.00-13.00 woodwork metalwork			09.00-13.00 woodwork metalwork	
Shed 8	08.30-12.30 gardening woodwork metalwork small engine workshop		08.30-12.30 gardening woodwork metalwork small engine workshop		08.30-12.30 gardening woodwork metalwork small engine workshop
Shed 9				09.00-12.30 metalwork	
Shed 10	09.00-12.00 social/guest speakers 12.00-13.00 exercise class 13.30-15.30 a capella singing group	09.00-14.00 leadlight/artisan glass work	09.00-12.00 woodwork leatherwork 12.00-13.00 leadlight/artisan glass work 12.00-13.00 men's water fitness class	09.00-12.00 woodwork leatherwork leadlight/artisan glass work 09.30-12.00 cards	09.00-12.00 woodwork leatherwork

5.3.5. Conclusion.

Programs offered by TOMNET and Men's Shed groups reflected the purposefulness of each organisation. Older men came together to create a culture of belonging and respect and were granted opportunities to share their acquired wisdom in a beneficial manner within the internal group of the organisation and the wider community. Table 5.10 presents a summary of the similarities and differences between each organisation regarding Structure.

Table 5.10

Summary of the Similarities and Differences of Structure

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
Both organisations were composed of elected representatives from the membership.	TOMNET operated a strategic dual leadership system consisting of a paid administrative component and a volunteer member management board.
Both organisations structured their programs around the needs and interests of their members.	There were three interconnected organisations within the Men’s Sheds Movement: AMSA, QMSA (which included the Zone reps) and the individual Sheds.
Both organisations emphasised the cultural elements of caring, purpose, learning, enjoyment and order in their leadership styles.	<p>There was a heavy emphasis on community volunteerism for TOMNET members.</p> <p>Individual Men’s Sheds’ leaderships varied in size from Shed to Shed depending upon membership numbers.</p> <p>TOMNET programs were actively focused on improving older men’s mental health through meaningful conversation and volunteerism.</p> <p>Men’s Shed programs were practical and mostly conducted in the Shed.</p> <p>Men’s Shed programs were focused on fostering incidental, not targeted, conversation.</p> <p>The concept of repairing or ‘fixing’ members was paramount in the AMSA ethos.</p>

5.4. Membership

Section 5.4 investigates membership application procedures. This is an important topic as it not only highlights the differences between TOMNET and Men’s Sheds but also demonstrates the individual differences between the Men’s Sheds. Table 5.11 depicts the progression of the chapter’s structure as it applies to Section 5.4.

Table 5.11

The Progression of the Chapter's Structure: Section 5.4 MEMBERSHIP

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
5.4 MEMBERSHIP	5.4.1 Membership application	*Application packs

The membership of each organisation was self-selecting in that a man joined the group that best suited his interests.

5.4.1. Membership application.

A potential member of TOMNET was required to undergo a 30-45 minute admissions interview with the Program Manager, who discussed the information supplied in the Admissions Pack. Prospective members also received a Volunteer Program Information Pack. All Flexi School volunteers were required to be nominated by a current member and must have been an active TOMNET member for six months or, in the case of female mentors, must have been associate members of TOMNET.

The application form was quite extensive and required potential members to record their personal details such as address, date of birth, next of kin, contact numbers, ethnic identification, whether they were a service veteran and any health issues that they may have had at the time. Background information such as previous employment, hobbies and skill sets were also recorded. Legalities such as consent for media, contact by support team and storage of personal information were a requirement. Applicants were provided with the TOMNET privacy policy and a code of conduct booklet. They were then expected to sign the Code of Conduct agreement. Included in the pack were other items such as the latest copy of the *TOMNET Telegraph* (a monthly newsletter); health referral information such as contact numbers for organisations to do with mental health, relationships, housing assistance, etc.; a brochure outlining the TOMNET philosophy, the programs that TOMNET provided and member benefits; and an A4 sheet describing TOMNET's purpose.

Men's Shed membership application forms varied greatly between Sheds. Shed 7 required the completion of an A4, one-page document only. Shed 1 provided an A4

envelope containing details about the Shed, the Shed's constitution and an A4 sized application form. Shed 10 gave prospective members a pamphlet with Shed details and a short application form.

TOMNET membership was more specific than Men's Sheds in that it serviced men over 50 years of age only and focused on men with particular health needs. "We've quite clearly articulated who our clients are now in the sense that we target the 50% who are suffering circumstantial or situational suicide risk, not [a] long-term diagnosed health risk" (Lucy, TOMNET Centre Administrator). Generally, Men's Sheds were open to men aged 16 to 96 years; however, individual Sheds imposed their own age limit. Shed 1 was open only to men over 18 years, whereas Shed 7 was open to men over 55 years exclusively.

Adam (TOMNET Centre Office Holder) explained that TOMNET membership was free and would remain so: "That's one of our cornerstones that we don't want to move." Men's Shed membership fees were reliant on the property rental, the cost of essential services such as water and electricity, and the purchase of the Shed's insurance.

TOMNET and Men's Shed recruitment occurred in a variety of ways that included word of mouth, annual regional musters and promotional stalls at Health and Wellbeing Expos and shopping centres. Membership fees for Men's Sheds were reliant on the organisation leasing the Shed to the men.

5.4.2. Conclusion.

Men applied to join TOMNET and Men's Sheds with specific needs and interests. The two groups had very dissimilar application processes, which reflected the intent of the philosophy of each organisation. Table 5.11 presents a summary of the similarities and differences regarding Membership.

Table 5.12

Summary of the Similarities and Differences of Membership

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<p>Membership was self-selecting.</p>	<p>A potential member of TOMNET was required to undergo a 30-45 minute admissions interview.</p> <p>TOMNET written admission packs were extremely detailed.</p> <p>Each Men’s Shed had a different membership application, which varied in length.</p> <p>TOMNET membership was offered only to men over 50 years.</p> <p>Shed membership age limits varied with the ethos of each individual Shed.</p> <p>TOMNET targeted men with specific health needs.</p> <p>TOMNET membership was free.</p> <p>Men’s Shed membership fees varied.</p>

5.5. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter examined the manner in which the leadership of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds implemented the design of their programs and philosophies to fit most effectively the contributive needs of older men. Specialised agencies such as TOMNET and Men’s Sheds played a major role in the fulfilment of older men’s contributive needs. Through their targeted programs and their inclusive philosophies, these two local male-only groups provided a place where older men felt welcomed, valued and purposeful. Contributive needs were catered for within two completely different environments. Programs offered provided the participants with a sense of both intrinsic and extrinsic value and purpose in life.

Postle (2014) stated: “Even more profoundly, links have been drawn between purposefulness and the ontology of being human...” (p. 227). This reinforced the notion of the relativistic ontological assumption of multiple truths and multiple realities as discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2). Postle’s (2014) notion of

purposefulness was reflected in the two disparate ways that each organisation filled the void created by a lack of direction in life. The act of disrupting the negative social narrative of a stereotypical older man and the resultant negation of the damaging assumptions around ageing and the older male approach were fundamental to the ideals held by TOMNET and Men's Sheds. The similarities and differences in the programs and philosophies of the two organisations exemplified the notion of purposefulness – each as effective and affirming as the other.

Section 5.2 discussed similarities and differences in the ethos of each of the organisations. Both TOMNET and Men's Sheds embraced an ethos built around a shared lexicon of mateship, community, involvement and masculinity. This language usage implied a commonality of belief based on respect, value, purpose and belonging. The male-only culture of the groups provided a masculine space that fostered and encouraged peer support without the added layer of female/male gender dynamics. The establishment of a grassroots philosophy ensured that the members were able to exercise control over the direction of their organisation. The anti-deficit positioning of older men not only developed self-esteem within the cohort of older men themselves but also provided a respectful profile of a marginalised group within the whole community. The men were receivers of positivity in the form of belonging, acceptance and a sense of purpose. Community ideals were reinforced through programs that helped others such as at-risk teens and/or reconstruction work for community members who were unable or unwilling to acquire the necessary skill base. Members' health and welfare were the primary concern of both organisations in that they endeavoured to educate older men about their physical and mental health needs in an appropriate manner.

The philosophies and programs offered by TOMNET and Men's Sheds provided frameworks around which members were able to feel valued and less isolated and, as a result, less marginalised. As was discussed in Chapter 2, retirement and ageing bring lifespan issues for which many men are ill-prepared. Marginalisation, whether self-imposed or externally imposed, results in feelings of loneliness, loss of identity, lack of purpose, social isolation and general inadequacy. Ultimately, these emotions lead to suicide ideation: "I don't think older men know they have any knowledge and experience. They think that a lot of it's out of date. They feel inadequate" (Gary, TOMNET Centre Office Holder).

Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator) addressed the issue of loss of self-concept:

A lot of the guys lack identity. We've got many guys who are caring for their wives. They've gone from being, say, a professional in their workplace to then not knowing what they're doing because they're caring for a wife. They don't have a problem with that. That's the role that they agreed to take on, but I think they are looking for an identity as to, "Well, what am I now? Am I a husband? I'm not a professional in my workplace any more".

The shared ethos of contributing to the local community in a practical manner addressed the contributive need of wisdom/skill sharing. TOMNET's volunteering programs have been proven to be effective long-term:

We came to see in every older man needs to be met, which meant their being viewed legitimately as both receivers and givers to some extent. It is amazing to witness how those [who] received help and support then became givers, thus developing a reciprocal dynamic among the members that became par for the course. (Laurence, TOMNET Centre past counsellor)

Section 5.3 addressed the specific structural systems embedded within TOMNET and Men's Sheds that were designed to raise a respectful awareness and acknowledgement of the positive impact that older men can have on the community. Hierarchical positions reflected the size of the organisations and the demands of the membership, as did programming. TOMNET programs were indicative of the organisation's commitment to "older men supporting older men" (TOMNET, n.d.). The weekly timetable of events consisted of a range of volunteer opportunities coupled with the availability of a variety of subgroups that enabled the men to gather for focused activities. Men's Sheds' "shoulder to shoulder" (mensshed.org/) programming reflected Gradman's (1994) theory of the "primacy of work" (p. 105) and the power of masculine ideals: "The work ethic underlies many older men's beliefs about manhood" (p. 105). Activities were dictated by the members through the inclusion of specific programs that enabled them to work together in a shed environment.

Section 5.4 concentrated on the different membership application processes required by TOMNET and the specific Men's Sheds that were studied. The application forms mirrored the grassroots ethos of each organisation in that the

TOMNET admission process was a lengthy one, focusing on the background of the applicant as well as on his current needs. Men's Sheds application forms varied in content and length, and reflected an individual Shed's request for personal information.

This chapter focused on the leadership viewpoints addressed in **Research**

Question 1: How does the TOMNET and Men's Sheds' organisational leadership seek to implement the design of their programs and philosophies so that they best fit the contributive needs of older men?

Figure 5.5 synthesises the themes presented when answering Research Question 1.

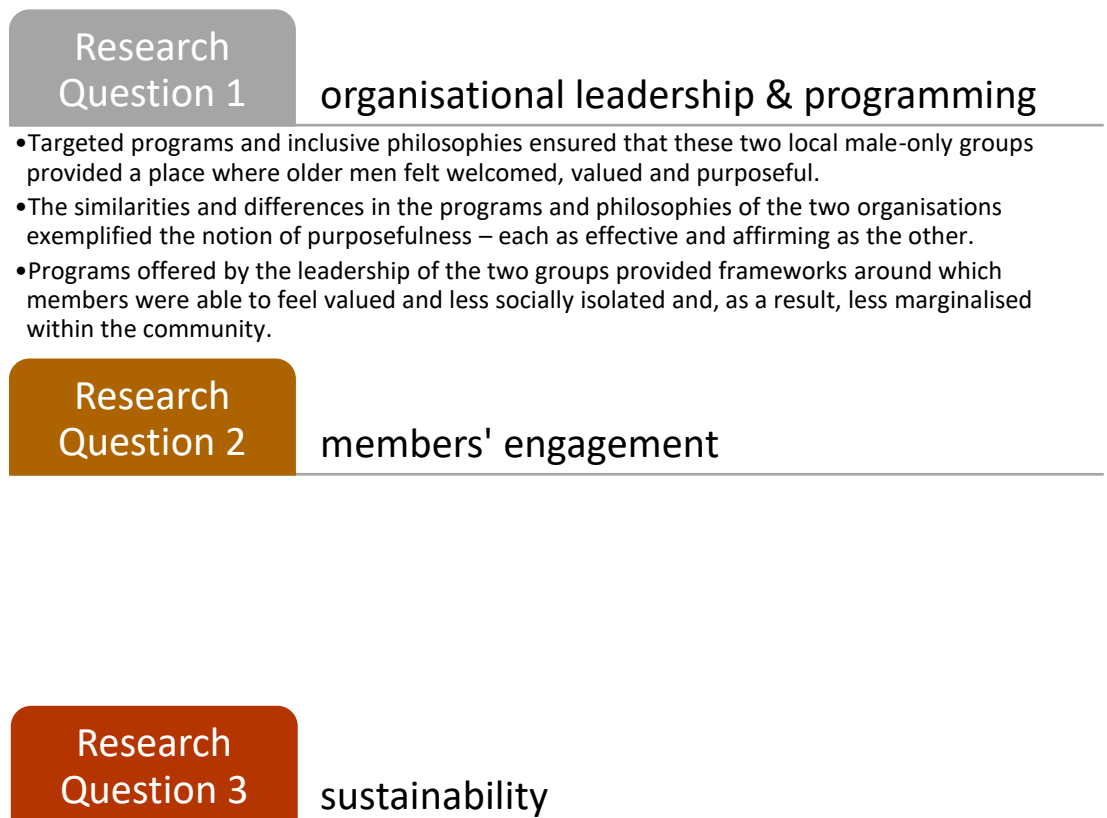


Figure 5.5. A summary of the themes from Research Question 1

Chapter 6 examines the members' perspectives and the manner in which they negotiated each organisation's programs and philosophies as per **Research Question 2: How have the members of TOMNET and Men's Sheds experienced and engaged with their programs and philosophies vis-à-vis members' contributive needs?**

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH QUESTION 2

“If you don’t have social groups, it really buggers you up.”

(Fieldnotes, 19 May 2018)

6.1. Overview of the Chapter

Chapter 5 focused on Research Question 1, which explored the programs offered by TOMNET and Men’s Sheds and their relevance to older men’s contributive needs from a leadership perspective. Chapter 6 addresses **Research Question 2**: How have the members of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds experienced and engaged with their programs and philosophies vis-à-vis members’ contributive needs?

In keeping with the consistent structure of the three research question-focused chapters, this chapter explores three themes – 6.2 Ethos, 6.3 Structure and 6.4 Membership – along with their respective section headings as they relate to the main idea of Research Question 2: member experiences and engagement.

Subheadings appropriate to each of the three themes are presented. Topics related to the subheadings are then discussed in detail. These topics examine the corresponding effects of the outcomes in the form of the positive and negative interactions experienced by the members. TOMNET and Men’s Sheds are examined respectively as each theme and subheading is interrogated in detail. The themes and subheadings included in Table 6.1 are consistent with those in the previous chapter and add continuity to the thesis whilst building the progression of the discussion in response to the research questions. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the design of this chapter.

Table 6.1

Chapter 6 Themes, Subheadings and Topics

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
6.2 ETHOS	6.2.1 Male-only culture	*Family interactions
	6.2.2 Grassroots organisations	*Community involvement
	6.2.3 Anti-deficit positioning	*Diversity
	6.2.4 Community capacity building	*Peer support *Suicide ideation *Social inclusion
6.3 STRUCTURE	6.3.1 Aims and goals	*Peer support
	6.3.2 Leadership	*Achievements
	6.3.3 Program implementation	*Management *Volunteering *Lifelong learning *Loneliness
6.4 MEMBERSHIP	6.4.1 Membership wellbeing	*Suicide ideation
	6.4.2 Member connectedness	*Identity *Friendship *Health *Counselling

This chapter focuses on the responses to a paper-based Likert scale survey. Focus group and individual semi-structured interview data and fieldnote observations are woven throughout and applied when relevant. The survey features a five-point response (“Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Neither”, “Disagree”, “Strongly Disagree”). A total of 268 men completed the survey, including 63 TOMNET respondents and 205 Men’s Shed respondents. Please refer to Chapter 4 (Table 4.5) for a numerical breakdown of the survey respondents.

Stacked bar graphs are provided to present the distributions of responses to the categorical variables measured by the survey. Questions asked as part of the survey constitute the title of each bar graph. The count of respondents is recorded in each of the bars. The number of respondents is recorded in the upper right-hand corner of the

graph. Not all respondents answered every question (please refer to Chapter 4, Sections 4.6.2 and 4.8.2). Each of the graphs has been fitted into the applicable categorical subheading, and an interpretative discussion of the data (including written comments from the respondents) is presented below each graph. As discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.8.2), the survey was conducted under the informal conditions encountered in the TOMNET and Men’s Shed locations. This in no way diminishes the robustness or the relevance of the findings. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework (please refer to Chapter 3, Figure 3.9) is referenced in the Conclusion of each theme. Applicable needs are emphasised in italicised bold blue font and discussed.

6.2. Ethos

Drawing on information collected from multiple data sources (please refer Section 4.6), this section begins with a discussion of the similarities in ethos between TOMNET and the researched Men’s Sheds, as indicated by the membership of both organisations. As per Chapter 5 (Sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3 and 5.2.4), these common traits included: male-only membership; grassroots philosophies; an anti-deficit positioning of ageing and older men; and attention to building community capacity.

Section 6.2 explores the engagement - or otherwise - of the philosophies around the ethos of each organisation by the membership. Table 6.2 depicts the progression of the chapter’s structure as it applies to Section 6.2.

Table 6.2

The Progression of the Chapter’s Structure: Section 6.2 ETHOS

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
6.2 ETHOS	6.2.1 Male-only culture	*Family interactions
	6.2.2 Grassroots organisations	*Community involvement
	6.2.3 Anti-deficit positioning	*Diversity
	6.2.4 Community capacity building	*Peer support *Suicide ideation

6.2.1. Male-only culture.

This subsection refers to TOMNET and the researched Men's Sheds as enacting a male-only culture. This is demonstrated by the fact that women are not entitled to direct membership in either of these organisations. They can, under certain circumstances, become associate members (as in volunteering at the Flexi School under the auspices of TOMNET), but this does not entitle them to attend TOMNET meetings or to work alongside the men in the Sheds.

Historically, men have had a defined role in family life, namely that of the primary income source (Perrone-McGovern, Jackson, & Wright, 2009). Research signifies that this is changing as more women engage in full-time or part-time employment (Oppenheimer, 1994); however, the gendered nature of social networking remains the same (Shaw et al., 2014). Generally, friendships formed by men are dependent upon shared workplace experiences (and are thus restricted to the period of paid employment) or are initiated by the spouse, who then socially navigates the relationship on behalf of them as a couple or a family. This situation becomes problematic when men retire from work and are unable or unwilling to maintain their work-related friendships, or when a man loses his spouse and finds himself isolated owing to his lack of practice in nurturing social networks (Brody, 2016; Culph et al., 2015; Mackenzie et al., 2017). Figure 6.1 represents the degree to which the respondents felt that they could talk to other men who understood their problems.

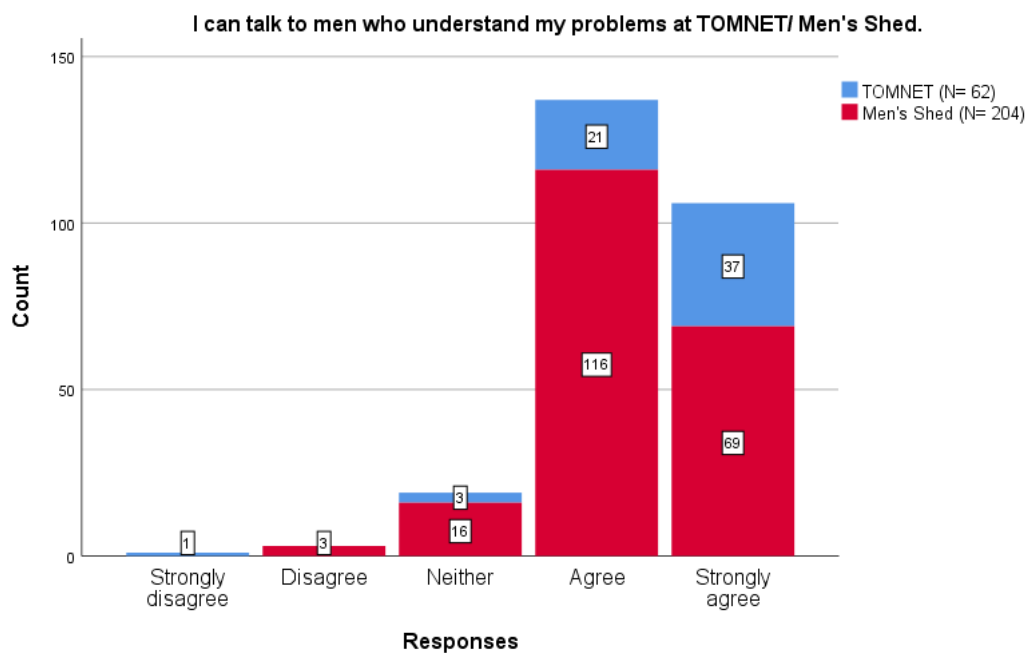


Figure 6.1. I can talk to men who understand my problems

In Figure 6.1, 94% of the TOMNET respondents, and 91% of the Men’s Shed respondents, indicated that they were able to talk to other members who understood their problems. It would appear that the participants were aware of their problems and were open to discussing them with other men, who understood and shared similar issues. Proportionately, more TOMNET men (60%) than Men’s Shed members (34%) strongly agreed. This would make sense as the TOMNET ethos is oriented towards older men having meaningful discussions and problem solving as they do so. These data demonstrated that the ethos of peer support through meaningful conversations benefited the majority of the respondents.

Good talkers and good listeners - not mutually exclusive - are of equal importance in conversation as they are in the building and maintaining of meaningful mateships. This has proved to be a powerful and valued component of older men actually engaged in supporting one another. (Laurence, TOMNET Centre Past Counsellor)

The attainment and the fulfilment of contributive needs are relational and dependent upon a shared understanding that contributes to a broader undertaking, such as the ethea presented by TOMNET/Men’s Sheds. Such a position of relationality highlights the interactive and unpredictable nature of the act of socialisation. Two men could share the same experience but differ in their

interpretations of the outcome of that experience. Thus, the fulfilment of contributive needs is intentional and reliant upon older men being willing to engage openly and wholeheartedly (please refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1).

It is possible to be a member of TOMNET or of a Men's Shed and to attain partial fulfilment of contributive needs. This is beneficial only to mental health if the remainder of the contributive needs are sourced elsewhere. For example, a man may find that the bulk of his needs are met within his family group; however, membership of TOMNET or of a Men's Shed may fulfil his need to share wisdom with like-minded men or to be of service through the volunteerism afforded by those organisations.

In Figure 6.1, 60% of TOMNET men strongly agreed that they were given agency to discuss their problems in a sympathetic environment as compared with 34% of Men's Shed respondents. These comparative figures reinforced the TOMNET philosophy of problem sharing through meaningful conversation, as stated by McGowan et al. (2014): "The TOMNET model primarily focuses on older men communicating with one another and openly engaging in interpersonal relationships to support one another. Men communicating with one another" (p. 112). This sentiment was further reinforced by Paul (TOMNET Member), who stated: "The benefit of TOMNET is to teach these men that it's not unmanly to be able to express their emotions."

Given that TOMNET actively practised its ethos of fostering positive mental health by way of older men supporting older men through meaningful discussion, I would not have expected to find a 5% TOMNET "Neither Agree nor Disagree" response. One interpretation of this statistic may be a lack of willingness to commit to a more straightforward answer or that they were not there to work on a project (as was in the case of 8% of Men's Sheds), and that therefore they were not interested in talking with others about their problems. They may also have felt that they did not have any problems to share.

Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator) explained:

They need an identity. A lot of the guys lack identity. We've got many guys who are caring for their wives. They've gone from being, say, a professional in their workplace to then not knowing what they're doing because they're caring for a wife. They don't have a problem with that. That's the role they agreed to take on,

but I think they are looking for an identity as to, “Well, what am I now? Am I a husband? Where am I? What am I doing here?”

Data represented in this subsection revealed that the male-only ethos of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds fulfilled older men’s contributive needs, in that the majority of the respondents were in agreement that they could communicate with other men who understood them. Figure 6.2 illustrates that this acceptance and understanding fulfilled a range of contributive needs. These needs are highlighted in bold blue font and italicised in the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework.

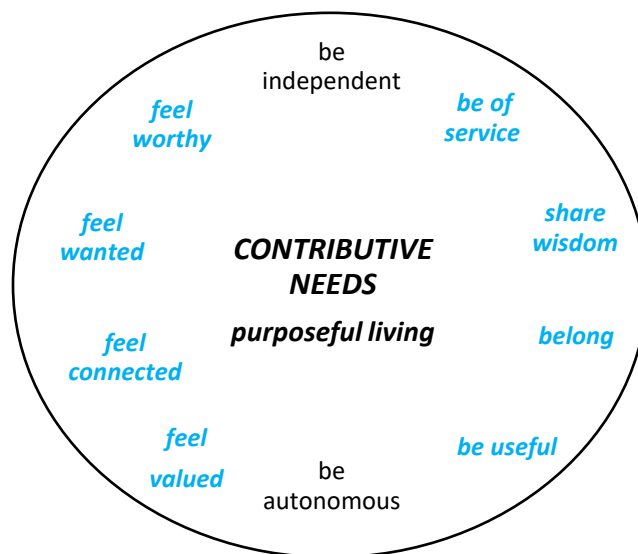


Figure 6.2. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework: Male-only culture

In Figure 6.2, eight of the 10 identified contributive needs related directly to male-only culture. Meaningful, male-only conversations around older men’s health and wellbeing were intentionally structured into the TOMNET program. This type of dialogic practice occurred casually in the Men’s Shed environment before and after the programs, and during the morning tea break. These formal and informal peer-related conversations acted as a conduit to the fulfilment of the members’ self-esteem through their feeling worthy, connected, wanted and useful in their contributions to these conversations. Self-determination was partially enacted by being useful and of service in the role of problem solver. Self-efficacy, the sharing of wisdom and a sense of belonging were also enacted through conversational interactions and opinion giving.

6.2.2. Grassroots organisations.

This subsection examines the democratic, member-driven grassroots ethos practised by TOMNET and Men’s Sheds from the members’ perspectives. The TOMNET Management Committee and the Men’s Shed Management Committees comprised men from the general membership who were elected by the members. Each Men’s Shed had written its own constitution, and every member had a chance to contribute an opinion on aspects of membership applications, Shed infrastructure, operational rules, etc. Also, when there were problem-solving project issues, each participant was afforded the opportunity to add his voice to the conversation.

Figure 6.3 exemplifies the grassroots ideal of equality of membership: all voices were heard and valued for their contribution to the collective.

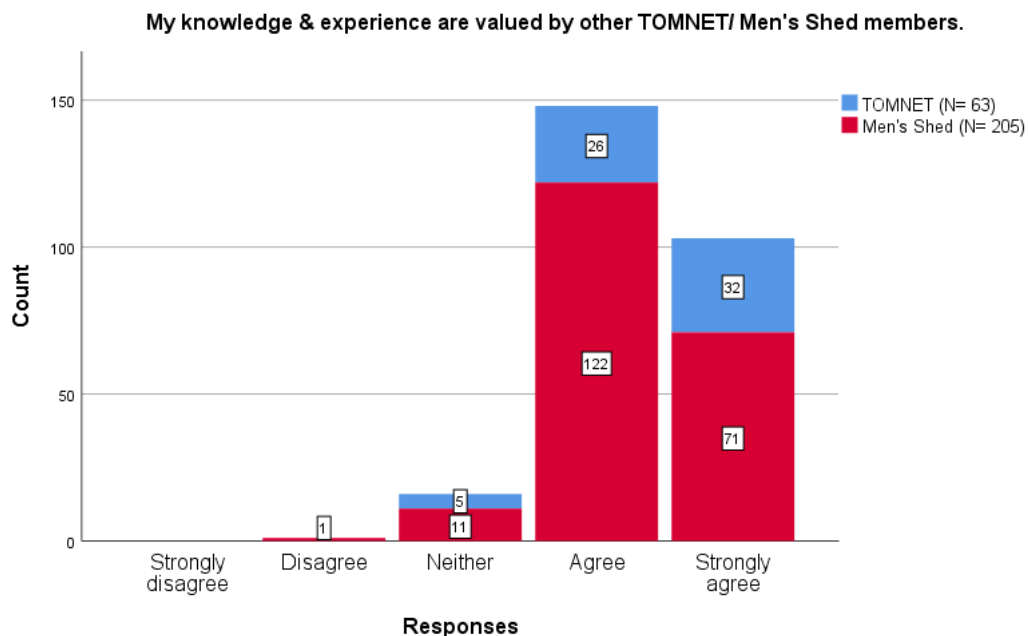


Figure 6.3. My knowledge and experience are valued by TOMNET and Men’s Shed members

In Figure 6.3, 92% of TOMNET respondents and 94% of Men’s Shed respondents indicated that their knowledge and experience were valued by their respective groups. Feeling valued and having a sense of belonging rated highly in that they are two of the elements that lead to healthy self-esteem and purposeful living, and thus to the fulfilment of contributive needs.

Eight percent of TOMNET participants responded “Neither Agree nor Disagree” as opposed to 5% of the Men’s Shed participants. One of the Men’s Shed respondents indicated that he was not valued. Both results were under 10%, but it was not clear

what these respondents were deriving from participation in the programs and the reasoning behind their continued presence. Aside from feeling that their knowledge and experience were not valued by their peers, perhaps this was a reflection on their degree of willingness to engage with others.

An article published in the local magazine *Bold* (Toowoomba Regional Council, 2017) featured Shed 7: “We’re all from different walks of life with different life experiences that we all share together. We’re about equality” (p. 8). This comment typified a grassroots attitude of egalitarianism found in all of the researched Sheds.

As was discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4), contributive needs are relational by practice and intentional by nature in that the fulfilment of contributive needs as a whole requires that an older man exercises a desire to interact with his peers. How others perceive us can factor into how we perceive ourselves, especially after a potential life crisis such as retirement. Oyserman et al. (2012) argued that self and identity can be “context sensitive” (p. 84). In this case, membership of an egalitarian grassroots organisation, where a man felt valued by his peers, promoted transformative feelings towards a positive self-concept.

Figure 6.3 reflects the appreciation that the TOMNET and Men’s Shed membership had for their acceptance into the group by their peers. Contributive needs pertaining to the application of grassroots philosophies are highlighted in bold blue font and italicised in the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework in Figure 6.4.

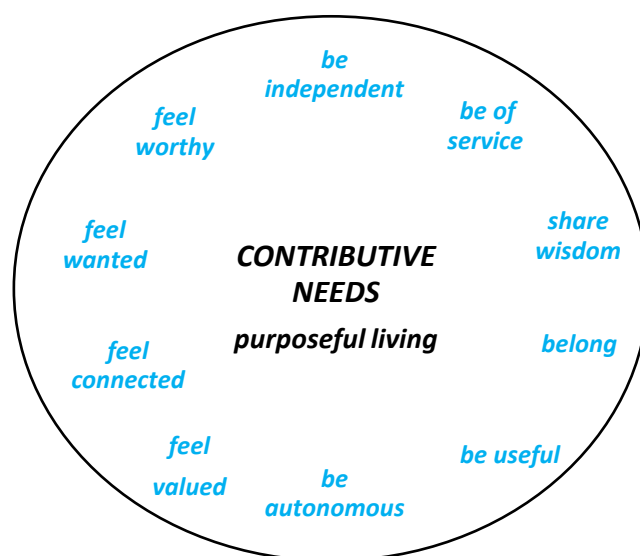


Figure 6.4. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework: Grassroots organisation

All of the identified contributive needs related to grassroots organisation. Self-efficacy in the form of sharing wisdom and belonging was demonstrated in the election of management committees. Self-esteem was fostered by feeling worthy, connected, wanted and valued by other members of the group, who respected individual opinions. Organisational independence and autonomy allowed the group to create its own agenda and to sustain self-government. Being useful and being of service were demonstrated through interactions with other members.

6.2.3. Anti-deficit positioning.

This subsection addresses the anti-deficit positioning of ageing as an older male in contemporary society. Feelings to do with acceptance within the wider community and isolation were specifically investigated.

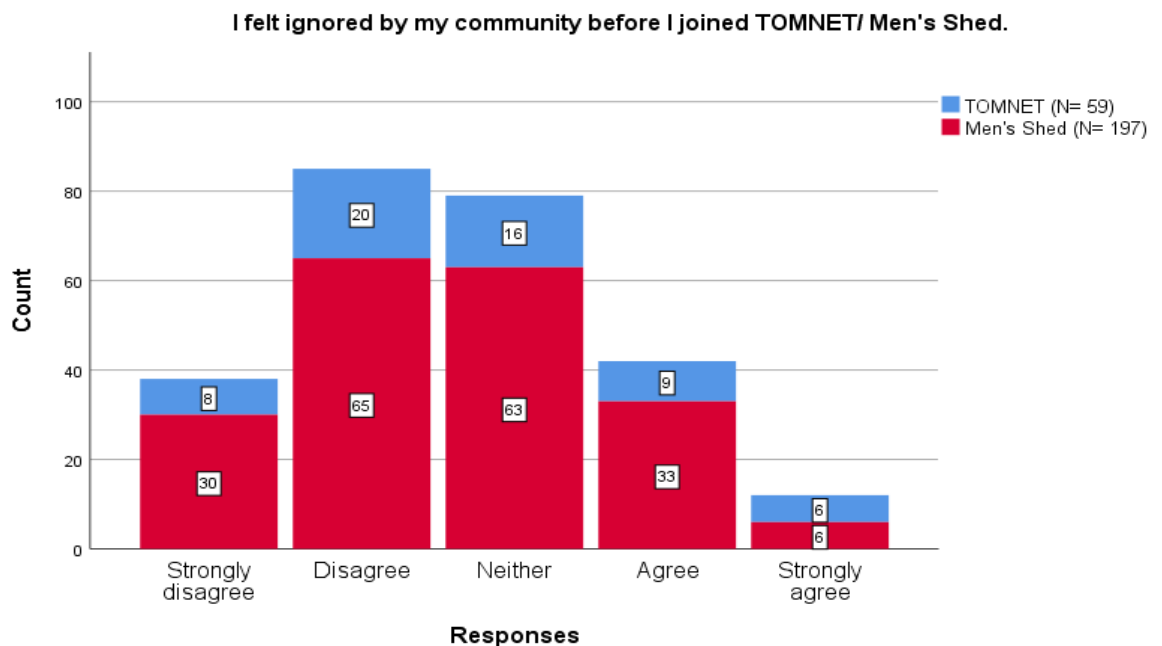


Figure 6.5. I felt ignored by my community before I joined TOMNET/Men's Shed

Just under half of the TOMNET (47%) and the Men's Shed (48%) respondents in Figure 6.5 felt that their community did not ignore them prior to their membership of their chosen group. Just over one quarter (27%) of the TOMNET respondents and just over one third (32%) of the Men's Shed respondents declined to indicate their feelings directly about this matter. These are significant statistics. It is difficult to ascribe a definitive meaning to a "Neither Agree nor Disagree" response; however, one reason for these data may be that the respondents were not affected or influenced

by the community's attitude towards them. 25% of TOMNET respondents and 20% of Men's Shed respondents agreed that they felt ignored by their community before joining their respective organisations.

Four (7%) TOMNET and eight (4%) Men's Shed respondents did not provide a response to this statement at all. This is an important number. It may have been that the use of the word "ignored" was too confrontational or too ambiguous. It may also have been that the respondents felt that this statement was too personal, and as such they eschewed a commitment by avoiding the statement. Adam (TOMNET Center Office Bearer) indirectly addressed the issue of the lack of community acknowledgement and the invisibility of older men:

When you talk suicide to someone that you meet, they'll talk about the kids that are committing suicide, they'll talk about the returned soldiers who are committing suicide and lately they'll talk about the tradies [tradespeople] that are committing suicide. But you look at the statistics: every day, every day in Australia a male over 60 commits suicide. No one wants to know this.

Class and ethnicity may play a major role in community bias. Pietila, Calasanti, and Ojala (2017) referred to data collected by Barnes and Parry (2004) that revealed that the retirement transition was less stressful for middle-class men. They posited that this demographic was more financially secure and therefore had more social opportunities available to them. By contrast, working-class men with limited financial and social capital were more restricted in their choices. Similarly, Ivan (Shed 4 Office Bearer) was concerned about the ethnic bias of the membership in his Shed. He commented:

Sheds are supposed to be multicultural and inclusive. In reality, they can be a stunted microcosm of the community in which they developed. A concern I have about my own Shed is that it is populated almost exclusively by men having European heritage. Does this mean there are no suitable or interested men in my district whose origins are Middle Eastern, Asian or Indigenous? I don't know the answer, but I do know that our group sometimes reflects many of the prejudices of people born in the [19]40s and [19]50s where race, religion and culture are concerned.

The discourse around men's health and retirement is grounded in the disruption of men's identity and the associated problems of loneliness, lack of purpose and

negative social stereotyping within the wider community. Scholarly references around the topic of masculinity and retirement have centred on a lexicon such as “problematic” (Hearn, 1999, p. 148) and “crisis” (Ricciardelli et al., 2012, n.p.). Figure 6.5 indicates that a significant percentage of the survey respondents refuted this rhetoric. Pietila et al. (2017) stated: “Class shapes both the perceived content of crises and the actual retirement experiences” (p. 1). With just under half of each group’s respondents indicating that they felt that they were not ignored by the community, perhaps considerations such as the economic status of the membership of each group should not be overlooked.

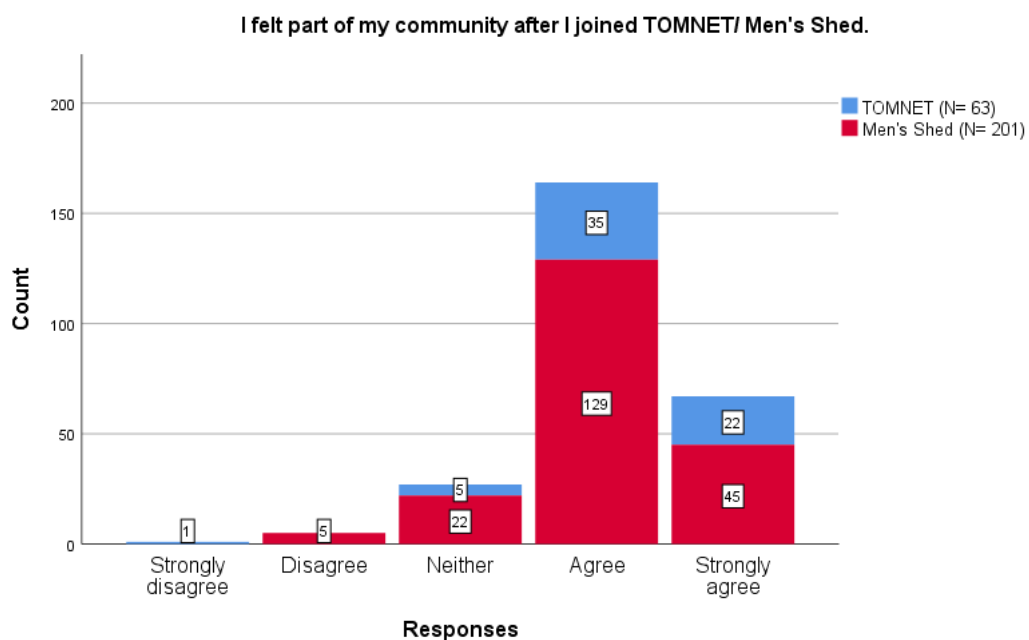


Figure 6.6. I felt part of my community after I joined TOMNET/Men’s Shed

In Figure 6.6, 90% of TOMNET respondents and 87% of Men’s Shed respondents indicated positively that they felt part of their community after joining their organisation. One survey respondent commented that “medical students should have to know about us”. This remark reinforced the overwhelming belief in the benefits ascribed to membership of these groups as an avenue for supporting older men who were isolated within their communities.

Eight percent of TOMNET and 11% of Men’s Sheds did not commit to a positive or negative response, and only one (2%) TOMNET respondents and five (2%) Men’s Shed respondents did not feel like part of the community after they joined their organisations. These were relatively insignificant proportions of the

groups. Responses may have referred to the internal community of each of the groups where their expectations of the functioning of the group may not have been met, or it may have been a disappointment in their dealings with the external wider community.

When salutogenic environments are being discussed, the question: “What works, for whom and in what context?” (Egan, 2013, p. 22) is an important one. Membership of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds was self-selective. Clearly, each of these disparate yet significant organisations was ‘working’ for these members, thus breaking down assumptions that propagandised a deficit view of the health and wellbeing of older men.

Likert scale survey respondents in Figures 6.5 and 6.6 indicated that all of the elements of the fulfilment of their contributive needs were being met. These elements are represented diagrammatically in Figure 6.7. Contributive needs pertaining to the anti-deficit positioning of older men are highlighted in bold blue font and italicised in the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework.

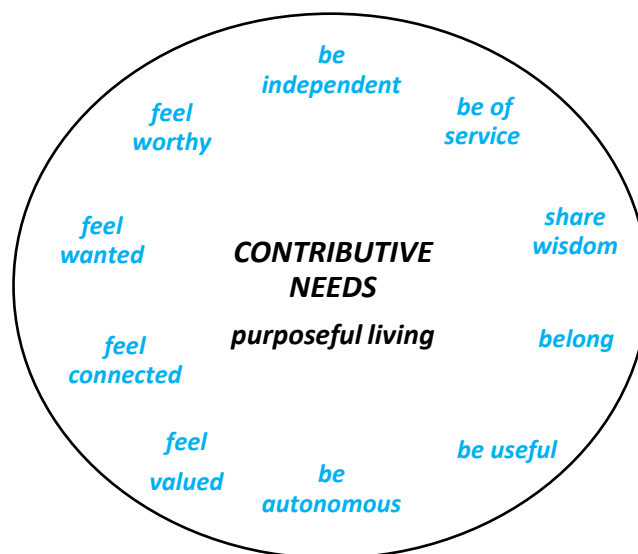


Figure 6.7. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework: Anti-deficit positioning

All of the identified contributive needs related to the anti-deficit positioning of older men. A shared uniform fostered feelings of self-esteem in that it was a visible symbol of feeling worthy, connected, wanted and valued. Self-determination needs were created within the organisations by allowing men to set their own agenda for volunteer work (TOMNET) or to work on their own projects (Men’s Sheds). The giving and receiving of advice through formal and informal conversation reinforced

self-efficacy in the form of sharing wisdom and belonging to a group that supported and encouraged this type of interaction.

One of the foci of scholarship based on the examination of the pathology of being male concentrates on the invisibility of older men. Thompson (1994) considered that “contemporary cultural coding” (p. 13) branded older men as being genderless and oppressed, and therefore as being socially and culturally invisible. He berated gerontologists for their lack of gender distinction when discussing older people that has resulted in an inadvertent homogenisation of elders. He also blamed falsely constructed stereotypical images promoted by the media that render older men a burden on society.

This sentiment continued into the new century when, nearly a decade later, Zinn (2002) wrote:

As men grow old a curious thing happens to us. Like Lewis Carroll’s Cheshire Cat in Alice in Wonderland, we start to vanish, a little at a time, until all that is left is a rather insubstantial form which, while clearly male and elderly, makes little impression on the world around us. (p. vii)

Findsen (2006) stressed the significance of the fact that the fulfilment of contributive needs is enacted in the volunteer role for older people: “Most Western societies are oriented toward the glorification of youth, where to be old is to be the ‘other’ – a largely invisible entity” (p. 69).

In 2017 males over 50 were still referred to as “Invisible Men” (Jameson-Allen, 2017, n.p.) owing to the fact that this demographic is rarely spoken of and that their health issues are comparatively rarely acknowledged in the media (as compared with women of that demographic).

In March 2018, Radio National in Australia aired a *Life Matters* session entitled “The Invisible Women Syndrome”, which referred to older women’s experiences of cultural isolation - e.g., being overlooked by shop assistants or by male peers. This prompted an older male listener to reflect upon his own feelings related to the topic in a comment in a Facebook discussion thread: “I’m just a ghost that’s not dead yet” (facebook.com/ABCRLifeMatters).

TOMNET and Men’s Shed groups go some way towards ameliorating these feelings of invisibility through their service to older men in terms of fulfilling their contributive needs. A sense of purpose and a recognition and acceptance of identity

enable members to reclaim visibility through the programs offered by each organisation.

6.2.4. Community capacity building.

This subsection examines the concept of community capacity building through the lens of membership needs. It further builds upon the contention (stated in Section 5.1.4) that the two groups researched demonstrated that community capacity building is multilayered. Two simultaneous communities - internal and external - existed within the parameters of the one organisation. The internal community was represented by the membership, whilst the external community was comprised of those members not directly engaged in the programs offered by the organisations (such as the wider community). Figure 6.8 depicts this concept diagrammatically.

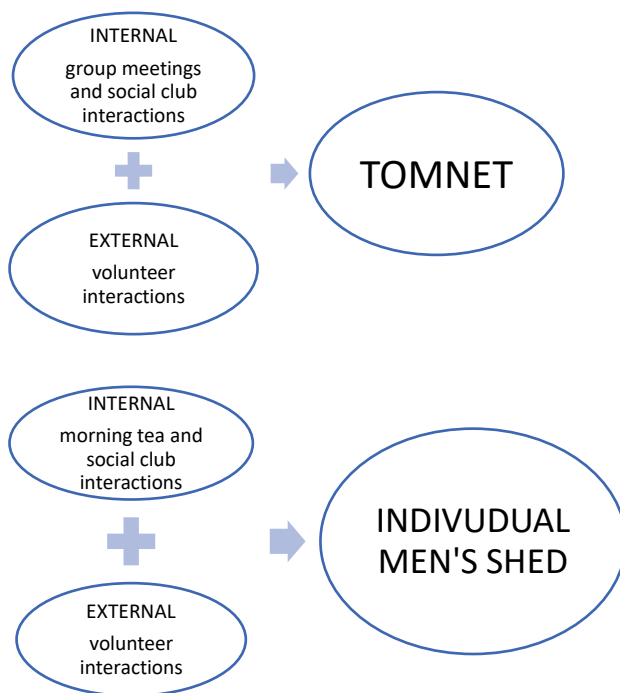


Figure 6.8. Community capacity building through the lens of membership

Figures 6.9, 6.10 and 6.11 depict the extent to which the membership survey respondents felt that their interactions with their internal and external communities were effective.

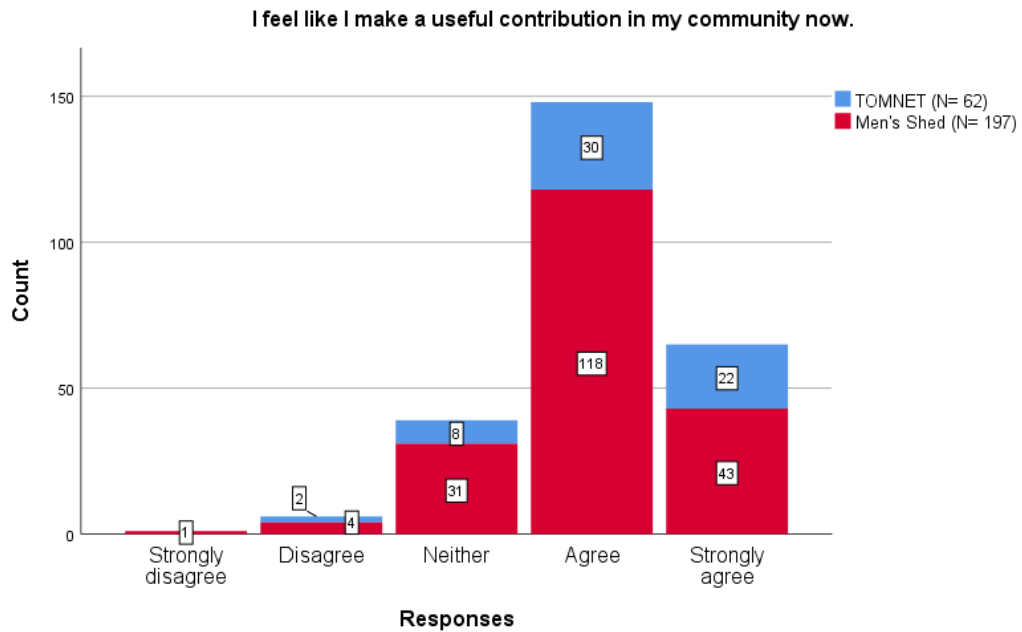


Figure 6.9. I feel like I make a useful contribution in my community now

In Figure 6.9, 84% of TOMNET respondents and 82% of Men’s Shed respondents felt that they made useful contributions in their community. This result constituted well over three quarters of the members surveyed in both groups. As this was a nonspecific question, the community reference could either be internal (i.e., within the TOMNET/Men’s Shed group), as was indicated by this survey comment: “Men’s Shed provides retired men with a venue to join with friends” (Shed Survey Respondent); or external (i.e., the wider community), as was indicated in the following survey comment: “I feel the Shed serves a very useful role in the community” (Shed 7 survey respondent).

In Figure 6.9, 13% of TOMNET respondents and 16% of Men’s Shed respondents indicated “Neither Agree nor Disagree”, while two (3%) TOMNET respondents and five (3%) Men’s Shed respondents did not feel that they made a useful contribution in their community. These responses could have been due to the use of the word “useful”, which can be a subjective adjective, particularly if they were comparing their lives pre- and post-retirement and whether they had felt more “useful” when they were in paid employment.

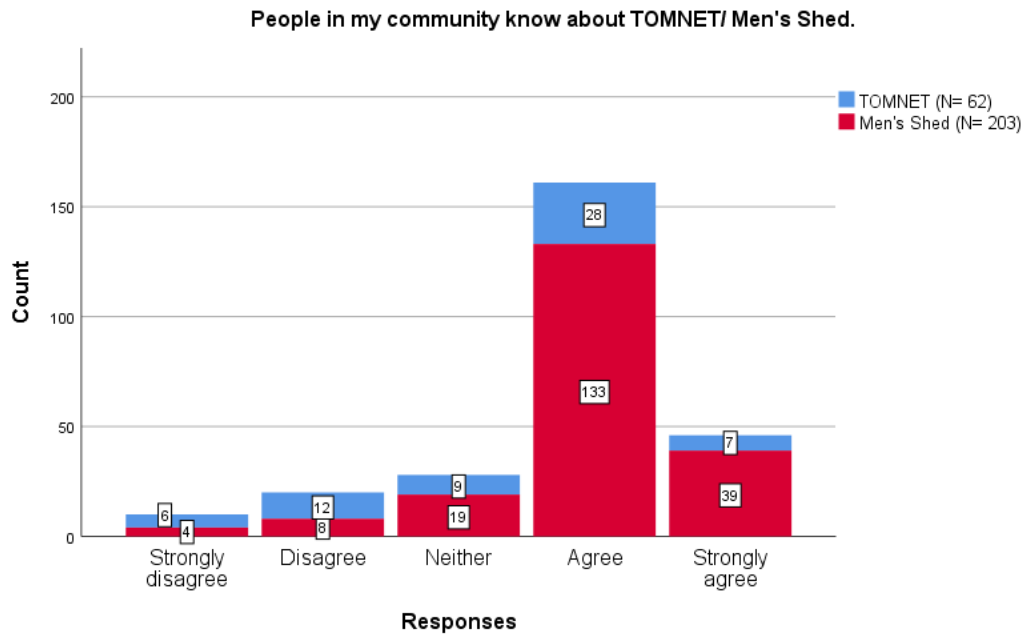


Figure 6.10. People in my community know about TOMNET/Men's Shed

In Figure 6.10, 56% of TOMNET respondents and 85% of Men's Shed respondents responded "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to the statement that people in their community knew about their organisations. 15% of TOMNET respondents and 9% of Men's Shed respondents indicated "Neither Agree nor Disagree", while 29% of TOMNET respondents and 6% of Men's Shed respondents did not think that the community knew about their groups.

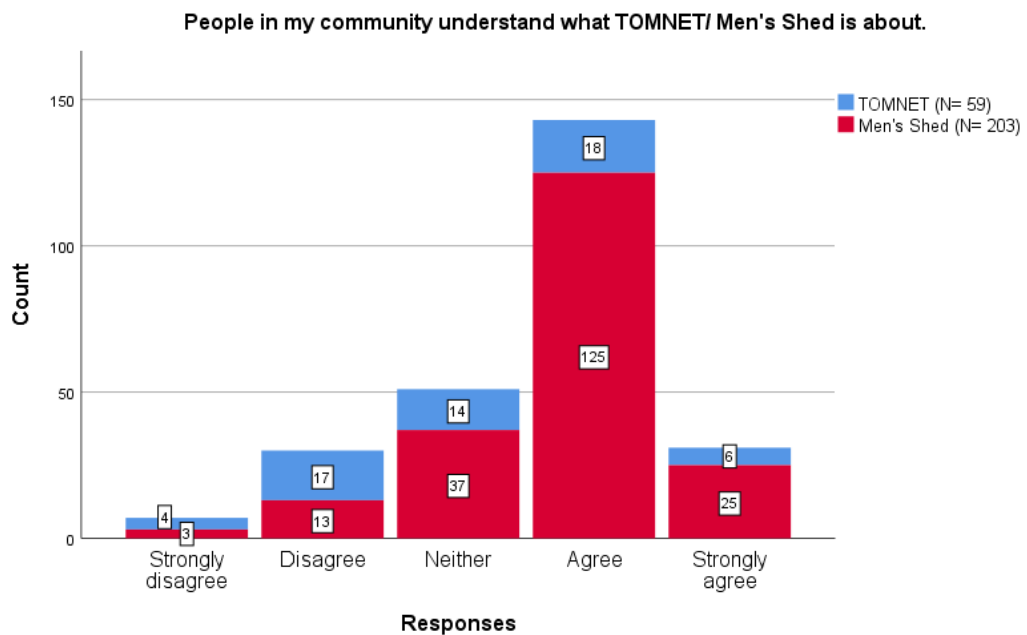


Figure 6.11. People in my community understand what TOMNET/Men's Shed is about

In Figure 6.11, fewer than half of the respondents from TOMNET (41%) indicated that the community understood the nature of their organisation. This may have reflected that the men within those groups were fully immersed in the volunteer programs offered and assumed that the wider community was aware of them. This would be particularly the case for some TOMNET members, who had joined TOMNET specifically to volunteer (please refer to 5.3.4, Programs). Conversely, nearly three quarters of Men's Shed respondents (74%) either agreed or strongly agreed that people in their community knew what Men's Shed was about.

Fifty-nine percent of TOMNET respondents and 26% of Men's Shed respondents declined to commit to a definite response either way, or else disagreed with the statement. More than half of the TOMNET respondents did not think that the community understood their purpose. This is unfortunate as TOMNET was established to work to support older men in the community and branded itself as such. Is this a reflection of the "invisible lives" referenced in Section 6.2.3 Are the concerns of older men not registering in the psyche of the wider communities?

Volunteerism and peer support play under-rated but vital functions in the growth of community wellbeing. Postle (2014) stated: "...communities have been seduced into thinking that economic growth and what flows from this is the sole indicator of community wellbeing and the only way in which community wellbeing can be measured" (p. 261).

Andrew (TOMNET Administrator) recounted the story of a man who was brought into the headquarters by a carer: "The lady just brought him in, dumped him and walked away." Later on, the man "...just disappeared." Andrew could offer no reasoning behind these actions except that clearly the carer - and perhaps the prospective member - had no understanding of TOMNET protocols.

General interview and survey respondent comments revealed that the survey participants were firmly of the opinion that the community did not understand the purpose of their organisations. "Some think we provide beds for homeless men!" (Men's Shed Survey Respondent). An interviewee further addressed a common misperception within his community:

We aren't an organisation that's been set up to do community projects to help everybody else. There is a perception - oh, if they want the scout hall fixed or some kids looked after at the local school who've been mischievous, they call on us to do it for them. (Shed Focus Group 2)

One Shed survey respondent had very definite views about the function of a Men’s Shed. He commented on the lack of community awareness of the Shed’s purpose:

Communities differ in their understanding of Men’s Sheds. They seem to think it’s about work when it’s not. It’s about men working with other men feeling at ease with each other and able to talk about anything - relationships, friendships and health are always important. Men are also looking out for the wellbeing of other men.

Figure 6.12 depicts contributive needs pertaining to community capacity building. These are highlighted in bold blue font and italicised in the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework.

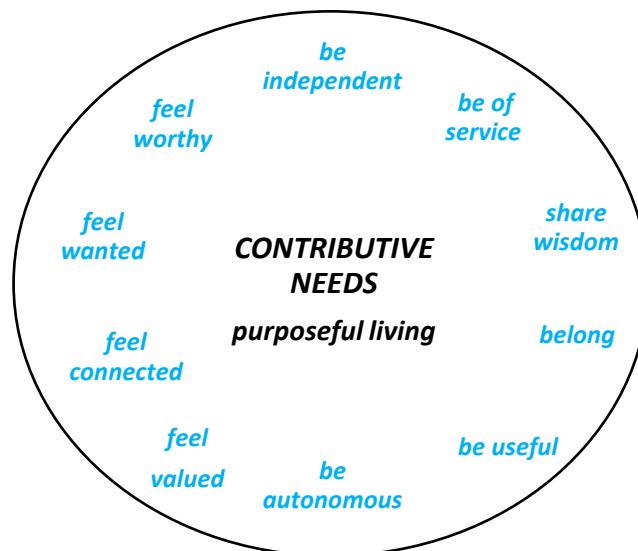


Figure 6.12. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework: Community capacity building

All of the identified contributive needs related to community capacity building. McGowan et al. (2014) posited that: “Older men are an invaluable resource: they represent a repository of knowledge and skills and a wide range of capabilities and life experiences that can be channelled into community support” (p. 118). The internal community supported the fostering of self-esteem needs: feeling worthy, wanted, connected and valued within the group. The self-governance needs of independence, autonomy, being useful and being of service can be associated with both the internal and the external communities, as can the self-engagement needs of sharing wisdom and belonging.

6.2.5. Conclusion.

Section 6.2 has examined the ethos of TOMNET and Men's Sheds from the members' perspectives. Junger (2016a) stated: "There are many costs to modern society, starting with its toll on the global ecosystem and working one's way down to its toll on the human psyche, but the most dangerous may be to community" (p. 109). This theory was borne out in the following comment: "Men are searching for intrinsic value, seeking value in men's groups. Men have quite deep emotional needs. They just don't know how to express or ask for it" (Barry, TOMNET Centre Current Member). When applying McClusky's (1974) Margin Theory (please refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1), an association may be made between the "load" (p. 329) of the stress of an older man's search for intrinsic value and the "power" (p. 329) of belonging to TOMNET or a Men's Shed, thereby reducing the margin between the stress of the load and the power gained in the fulfilment of contributive needs. TOMNET and Men's Sheds provided a practical resolution to the issues surrounding older men through their continued interactions with the external, wider community as well as through their programs caring for the internal community members of each organisation. Table 6.3 provides a summary of the positive and negative elements of Ethos.

Table 6.3

Summary of the Positive and Negative Elements of Ethos

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
Over 90% of respondents recognised that they had issues that needed to be addressed.	Over half of the respondents from both groups felt that they were ignored by their communities prior to their membership of that group.
Over 90% of respondents in each group indicated that they felt comfortable speaking with other members who understood their problems.	A number of Men's Shed members commented that a class bias or discrepancy may exist in their internal community and that it may be reflective of a "stunted microcosm".
92% of TOMNET members and 94% of Men's Shed members indicated that their knowledge and experience were valued by their group.	None of the Men's Sheds that were researched had paid positions (as they did in the TOMNET headquarters) to devote to the public profile of the organisation.
Just under half of the TOMNET (47%) and the Men's Shed (48%) respondents felt that their community did not ignore them prior to their membership of their chosen group.	Some respondents were concerned about the lack of contact between groups set up for older men.
Almost all of the respondents indicated positive responses to feeling that they belonged and to having their contributive needs met through their participation in these groups.	Fewer than half of the respondents from TOMNET indicated that the community understood the purpose of their organisation.
84% of TOMNET respondents and 82% of Men's Shed respondents felt that they made useful contributions in their community.	
Most Men's Shed respondents agreed that people in their community knew about their Shed.	
Men from the same generation were able to share commonalities of values within their group.	
Nearly three quarters of Men's Shed respondents agreed that people in their community knew the purpose of their Men's Shed.	

6.3. Structure

This section focuses on the structural organisation of TOMNET and Men's Sheds from a membership perspective. Subheadings include Aims and goals (6.2.1), Leadership (6.2.2) and Program implementation (6.2.3). The notions of social inclusion, peer support, volunteerism and lifelong learning are interrogated. Members' feelings of achievement since joining their group are also reviewed. Table 6.4 depicts the progression of the chapter's structure as it applies to Section 6.3.

Table 6.4

The Progression of the Chapter's Structure: Section 6.3 STRUCTURE

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
6.3 STRUCTURE	6.3.1 Aims and goals 6.3.2 Leadership 6.3.3 Program implementation	*Social inclusion *Peer support *Achievements *Management *Volunteering *Lifelong learning

6.3.1. Aims and goals.

Programming that implemented the aims and goals of TOMNET and Men's Sheds has been discussed in the previous chapter (please refer to Subsection 5.3.1). This subsection focuses on how the membership received and enacted those aims and goals. TOMNET and Men's Sheds provided avenues through which older men were afforded opportunities and actively encouraged to work together in an altruistic manner, helping one another - member to member - as well as helping the community at large through volunteer work.

Figure 6.13 depicts the members' understandings of the purpose behind the formation of their organisation.

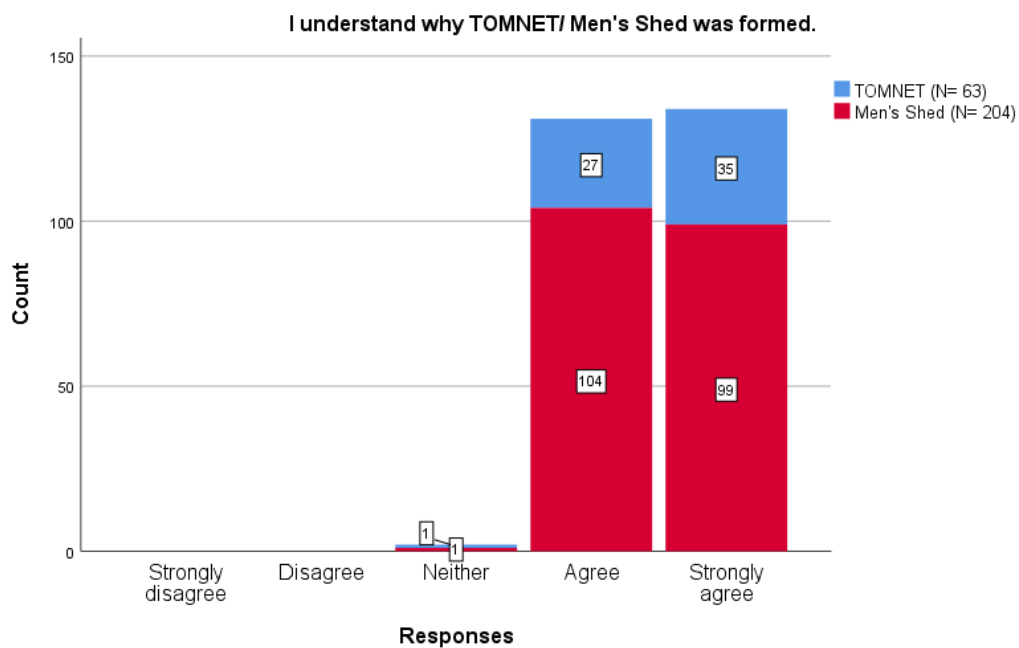


Figure 6.13. I understand why TOMNET/Men's Sheds was formed

Ninety-eight percent of TOMNET and 99.5% of Men's Shed respondents in Figure 6.13 indicated that they understood why their group was formed. Pachana (2017) stated: "We need to give older adults meaningful ways to engage in society. If we close doors to participation, we are propagating this sense of isolation that older adults aren't welcome or don't belong" (n.p.).

Table 6.5 provides examples of categorical comments from members about these understandings. Topics are linked in brackets with the Older Men's Contributive Needs and Identity Framework (Chapter 3, Figure 3.9) to exemplify the manner in which each organisation was experienced as fulfilling these men's contributive needs.

Table 6.5

Interpretational Categorical Comments about Members' Understandings of Experience and Engagement in the Programs Offered

TOPIC	TOMNET	MEN'S SHEDS
Social inclusion (belong, feel worthy)	"Getting together and just talking about things....That's a good outlet." (Gary, TOMNET Member)	"We got [Name] and he's Hungarian and I've always thought 'There's something more to this fellow' and I stood back and I listened and talked to him and now he always singles me out to talk to. (Participant, Men's Shed Focus Group 4)
Purpose (share wisdom)	"I've been about. I've got skills - why not share them?" (Ray, TOMNET Member)	"The Mens [sic] Shed maintains a structure in my life that I experienced whilst working that was initially lost on retirement." (Men's Shed survey respondent)
Community (be useful)	"I think it's almost critical [community work]. It's very, very important because it gives a sense of belonging. The average community don't realise what a wealth they could tap into. There's experience; there's wisdom." (Peter, TOMNET Member)	"You can't bring a bunch of guys together and sit them in a room and say, 'You have men's disease.' Men really come together to become a community and then give back to the community." (Shed Focus Group 3)
Peer support (feel connected)	"It's most important to have a personal relationship that involves people being able to say, 'Oh, well, at least I can talk to that bloke'." (TOMNET Focus Group 2)	"Looking after men that have lost their wives if they want to come here and talk." (Shed Focus Group 1)
Volunteerism (be of service)	"It's the reward. It's a lot of personal satisfaction." (Paddy, TOMNET Member)	"Helping out in the community - the hospital has given us quite a bit of work to do." (Shed Focus Group 1)
Mateship (feel wanted, feel valued)	"We have a duty of care to one another. We care for each other on a personal level." (TOMNET Focus Group 2)	"We're all a bunch of old farts who sit around and tell stories." (Shed Focus Group 2)
Grassroots (be autonomous, be independent)	"It's [TOMNET] all about older men going out into the community and supporting other older men. We do it on our own terms. (Adam, TOMNET Office Bearer)	"Men's Sheds are not a council infrastructure problem. They're driven by the desire and will of a few individuals and their efforts." (Shed Focus Group 3)

Figure 6.14 shifts the focus from the members’ understandings of the respective organisations’ aims and goals to demonstrating members’ feelings of achievement since joining their respective organisations.

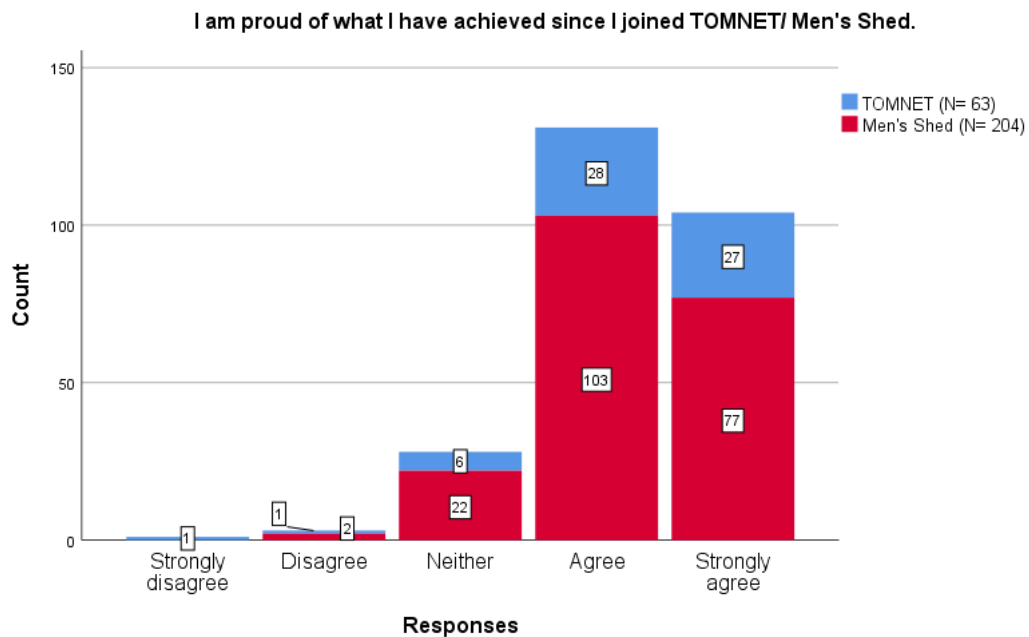


Figure 6.14. I am proud of what I have achieved since I joined TOMNET/Men’s Sheds

Eighty-seven percent of TOMNET and 88% of Men’s Shed respondents in Figure 6.14 were proud of their achievements since joining their respective organisations. Approximately 10% of each group indicated “Neither Agree nor Disagree”. This response could represent an unwillingness to commit and could be interpreted as a reflection on the word “proud” in the statement. Could it be that they viewed their activities at TOMNET and Men’s Shed as being either an extension of their work life or a compulsory social philanthropic act, and so completed it as a matter of course? A “Neither Agree nor Disagree” response could also have had to do with the focus or tone of the individual Shed and/or the reasoning behind the member’s attendance. Shed 9 operated mainly as a gathering place for older men (from the Senior and the Builder generations) to sit and converse with one another. These men did not view the Shed as a place of achievement – it was more of a social outing. This was evidenced by the fact that, of the 20 members in attendance at the Shed on the day of the survey, 14 of the men sat and chatted for the duration of the Shed’s opening time (Fieldnotes, 1 September 2016).

Certainly, the word “proud” was utilised by some of the members, as was indicated by this survey respondent: “Proud to be a foundation member”. Another

Shed survey respondent commented: “The Men’s Shed I think gives some [or] most [men] a sense of achievement that they can achieve a lot when society, largely, has mentally placed them on the social scrap heap.” Junger (2016a) posited that: “The beauty and tragedy of the modern world is that it eliminates many situations that require people to demonstrate a commitment to the collective good” (p. 59). The “collective good” in this case may refer to the internal group itself and/or to the external, wider community that influences the best practice of TOMNET and Men’s Shed groups.

Contributive needs pertaining to the aims and goals of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds are highlighted in bold blue font and italicised in the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework in Figure 6.15.

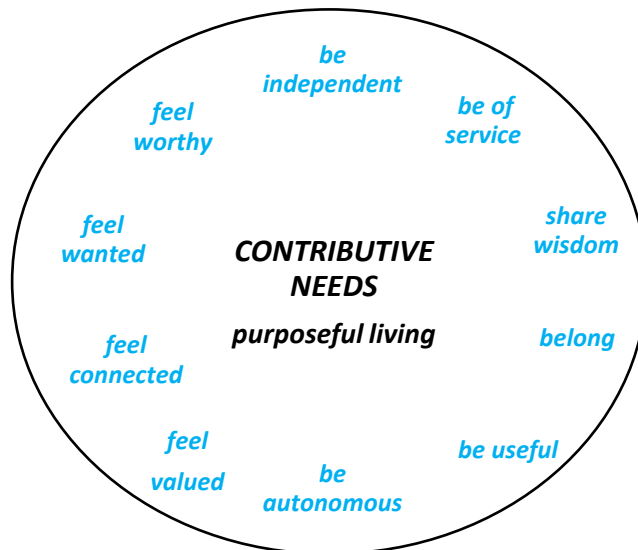


Figure 6.15. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework: Aims and goals

All of the identified contributive needs related to the aims and goals of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds. As was indicated in the interpretational categorical comments from members (please refer to Table 6.5), several factors, including social inclusion, purpose, community, peer support, volunteerism, mateship and a grassroots ethos, all contributed to the understandings of the principles behind each of the organisations.

6.3.2. Leadership.

As was discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.3 Leadership styles), both TOMNET and Men's Shed utilised a culture-driven leadership approach that befitted the grassroots ethos of each organisation. This subsection addresses the issues to do with leadership from the members' perspectives. TOMNET Administrators were specifically identified as they were the only paid leadership positions in either group researched. Comments from the Likert scale survey, interviews, focus groups and fieldnotes have also been employed to deepen understandings of leadership within both organisations.

TOMNET leadership comprised two branches. The TOMNET Centre administration consisted of three full-time and one part-time paid employees. The volunteer Management Committee comprised 11 elected representatives drawn from the membership. There was some member confusion as to where each of these branches was positioned in terms of hierarchical importance in the organisation. The paid employees solicited program funding, ensured the smooth running of the programs and supported members with any governmental bureaucracy such as grant writing. Observational fieldnotes indicated that the staff members felt that they had influence over the Management Committee as they attended to financial matters. Conversely, some members of the Management Committee (which represented the membership in terms of program innovation and implementation, and any issues or conflicts arising) felt that the staff members' role was subsidiary to theirs.

Figure 6.16 reflects the feelings of the membership concerning the paid staff members at TOMNET.

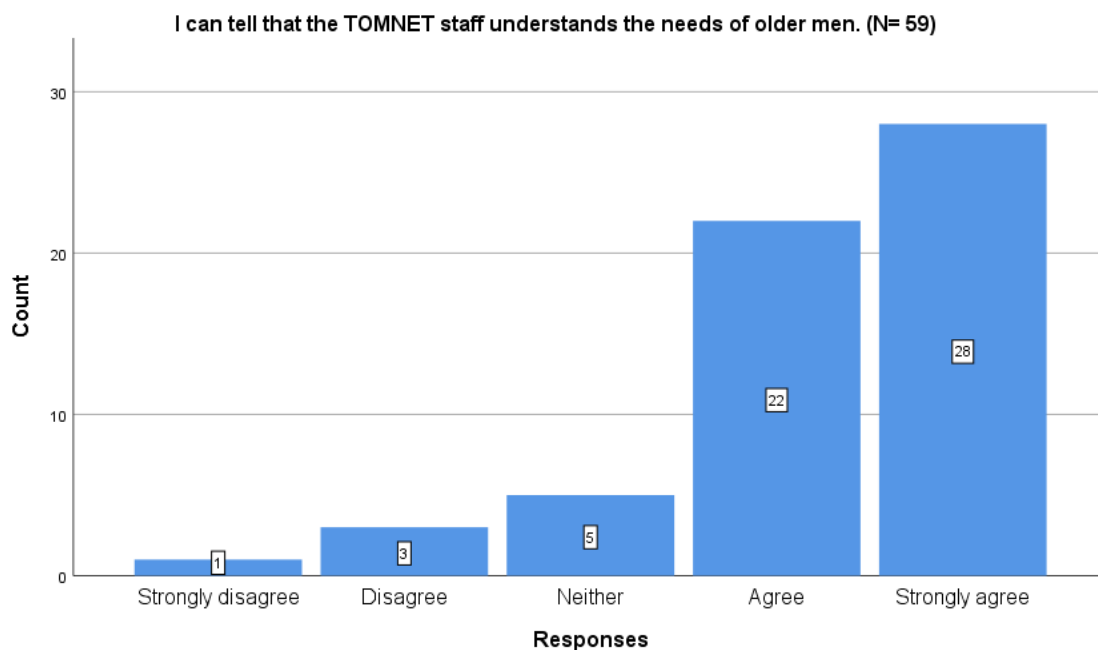


Figure 6.16. I can tell that the TOMNET staff members understand the needs of older men

In Figure 6.16, 85% of the respondents felt that the TOMNET staff members understood the needs of older men. 8% declined to give a definitive response, and 7% did not think that the TOMNET staff members understood the needs of older men. Four men did not respond to this statement at all. This would indicate that 21% of the men who participated in the whole survey (including the men who chose “Neither Agree nor Disagree” and those who declined to respond to this statement at all) believed to some extent that the staff members did not understand their needs. This is important information as it measured the level to which the staff members were perceived to understand the complexities involved in the fulfilment of their clients’ contributive needs. It further reflected the trust that the men had in the staff members to deliver programs applicable to their needs.

Whilst the Likert scale survey did not contain a statement concerning leadership in the Men’s Sheds, respondents took it upon themselves to share their opinions on this topic. One comment focused on the inappropriateness of top-down management styles and reinforced the need for a grassroots culture:

Men’s Sheds should be controlled by Men from the shed[,] not by imported businessmen who sometimes have no idea about community groups like Men’s Sheds. Many business people do not understand bottom[-up] management. They are more interested in lower from the top. Men in sheds seem to favour the bottom[-up] management systems, as here they have more of a say through their

committees about what happens in their local shed. With top-down management, they feel not heard or valued. They had top-down management all their lives[;] it is now time for them to be heard and valued in their community. (Shed survey respondent)

Another respondent commented favourably about the delivery of programs within the Shed: “The Executive have been helpful in extending the activities which are offered in the shed, even though dollars have been involved” (Shed survey respondent).

When reference was made to a leadership conflict in another Shed, a participant in Shed Focus Group 4 remarked that: “The President’s only one man.” This indicated that, although the executive was voted in by the membership, all voices and opinions were equal, and one was not more important than another. Another Shedder commented on leadership in terms of a democratic, grassroots ethos that allowed for management change if necessary: “You’ve got to structure the organisation so that you can get rid of a dud” (Fieldnotes, 1 October 2017).

Contributive needs pertaining to organisational leadership are highlighted in bold blue font and italicised in the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework in Figure 6.17.

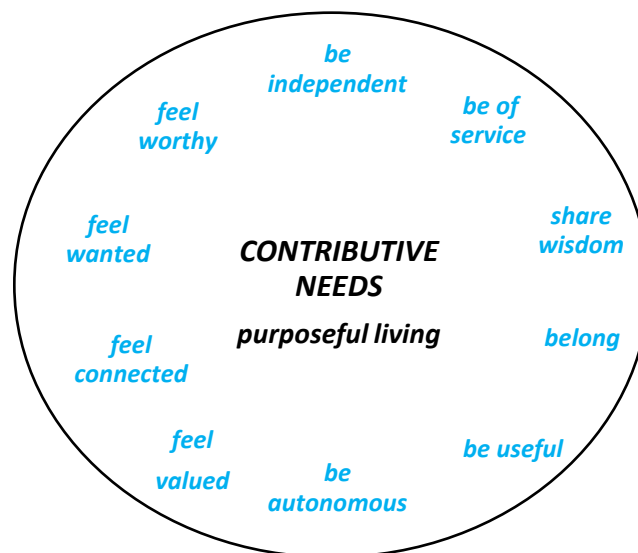


Figure 6.17. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework: Leadership

All of the identified contributive needs related to leadership. Participation in the program delivery by TOMNET members was reflected in heightened feelings of self-esteem (feeling worthy, connected, wanted and valued) and self-efficacy (sharing

wisdom and belonging). Independence and autonomy were paramount values for individual Men’s Sheds as they enacted self-determination. They were equally important to TOMNET in terms of the perceived effectiveness of the Management Committee and paid staff decision-making vis-à-vis program initiatives.

6.3.3. Program implementation.

Both the TOMNET and Men’s Shed programs exhibited a number of commonalities in that they were both based on social connection and social engagement.

Table 6.6 presents a comparison between the two organisations based on the essential components that framed the implementation of the TOMNET programs as stated by McGowan et al. (2014, p. 111).

Table 6.6

Structural Commonalities and Differences between TOMNET and Men’s Sheds

TOMNET	MEN’S SHEDS
“The organisation is exclusively for older men (aged 50 years or older).”	The average age of a Shedder is 70 years and not all Shedders are men.
“All older men, regardless of their circumstance, are welcome.”	✓
“Members are treated equally with dignity and respect.”	✓
“Each member can become involved in the organisation as much or as little as his interests and circumstances allow - without obligation.”	✓
“The organisation provides appropriate levels of support to members for their physical, mental, emotional and social health and wellbeing.”	✓
“TOMNET is in theory and practice a culture and tradition of conversation.”	Conversation is an important aspect of Shed interaction, but it is not emphasised as a necessary Shed practice.
“Members and staff share equally the rights and responsibilities to uphold the TOMNET constitution.”	Constitutions are written and upheld by the membership of the individual Sheds.
“The men themselves have ownership of the organisation and determine its future.”	✓

Two major differences between the implemented programs were that: a) TOMNET did not include manual labour as part of its programming; and b) volunteerism was an essential component of TOMNET programming.

Even though all Sheds were different, there were some key factors that drove the Men’s Shed programs. Ormsby et al. (2010) stated that: “Activities in a shed provide a sense of purpose and autonomy; [link] generations of men in the family; [transcend] age and class; and can become the primary source of activity for retired men” (p. 607). A Shed’s practice was situational in that programs were adapted to suit the needs of the community in which they were located and were dependent on the interests of the membership.

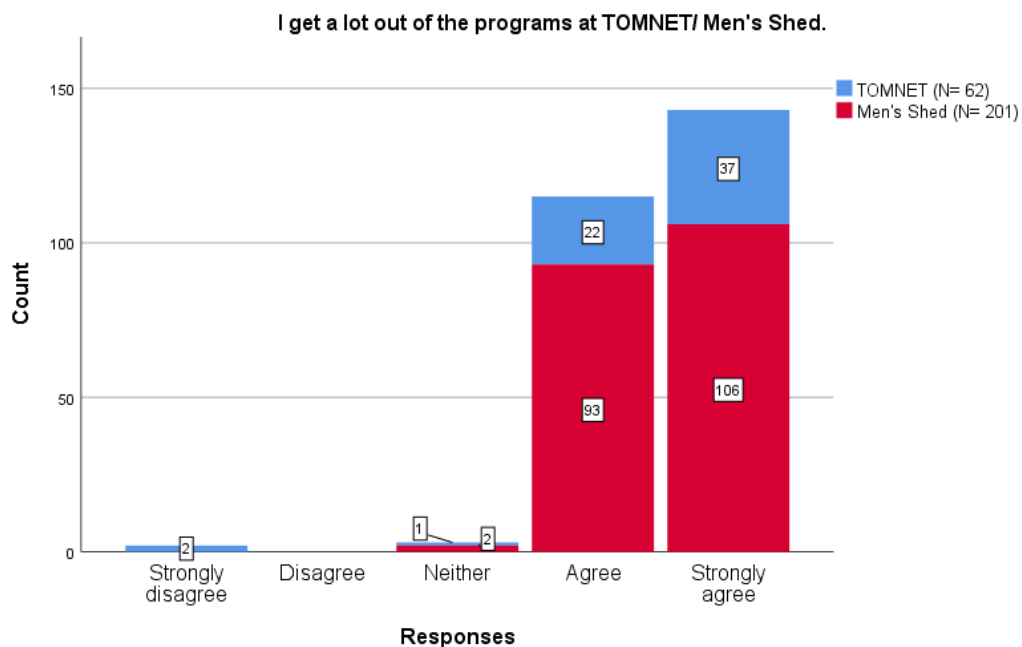


Figure 6.18. I get a lot out of the programs at TOMNET/Men’s Shed

In Figure 6.18, 95% of TOMNET respondents and 99% of Men’s Shed respondents positively signalled that they derived a lot from the programs offered by their respective organisations.

Negative assumptions around the worth of older people in general seep into the realm of lifelong learning. Golding et al. (2007) maintained:

There is a popular but false assumption that people over 65 years of age are at best of no value, and at worst a “cost” to the community. It is widely assumed that people over 65 are beyond productive employment, not interested in learning and should not be eligible for government support to do so. (p. 11)

Kellenberg, Schmidt, and Werner (2017) stated that: "...lifelong learning focusses on the continual development of individual competencies..." (p. 23). Furthermore: "in reflective learning, reflection means much more than thinking; it is a process that is usually initiated in problem situations and is aimed at solving the relevant problem. The ability to reflect is not at all trivial..." (p. 25).

Boulton-Lewis (2012a) claimed that research into lifelong learning has produced positive findings around increased mental health and the prevention of "...cognitive decline in ageing" (p. 2). She suggested that benefits included boosting self-confidence, network and friendship building, and the attainment of skills and knowledge. Furthermore, lifelong learning could also provide an avenue through which the neuroplasticity of the brain may be enhanced. "The issue of what motivates and assists older adults to keep on learning is important....There is very little research that describes what older people *themselves* say they want and need to learn" (p. 3; *italics in original*).

The empowerment of older men to be learners was alluded to by the members of both TOMNET and Men's Sheds. The reflection involved in the informal learning process that occurs during interactions with other members and the wider community can be both intrinsic and extrinsic. Subjects such as the hardships of others, the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, volunteerism and social cues were all referred to by survey respondents, interviewees and focus group participants.

TOMNET enacted reflective learning through meaningful conversations with others. Hearing about the misfortunes of others can be helpful for self-examination and introspection:

Volunteering has taught me how lucky [wife] and I are. We've got two healthy children. How sad it is....It's something I'd never thought of....Kids who don't get on with their parents. Everyone's got a story and it's not always a nice one but you have to listen to it. (Dave, TOMNET Centre Current Member)

Ray (TOMNET Centre Current Member) described the peer support that TOMNET men offered to one another: "We have a group session where we listen to each other and encourage each other. Sharing life stories gives you the opportunity to interact with some of life's difficulties."

Walter (TOMNET Centre Current Member) commented on the significance of learning new skills as he aged: “That grey matter, unless you stir it, it soon gets weak.”

Ben (TOMNET Centre Current Member) remarked on the importance of learning self-awareness through intergenerational mentoring and role modelling: “It keeps you in touch with what’s going on and you’re contributing back to society. I think it’s important for your own self-esteem and your own self-worth.”

Men’s Shed members enacted reflective learning through problem solving issues to do with construction, social discourse and Shed management.

Providing the conversational structure of having to wait to “have your say” was instructional for building social skills. Evan (Shed 5 Office Holder) highlighted the importance of equality with the implementation of mateship demonstrated by the men in his Shed:

Camaraderie is the major thing. We go around the table at morning tea and everybody has a say - not everybody has something to say every time - we do things together. We talk about projects, fundraising. Someone’ll tell a joke - not always good ones - we have a good laugh about that - and then every now and again someone’ll get upset about something that’s bugging them in the Shed, so everybody has an opportunity to have a say.

Brad (Shed 3 Member) explained that informally teaching fellow members how to deal with personal issues through humour and “having a laugh” was a very important aspect of his Shed: “I doubt whether some of these guys would ever laugh at anything in their other life. Here they can come and just relax and have a good time. They learn here to be outgoing.”

Ron (Shed 7 Office Holder) commented on learning how to build positively a social profile and to interact with wider community members:

Our Shed went to the new Bunnings [an Australian hardware shop] before it opened and volunteered to assemble furniture. Now a group goes every month and works at Bunnings during opening hours assembling furniture. They wear their shirts and people approach them to talk about Men’s Shed.

A Shed Survey Respondent alluded to his pride in his role as a mentor within the Shed: “Best thing I have done [is] teaching glass [making] since retiring.”

One of the Shedders in Shed 7 was compelled to remark upon his new skill acquisitions: “I’m an ex Ambo [paramedic]; I’ve never done woodworking before. I learn new skills every time I come here” (Fieldnotes, 8 March 2017).

Contributive needs pertaining to program implementation are highlighted in bold blue font and italicised in the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework in Figure 6.19.

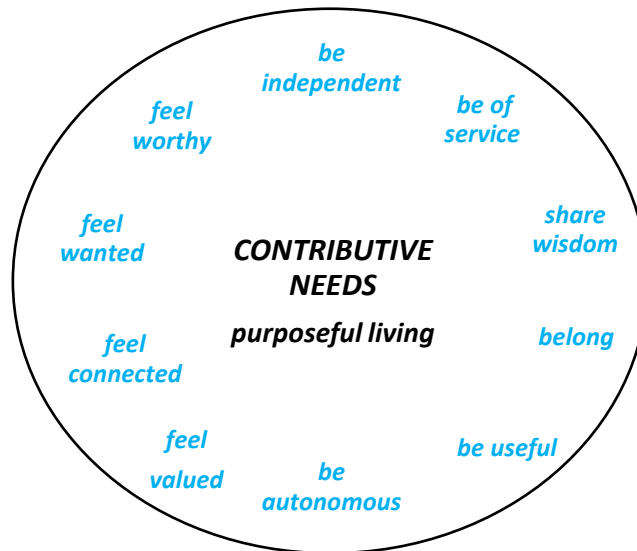


Figure 6.19. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework: Program implementation

All of the identified contributive needs related to program implementation. During an interview with Ryan (2017c), Golding remarked that: “Men need to claim back learning in their own way” (n.p.). The programs implemented by TOMNET and Men’s Sheds were received positively by the membership of both groups. Self-governance ensured that the programs were not imposed by the management. Self-esteem and self-acceptance were promoted by the programs implemented within each organisation.

6.3.4. Conclusion.

Section 6.3 has examined the structure of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds from the members’ perspectives. The subheadings of Aims and Goals (6.3.1), Leadership (6.3.2) and Program Implementation (6.3.3) were interrogated. McClusky’s (1974) Margin Theory (please refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1) provided an example of the reduction of “load” (p. 329) through participation in the programs offered by TOMNET and Men’s Sheds. Life’s stressors may be reduced considerably through

the “power” (p. 329) of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards such as the mateship experienced and the completion of a task through learning new skills. Table 6.7 provides a summary of the positive and negative elements of Structure.

Table 6.7

Summary of the Positive and Negative Elements of Structure

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
<p>TOMNET and Men’s Shed provided an avenue through which older men were afforded opportunities, and actively encouraged, to work together in an altruistic manner - helping one another, member to member, and helping the community at large through volunteer work.</p>	<p>There was some member confusion in TOMNET as to where the two arms of the leadership branches were positioned in terms of hierarchical importance in the organisation.</p>
<p>The overwhelming majority of the respondents in both organisations indicated that they understood why their group was formed.</p>	<p>Some TOMNET members believed that the staff members did not understand their needs.</p>
<p>Both TOMNET and Men’s Sheds met the criteria outlined in this study’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework.</p>	
<p>87% of TOMNET respondents and 88% of Men’s Sheds respondents were proud of their achievements since joining their respective organisations.</p>	
<p>The informal learning that occurred in the Shed could be both intrinsic in the acquisition of problem-solving skills and extrinsic in the manifestation of final products.</p>	
<p>85% of the respondents felt that the TOMNET staff members understood the needs of older men.</p>	
<p>All voices and opinions were considered to be equal; one was no more important than another.</p>	
<p>95% of TOMNET respondents and 99% of Men’s Sheds respondents indicated that they derived a lot from the programs offered.</p>	

6.4. Membership

This section addresses the positives and negatives of joining TOMNET and Men’s Shed from a membership perspective. Sub-headings include Membership wellbeing (6.4.1) and Member connectedness (6.4.2). The topics of loneliness, suicide ideation, identity, friendship, health and counselling are discussed. Table 6.8 depicts the progression of the chapter’s structure as it applies to Section 6.4.

Table 6.8

The Progression of the Chapter’s Structure: Section 6.4 MEMBERSHIP

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
6.4 MEMBERSHIP	6.4.1 Membership wellbeing 6.4.2 Member connectedness	*Loneliness *Suicide ideation *Identity *Friendship *Health *Counselling

6.4.1. Membership wellbeing.

Figures 6.20 and 6.21 illustrate respondents’ feelings about loneliness before and after they joined their group.

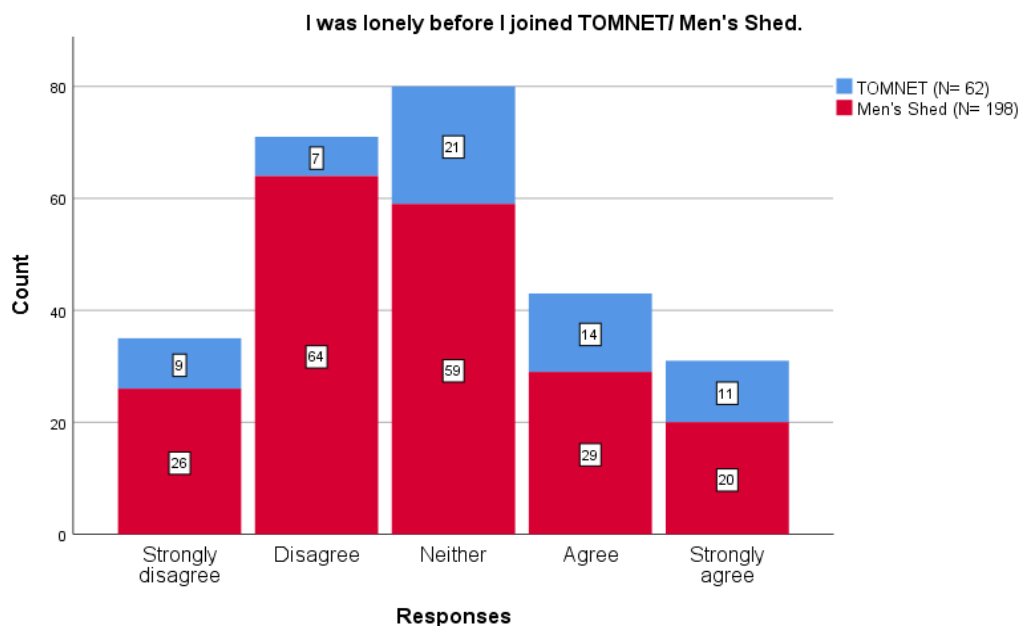


Figure 6.20. I was lonely before I joined TOMNET/Men’s Shed

In Figure 6.20, 26% of TOMNET respondents and 45% of Men's Shed respondents indicated that they were not lonely before they joined their group. 34% of TOMNET respondents and 30% of Men's Shed respondents had a "Neither Agree nor Disagree" response, while 40% of TOMNET respondents and 25% of Men's Sheds responded that they were lonely before they joined their group. Nine men from Men's Shed declined to respond to this statement. The use of the emotive word "lonely" may have dissuaded some participants from responding. Conversely, one man remarked: "I didn't know I was so bloody lonely until I joined TOMNET" (Fieldnotes, 7 August 2017). This forthright statement was addressed to the researcher, and perhaps his honesty and lack of embarrassment to admit his feelings in front of others may have been due to the fact that TOMNET men had frank and open discussions regularly. Ray (TOMNET Current Member) commented: "Listening's more important than talking."

Adam (TOMNET Centre Office Holder) reinforced the notion of the benefit of sharing problems through conversation for older men:

They just want the problem to go away. Self-help is probably the biggest thing, and self-help comes through for the older males talking to other older males and realising that you're not alone. You're not really that isolated. You may not have friends, and you may not get out a lot. But there are so many others that are suffering the same problems you've got.

Shedder respondents were aware of the spectre of loneliness and the support given to them through their Men's Shed membership, even though they did not refer to the term outright: "I joined Men's Shed about 6 weeks after my wife died in 2015 (after 41 years of being a couple). The shed has become a supportive network of friends and I enjoy coming on Mondays and Wednesdays" (Shed 10 survey respondent).

Another Shed survey respondent commented:

Since retiring from a full life of working since the age of 16, I found that nobody cared. The doctors and hospitals should relay about Men's Sheds and their contribution to retired men. We tend to not network so when we retire our work mates, who were our mates, are no longer part of our life. The transition to retirement has been very hard to obtain satisfaction and a feeling of worth to the community.

The significance of interaction through informal conversations was noted by one Shedder when he commented: “The most important tool in the Shed is the teapot” (Fieldnotes, 30 August 2017). A survey respondent concurred with this sentiment:

The success of a Men’s shed is not how much work is done in a day. It’s about how many empty coffee cups are in the sink at the end of the day. This indicates men have stopped and talked to each other which is what sheds are all about!

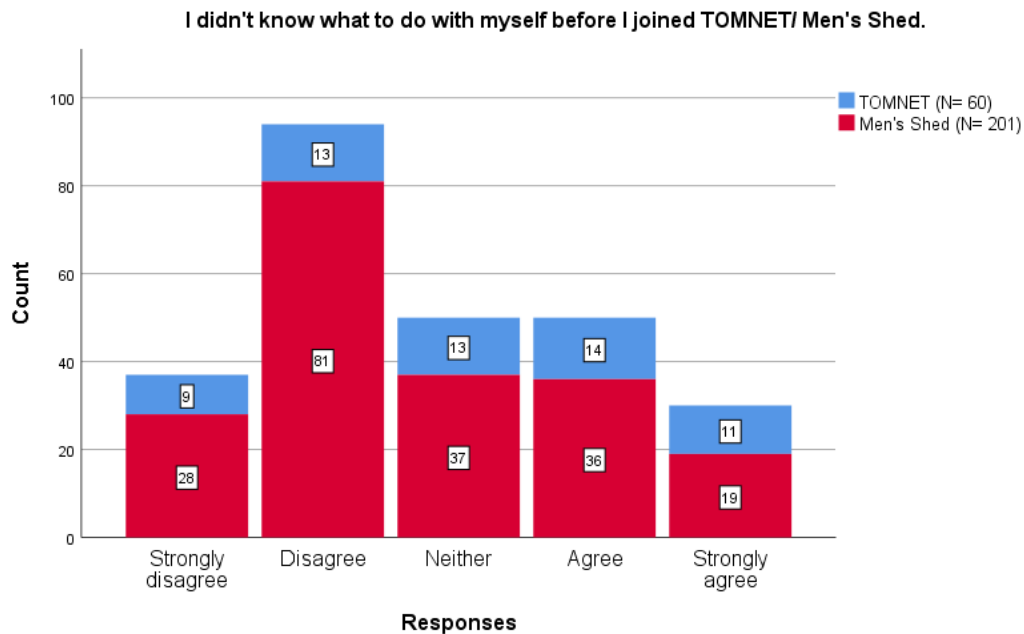


Figure 6.21. I didn’t know what to do with myself before I joined TOMNET/Men’s Shed

In Figure 6.21, 42% of TOMNET respondents and 27% of Men’s Shed respondents agreed that they did not know what to do with themselves prior to joining their group. 22% of TOMNET respondents and 19% of Men’s Shed respondents indicated a “Neither Agree nor Disagree” response. 36% of TOMNET respondents and 54% of Men’s Shed respondents disagreed that they could not fill in their time before joining their group.

One Shed survey respondent alluded to the social isolation from which older men can suffer post-retirement: “I finished work 9 months ago. [The] Shed fills a gap of social interaction”.

In an article published by a local magazine, a spokesman for Shed 7 addressed the multi-faceted social benefits of becoming a Shedder:

We offer mateship, camaraderie and a sense of belonging. We know that men aren’t the best at talking about feelings, but here we talk about everything

openly. More than anything, I think many of the guys come here for the laughs. (Toowoomba Regional Council, 2017, p. 9)

TOMNET offered their membership free access to counselling. Ray (TOMNET Current Member) extolled the virtues of an onsite counsellor: “If there’s a paid staff member (as opposed to a volunteer), that says ‘confidentiality’”.

Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) commented on the power of peer support and of talking openly about suicide ideation:

We’ve had people get up and you know when they hit the tender points in life, but that then shows everybody else that it’s okay to do that. We’ve had blokes get up there and talk about their risk of suicide and how they’ve attempted suicide, so it’s incredible.

Ormsby et al. (2010) posited that: “The ability to retain a sense of balance in one’s life is important in relation to maintaining a sense of identity and the belief in one’s competence” (p. 611). The notion of the Shed providing a “sense of balance” (p. 611) through positive interactions with peers and support from other members was echoed by some of the Shed interviewees.

A participant in Shed Focus Group 1 also recognised the importance of sharing life stories and socialising: “We’re 90% social and 10% work. We all need a mate.” Ron (Shed 7 Office Holder) commented on the improvement of another member’s mental health after joining the Shed: “He became so involved here that he was able to put some of his other problems away”.

George (Shed 3 Office Holder) touched on the feelings of the loss of identity after retirement: “You have a feeling of ‘Hey, I used to be important here once’.” He went on to comment that “Men’s Shed helps to find your identity again”.

Barry (TOMNET Current Member) concurred: “Men find their identity in what they do rather than who they are. Who are you and what do you do? Their identity is tied up nearly intrinsically with what they do.”

Contributive needs pertaining to membership wellbeing are highlighted in bold blue font and italicised in the Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework featured in Figure 6.22.

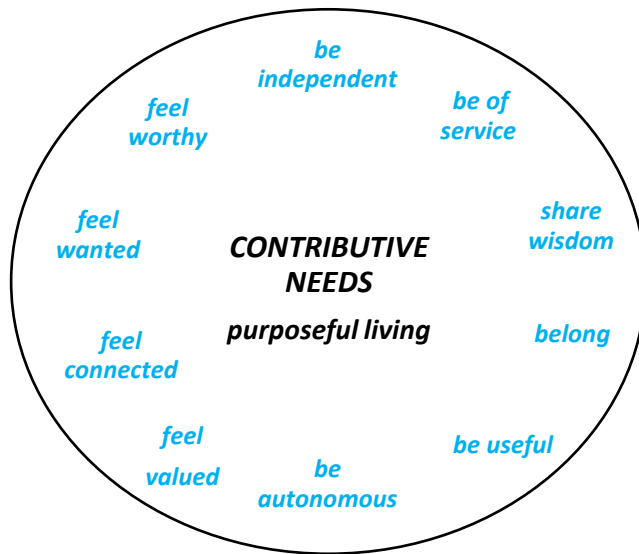


Figure 6.22. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework: Membership wellbeing

All of the identified contributive needs related to membership wellbeing. Self-esteem was promoted through meaningful conversation at TOMNET and informal conversations in Men’s Sheds. Men practised self-engagement through their desire to share their wisdom and to belong to the groups by actively participating in the programs offered. Self-governance was enacted through the members’ willingness to involve themselves in deeper conversational topics such as suicide.

6.4.2. Member connectedness.

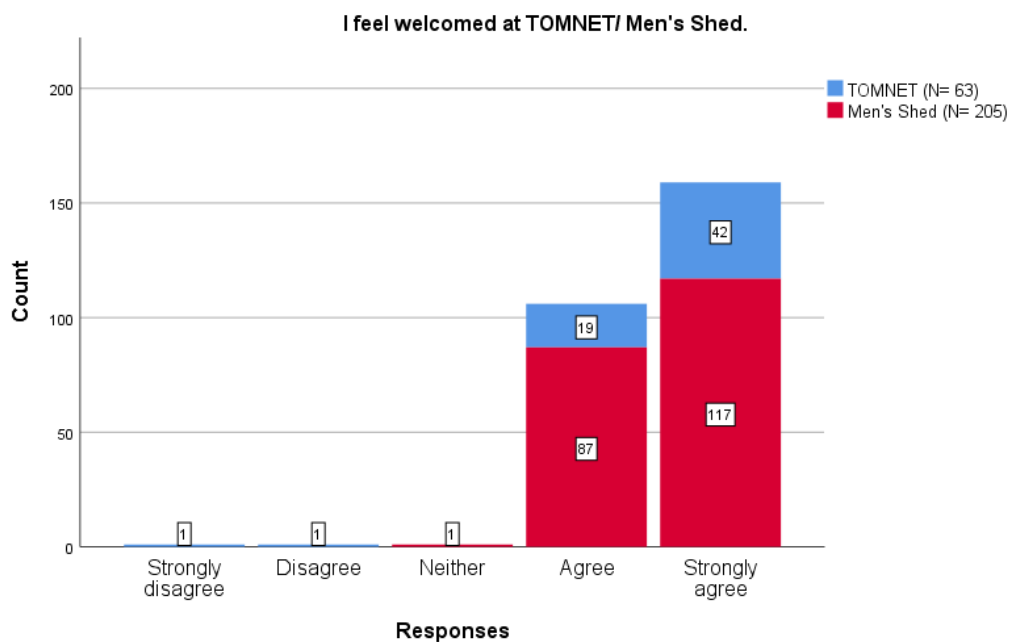


Figure 6.23. I feel welcomed at TOMNET/Men’s Shed

In Figure 6.23, 97% of TOMNET respondents and 99.5% of Men’s Shed respondents indicated that they felt welcomed in their groups. A Shed survey respondent commented: “I look forward to Mens [sic] Shed days.” After his birthday celebration at morning tea, one Shed member remarked: “I now have 60 mates that I can call on” (Fieldnotes, 8 March 2018). Another survey respondent simply stated: “A good group of fellows!”

The importance of allowing new members to take the time to become acquainted with other Shedders was acknowledged. A participant in Shed Focus Group 3 observed the initial difficulty experienced by some members to become fully immersed in the Shed’s activities and to accept the friendships offered:

The biggest thing is when you come to a Men’s Shed you can just sit in a corner and watch, just watch, not doing anything, just watch. They come back and slowly after a while they make their way to the main table and then after a while you can have a conversation. Some of that takes time.

Junger (2016a) referenced Lyons (1979), who wrote: “When people are actively engaged in a cause their lives have more purpose...with a resulting improvement in mental health. People will feel better psychologically if they have more involvement with their community” (p. 49). The benefits of the friendships extended to the internal Shed, community and the resultant sense of acceptance and belonging were highlighted by one Shed survey respondent, who wrote: “I had episodes of mild mental health problems. I no longer do.”

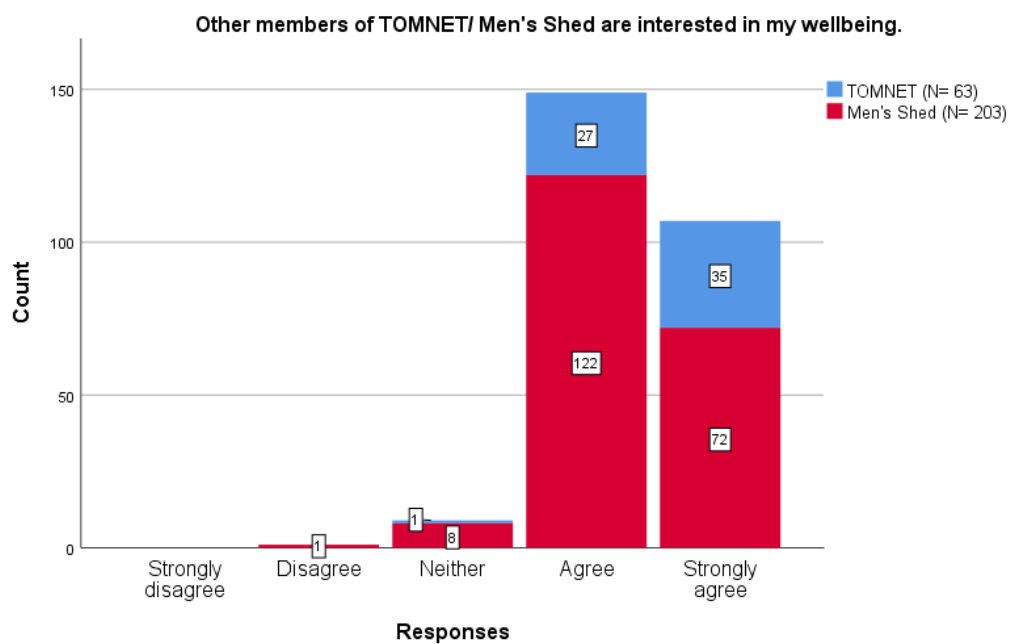


Figure 6.24. Other members of TOMNET/Men’s Shed are interested in my wellbeing

In Figure 6.24, 98% of TOMNET respondents and 95% of Men's Shed respondents indicated that other members of their organisations were interested in their wellbeing. The notion of working together to help one another was reflected in this comment from a Shed Focus Group 3 participant: "When you get to our age, there's nothing in front of you - what can we do now? The biggest thing we've got is time. We feel stronger and stronger about helping each other". Vedantam (2018) commented:

The tone of social isolation isn't just emotional. People with strong social relationships had about a 50% lower mortality risk than those with weaker ties. Those with weaker social relationships had a greater risk of death than people who are physically inactive or obese. Spending time building and nurturing friendships might be just as important to your health as eating right and exercising. (n.p.)

Member connectedness featured prominently in Shed life. Some of the members of the larger Sheds cooked and prepared meals in-house. The sense of care that Sheddors had for one another was reflected in this remark made at lunch time: "Some of the blokes take away four or five sandwiches. That's probably one of his better meals for the day" (Fieldnotes, 29 January 2018).

This sense of concern and connectedness was also demonstrated in a comment written by a Shed survey respondent when he reflected on his surprise that he was accepted into the membership so comprehensively: "After joining the Men's Shed for only a few weeks, I spent nearly 7 weeks in hospital. I was amazed at the amount of visitors I had in hospital. All Men's Shed members [were] concerned about my welfare."

A Shed survey respondent commented generally about the benefits of being a Shedder: "I really enjoy the Men's Shed for the mateship, company and for learning new skills. A good bunch of blokes and I am pleased to be in their company."

One Shedder mentioned that he was disappointed because he thought that no one had noticed his absence. Then he received a text message on his phone from a fellow member: "The Shed's not the same without you! Where are you, you bastard?" (Fieldnotes, 29 January 2018).

Contributive needs pertaining to member connectedness are highlighted in bold blue font and italicised in the Older Men's Contributive Needs and Identity Framework featured in Figure 6.25.

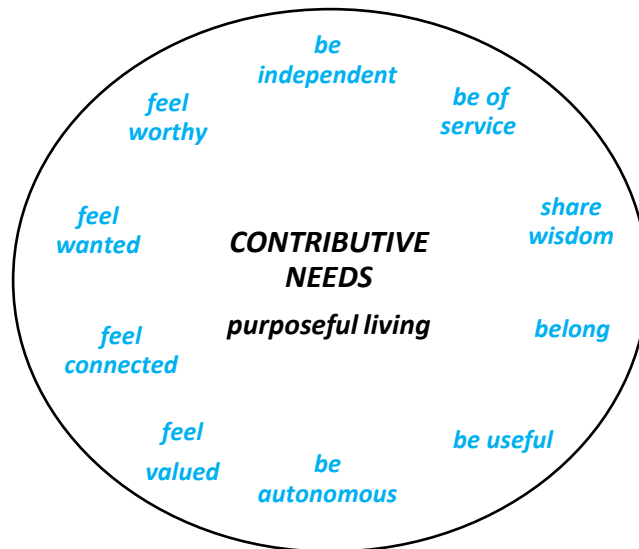


Figure 6.25. The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework: Member connectedness

All of the identified contributive needs related to member connectedness. The self-esteem elements of feeling worthy, wanted, connected and valued were dominant in this theme. Self-efficacy was also emphasised in the strong sense of belonging to the group and sharing wisdom through conversation and action (e.g., the sending or receiving of a text message). Self-determination in the form of being useful (in prompting friendship networks) and being of service (to one another) was also practised. Independence and autonomy were reflected in the confidence felt by many members as a result of being in a strong, connected network of peers.

6.4.3. Conclusion.

Gradman (1994) stated:

Work and career dominate a man’s identity, leaving him unprepared for the realities of retirement. Retirement is often perceived as a vague and distant goal and a reward for years of hard labor. Men sometimes plan for its financial impact but rarely acknowledge its psychological impact... Retirement threatens a man’s sense of masculinity. Many men do not realise this until they decide to retire. (p. 104)

McClusky’s (1974) Margin Theory (please refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1) can be applied to the “load” (p. 329) of the negative impact of retirement for older men. This can be significantly decreased by the “power” (p. 329) of membership of a male-only organisation, thereby lessening the effect of the “margin” (p. 329). Table 6.9 provides a summary of the positive and negative elements of Membership.

Table 6.9

Summary of the Positive and Negative Elements of Membership

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
TOMNET men had frank and open discussions about personal issues and suicide ideation regularly.	
The sharing of problems through formal and informal conversation occurred in both organisations.	
Each organisation provided a conduit to a supportive network of friends.	
The significance of human contact through informal conversations was highlighted in both groups.	
Each organisation confirmed the multi-faceted social benefits associated with the membership of TOMNET or a Men's Shed.	
TOMNET offered its membership free access to counselling.	
The importance of sharing life stories and socialising was recognised by both organisations.	
97% of TOMNET respondents and 99.5% of Men's Shed respondents indicated that they felt welcomed in their groups.	
The importance of the psychology of allowing new members to take the time to become acquainted with other members was acknowledged.	
The notion of working together to help one another was validated.	
A heightened sense of care and connectedness was demonstrated in both organisations.	

6.5. Summary of the Chapter

Victor (TOMNET Centre Ancillary Staff) explained the dilemma that many older men face post-retirement:

A lot of men are not confident in making new friends and moving to new organisations. They feel they want to contribute, but they don't know what to contribute and they don't know how they can contribute. A lot of men self-

isolate. They go to join other groups and they don't shape up to what they were used to in their old workplace, so they don't stay. They disagree with what's happening, so they go back to their flat and brood.

My research indicated that TOMNET and Men's Sheds provided the promotion of positive environments that enabled older men to engage actively in re-entering the community in a purposeful manner. Golding (2015) posited that men become "agents of their own transformation" (p. 13) when exposed to a salutogenic environment – i.e., one that is "health promoting and giving" (p. 13) such as TOMNET or a Men's Shed.

Older men's contributive needs were fulfilled through shared ethea of male-only culture, a grassroots leadership structure, an anti-deficit positioning of older men in society and a recognition that the skills and experience of older men were beneficial to the community. Overall, 94% of the TOMNET respondents, and 91% of the Men's Shed respondents, indicated that they were able to speak with other members who understood their problems. 92% of TOMNET members and 94% of Men's Shed members indicated that their knowledge and experience were valued by their peers. Even though 25% of TOMNET respondents and 20% of Men's Shed respondents indicated that they felt ignored by their community before joining their respective organisations, 90% of TOMNET respondents and 87% of Men's Shed respondents indicated positively that they felt part of their community after they joined their respective organisation. Additionally, 84% of TOMNET respondents and 82% of Men's Shed respondents felt that they made useful contributions in their community. 56% of TOMNET respondents and 85% of Men's Shed respondents agreed or strongly agreed that people in their community knew about their organisations.

Vedantam (2018) commented on the 50% increased suicide rate for men aged 50 to 54 years:

The uptake in suicide seems to be occurring earlier and earlier for men. [The] common interpretation is that it's driven by economic problems but it's more complicated than that. People have fewer social supports, many live a long way away from family, many are opting out of marriage, many are getting divorced. (n.p.)

The structural elements of each organisation researched in terms of aims and goals, leadership and program implementation were adapted specifically to fit the

needs of socially isolated older males. This was evidenced by the positive responses to the Likert scale survey statements. Ninety-eight percent of TOMNET and 99.5% of Men's Shed respondents indicated that they understood why their group was formed. Eighty-seven percent of TOMNET and 88% of Men's Shed respondents were proud of their achievements since joining their respective organisations. Eighty-five percent of the respondents felt that the TOMNET staff members understood the needs of older men. Ninety-five percent of TOMNET and 99% of Men's Shed respondents signalled that they derived a lot from the programs offered by their respective organisations.

The issue of social isolation was also addressed by Junger (2016a), who posited that the "communal nature" (p. 10) of society has diminished with the growth of a more individualistic attitude towards living with others in an urban environment: "A person in a modern city...can be surrounded by others and yet feel deeply, dangerously alone" (p. 18).

TOMNET and Men's Sheds addressed these concerns of 'aleness' by catering to membership concerns such as wellbeing and connectedness. Figures indicated that nearly one half (40%) of TOMNET and one quarter (25%) of Men's Sheds respondents were lonely before they joined their group. Similar figures denoted that 42% of TOMNET respondents and 27% of Men's Shed respondents did not know what to do with themselves prior to joining their group. These statistics changed markedly once the respondent became a member of his respective organisation. Ninety-seven percent of TOMNET and 99.5% of Men's Shed respondents indicated that they felt welcomed in their groups, and similar figures indicated that other members of their organisations were interested in their wellbeing (98% of TOMNET respondents and 95% of Men's Sheds).

The positive and compelling enactment of McClusky's Margin Theory (1974), described in Chapter 3 Section 3.3.1, was demonstrated by members' experiences and engagement with the programs offered by both organisations. The "load" (p. 329) of life stressors for older men can be significantly reduced through the "power" (p. 329) of membership of groups such as TOMNET and Men's Sheds, thereby resulting in the fulfilment of their contributive needs.

This chapter has examined the members' perspectives and the manner in which they negotiated each organisation's programs and philosophies as per **Research Question 2:** How have the members of TOMNET and Men's Sheds experienced and

engaged with their programs and philosophies vis-à-vis members' contributive needs?

Figure 6.26 synthesises the themes presented when answering research questions 1 and 2.

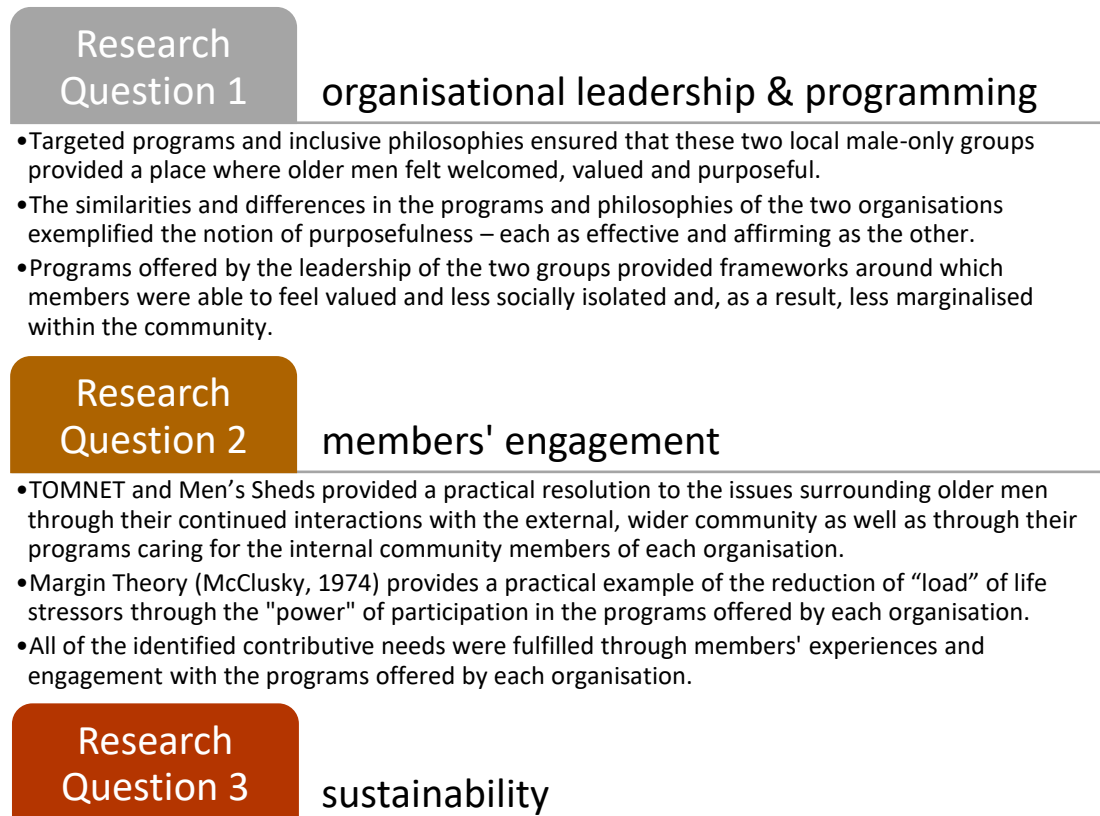


Figure 6.26. A summary of the themes from Research Questions 1 and 2

Chapter 7 investigates the future viability of organisations such as TOMNET and Men's Sheds in the fulfilment of older men's contributive needs as per **Research Question 3**: To what extent are TOMNET and Men's Sheds important vehicles for the sustainable delivery of the contributive needs of older men in the community?

CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH QUESTION 3

“Society in general and community leaders have a responsibility to create opportunities for older men to take up. But equally older men have a responsibility to engage and to take those up.”

Paul (Interested Other)

7.1. Overview of the Chapter

Chapters 5 and 6 focused on the first and second research questions:

- **Research Question 1:** How does the TOMNET and Men’s Sheds’ organisational leadership seek to implement the design of their programs and philosophies so that they best fit the contributive needs of older men?
- **Research Question 2:** How have the members of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds experienced and engaged with their programs and philosophies vis-à-vis members’ contributive needs?

These two initial research questions explored the philosophies and programs offered by TOMNET and Men’s Sheds and their relevance to older men’s contributive needs from the perspective of organisational leadership and the grassroots membership.

This chapter addresses the third and final research question:

- **Research Question 3:** To what extent are TOMNET and Men’s Sheds important vehicles for the sustainable delivery of the contributive needs of older men in the community?

In keeping with the consistent structure of the three research question chapters, this chapter explores three themes – 7.2 Ethos, 7.3 Structure and 7.4 Membership – along with their respective section headings as they relate to the topic of Research Question 3: the sustainable fulfilment of the contributive needs of older men. Subheadings appropriate to each of the themes are presented. Topics related to the subheadings are then discussed. These topics highlight the analogous effects of the outcomes in the form of benefits for and barriers to each organisation’s future sustainability. TOMNET and Men’s Sheds are examined respectively as each theme and subheading is interrogated in detail. The themes and subheadings included in

this table are consistent with those in the previous chapters. Table 7.1 provides an overview of the design of this chapter.

Table 7.1

Chapter 7 Themes, Subheadings and Topics

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
7.2 ETHOS	7.2.1 Male-only culture 7.2.2 Grassroots organisations 7.2.3 Anti-deficit positioning 7.2.4 Community capacity building	*Managing conflict *Public perceptions *Branch interactions *Family needs *Community involvement
7.3 STRUCTURE	7.3.1 Aims and goals 7.3.2 Leadership 7.3.3 Program implementation	*Dominant personalities *Funding *Infrastructure *Friendship networks *Future considerations
7.4 MEMBERSHIP	7.4.1 Member considerations 7.4.2 Member connectedness	*Screening processes *Evolution of practice *Retaining members *Lifelong learning *Health *Social media

Drawing on information collected from multiple data sources (please refer to Section 4.6), this section begins with a discussion of the similarities in ethos between TOMNET and Men’s Sheds as indicated by the men in both organisations, and as per Chapters 5 (Sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3 and 5.2.4) and 6 (Sections 6.2.1, 6.2.2, 6.2.3 and 6.2.4). These common traits included male-only membership; grassroots philosophies; anti-deficit positioning of ageing and older men; and attention to building community capacity.

For the purposes of this chapter, the term “sustainability” is defined as “...ongoing viability...” (Van Der Laan, 2014, p. 205). As a framework for discussion, I have used an adaptation of Jackson’s (2017) four elements when building a sustainable business venture. Even though TOMNET and Men’s Sheds are not-for-profit organisations, they operate with organisational similarities to those

of profit-making ventures. I address the extent to which TOMNET and Men’s Sheds can provide the sustainable delivery of present, as well as future, opportunities to fulfil the contributive needs of older men in their local communities.

As was discussed previously in Chapter 3 (Section 3.6), Jackson’s “steps” (2017, n. p.) involved: 1) “Creating a sustainable ethos”; 2) “Having fixed goals across the company”; 3) “Streamlining wider processes”; and 4) “Involving the local community” (n.p.). I have renamed Jackson’s steps to accommodate the structure of the organisations that I researched. Steps 1 and 4 (Jackson, 2017, n.p.) have been incorporated into Theme 7.2 Ethos. Step 2 is represented in Theme 7.3 Structure. The ideas embedded within Step 3 are discussed in Theme 7.4 Membership. This modification is presented graphically in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2.

Structural Links between Chapter Themes and Jackson’s (2017) Model of Sustainability

CHAPTER THEME	ELEMENTS OF JACKSON’S (2017) MODEL OF SUSTAINABILITY
7.2 Ethos	1) Creating a sustainable ethos 4) Involving the local community
7.3 Structure	2) Fixed goals across the company
7.4 Membership	3) Streamlining wider processes

Figure 7.1 provides a structural link in the form of a thematic modified analytical framework to demonstrate the chapter themes and my adaptation of Jackson’s (2017) model.

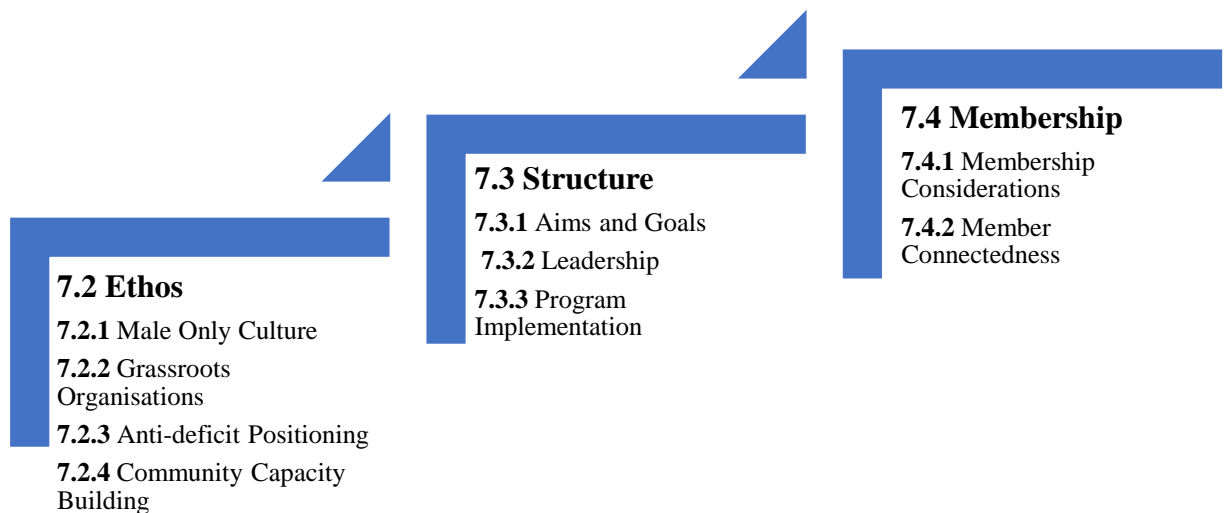


Figure 7.1. Modified analytical framework with themes

The subheadings from Table 7.1 are interwoven within the modified framework of Jackson’s (2017) four “steps” (n.p.), and they are discussed progressively throughout the chapter. The benefits for each organisation in the fulfilment of each step are discussed, utilising examples cited from interviews and focus groups. Similarly, barriers to sustainability are also exemplified.

A table of the salient points to do with the benefits and barriers regarding sustainability is provided at the end of each section. Below the table is a summarising paragraph linking these points into the major themes covered throughout the section. These themes are then linked with the fulfilment of older men’s contributive needs as represented in Chapter 3 Figure 3.9.

7.2. Ethos

Theme 7.2 (Ethos) combines Jackson’s (2017) first (“Creating a sustainable ethos”, n.p.) and fourth (“Involving the local community”, n.p.) steps for sustainability. I have linked these two steps as community capacity building is deeply embedded in the ethos of both TOMNET and Men’s Sheds.

Jackson’s (2017) first step to enable sustainability involved the notion of a shared organisational ethos and vision. He posited that this ideal “...demonstrates its commitment to supporting the environment and improving its processes” (n.p.). The targeted organisations shared four common ethea that focused on the following: a male-only culture grounded in mateship and peer support; grassroots principles that were member driven; attention to an anti-deficit positioning of older men and ageing;

and a dedication to community capacity building. The latter element is discussed when referring to Jackson’s (2017) fourth step, “Involving the local community” (n.p.), which prompted Jackson to argue that “...a big part of sustainability involves investing in people...” (n.p.).

A visual representation of Section 7.2 is depicted in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3

The Progression of the Chapter’s Structure: Section 7.2 ETHOS

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
7.2 ETHOS	7.2.1 Male-only culture	*Managing conflict
	7.2.2 Grassroots organisations	*Public perceptions
	7.2.3 Anti-deficit positioning	*Branch interactions
	7.2.4 Community capacity building	*Family needs
		*Community involvement

The notion of ethos has been fully developed in Chapter 5 (please refer to Section 5.2, Ethos). However, it is timely to revisit this notion briefly and to define its parameters as they relate to Research Question 3, particularly in the area of sustainability. As was discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2), this thesis has examined the concept of ethos as it applied to shared customs in terms of masculinised codes and values that were central to the fulfilment of older men’s contributive needs in the form of identity, belonging, self-worth and sharing life experiences. If the members of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds felt dissatisfied with the practical implementation of the ethos of their chosen organisation (e.g., if they invited women to join as full-time members), the “ongoing viability” (Van Der Laan, 2014, p. 205) or sustainability of the group would be faced with significant potential changes to its ethos.

7.2.1. Male-only culture.

One of the greatest benefits of TOMNET and the Men’s Shed movement, and one of their strongest pathways to sustainability, was that they are challenging accepted societal truths and assumptions around what it is to be an older, retired man. Through the shared vision of a male-only culture, older men were provided with an opportunity to interact with like-minded peers in an environment where they

were free to enact their individual masculine character without fear of judgement or prejudice. As long as the men had a sense of freedom and agency, they retained their membership and a sense of belonging. In these forums, older men's contributive needs were being met through authentic fellowships and interactions with others.

Each of the Sheds examined in this thesis was an adamantly male only space (as was discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1). Neville (Shed 1 Office Holder) described how some men actively sought out male-only Men's Sheds:

We've had some men come and say, "Do you allow women members?", and we say, "No", and he says, "Good – I'll join". He'd been in a Shed where women had come in and taken over and then he said, "I'm going to go and find another Shed".

Alternatively, Grant (Shed 8 Office Holder) saw nothing wrong with allowing women as members into their Men's Shed: "We give the women as much shit as we give the men."

When discussing the sustainability of the Men's Shed movement, Ivan (Shed 4 Office Holder) stated that: "The need for friendship is deep in the heart of everybody." Or more simply expressed: "We all need a mate" (Shed Focus Group 2 Participant). Further to this, an overarching commitment about passing on skills and knowledge resided in the Men's Sheds' ethos:

See, collectively here, everyone with their life experiences and background, the men are able to utilise skills that they might not be able to know, or learn new skills, or skills that they've already got they can pass on. People who've got strengths in say metalwork or carpentry where others don't, others can learn from them if they wish to do that. (Ron, Shed 7 Office Holder)

Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) stressed the importance of affording older men the agency needed to run counter to the assumptions of masculine ideals, which she equated with the more stereotypical behaviours in a Men's Shed: "You'll watch men come in [to TOMNET] going, 'Oh, I need to do the blokey thing', and they soon find out they don't have to be like that. It's like they go, 'Oh, thank you'". Similarly, Andrew (TOMNET Centre Administrator) remarked that the programs that Men's Shed offered were simply not appealing to the TOMNET membership: "We're at the point where we don't want to do that stuff any more. We're still

physically able to do that stuff, but just not interested in that. We want to do this stuff.”

The notion of agency cuts right to the heart of sustainability in that members will commit to the male-only ethos if they believe in its value. Clearly this cultural ethos is a viable one. This was demonstrated by the number of men who engaged with membership in TOMNET and the Men’s Sheds. As the population ages, the act of older men helping and sustaining one another is enacted through belonging to groups such as TOMNET and Men’s Shed. I contend that once the culture is publicly acknowledged and accepted, younger men will be more likely to participate in these programs. Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) explained the self-perpetuating nature of groups such as TOMNET and Men’s Shed:

...it shouldn’t matter whether they’re 50 or 85 ...and half of the motivators for joining [TOMNET] is that someone else will do this for them when they get to this point- even if it’s just a phone call. Older men supporting peers to live their versions of masculinity and/or in difficult periods of their lives such as being isolated in aged care facilities is important and demographically relevant for the present and the future.

Older men are breaking from traditional norms and stereotypes. They are rewriting the paradigm of masculinity through their utilisation of positive and sustainable pathways such as TOMNET and Men’s Sheds. Mackenzie et al. (2017) discussed the insidious nature of hegemonic masculinity – that is, “...masculine norms that are considered ideal and dominant over other forms of masculinity in a given place and time” (p. 2). They posited that the rigidity of these embedded stereotypes is well established, and that changes in public mindset are slow to occur. The authors acknowledged that research has begun to emerge in the last decade challenging this ‘one size fits all’ perspective, particularly in the case of the older, retired male. They cited academics (Bennett, 2007; Coles & Vassarotti, 2012; Golding, 2015; Saxton & Cole, 2012) who have investigated older men’s attitudes towards resilience, health, autonomy, wisdom, life experiences, gender identity and lifelong learning.

Men’s Sheds spaces offered older men the opportunity of freedom to engage in diverse masculine practices on an individual level. This interaction was enacted in a non-judgemental environment through the companionship of the male-oriented conversation and mateship offered within the Shed (Mackenzie et al., 2017). Given

that the average age of a Shedder is 70, Golding (2015) posited that "...the Men's Shed Movement has come from relatively conservative, mainly older men..." (p. 9); therefore tradition and values play an important role in masculine identity. Golding et al. (2007) stressed the vulnerability of older men and the positivity of a male-only culture where they are at liberty to "...reconstruct their masculinity, without the repercussions of traditional patterns of aggressive behaviour" (p. 22).

The membership of TOMNET and Men's Sheds was self-selecting. A key criterion for sustainability is the provision of male-only spaces where men are provided with opportunities to exercise their right to live their masculinity on their own terms. Golding (2014) cited British researcher Sandy Ruxton, who stressed that providing a "...menu of options..." (p. 374) was essential to their agency as older men. This sense of choice provides a range of alternatives for older men actively to construct new spaces that service their specific interests and needs.

Generally, men joined a particular Shed because they believed in the ethos – i.e., the vision and values promoted by that Shed. Golding (2014) referred to surveys conducted about the gendered nature of Sheds that revealed that one third of the membership deliberately joined a Shed without women members. Another third allowed women as members with the proviso that the men were not stifled by their presence and were still able to "...behave 'like blokes'" (p. 364). The final third expressed the opinion that women should be welcomed as equal partners into a Men's Shed. Thus men are presented with an array of selections as far as Shed ethos is concerned. The provision of these options is essential to the ongoing viability of the Shed movement. Flexibility of delivery of the programs, born out of the enacted ethos, sustains the organisation and allows alternative needs to be catered for. For example, women may be invited into a Shed that is struggling for membership. This can be particularly so in regional areas where the population is smaller.

The TOMNET model was based on the enactment of a genuine appreciation of belonging to a group of men who strive for connectedness with one another. Older men were united through their life experiences and supported one another through meaningful discussions about topics relevant to their lived experiences. These discussions encompassed issues arising from: (voluntary or forced) retirement, including loneliness and disconnectedness; matters of loss, including the death of a loved one; reduction in social status, through the loss of employment; deterioration of health; financial issues; and suicide ideation. Discussions of this nature involve a

degree of vulnerability that may lead to a sense of connectedness and unity within the group: "...a firm handshake has taken on special significance among members and has become a signature of TOMNET men" (McGowan et al., 2014, p. 112).

7.2.2. Grassroots organisation.

The notion of a grassroots organisation was fully examined in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.2), where Schneider (2011) referred to grassroots as "...local people working together to find solutions to problems in their communities" (n.p.). The success of a sustainable, grassroots organisation rests firmly within the purview of the membership as it is the driver of the programs and a prevailing influence on the future of the activities and programs.

TOMNET advertised the benefits of a grassroots model by stating on their website that it is a major organisational objective: "In short, we aim to develop sustainable groups that are peer supported and Member led." The organisation acknowledged the importance of member input to sustain interest: "Member driven – every week is different. Guest Speakers, Life Stories, Trivia Days, Singing, Barbecues and much more. Come in and meet some of the guys" (tomnet.org.au).

The organisational structure of TOMNET is such that the problems of funding and the basic maintenance of the programs (venues, equipment, etc.) are overseen and arranged by the administration, which left the elected, 11-man Management Committee free to represent membership interests. Adam (TOMNET Centre Office Holder) stressed the need to share the load of the content of the Wednesday afternoon meetings:

I facilitate the meetings down there. I show the old boys some movies and stuff like that. So they've got about 15 minutes of rubbish to look at, or 15 minutes of trouble. But I only do that three or four times a year now, because we've got a panel - six or eight mentors. So everyone brings something different, which is good. We need variety.

Funding for Men's Sheds was uncertain. AMSA was highly dependent upon the funding provided by the federal government in order to deliver health services to the Sheds. Support from governmental parties adds sustainability only in so far as Sheds are seen to be politically expedient.

Barriers to the sustainability of grassroots-based organisations exist through the challenges of maintaining group coherence and member retention. Unity and harmony between members may present a barrier to the sustainability of certain Men's Sheds. Conflict can arise and group dynamics can sour owing to insufficient interpersonal skills on behalf of the group and particularly the executive of the Shed. As a long-time observer of this model, Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) remarked that:

A lot of them [Men's Sheds] shut down because of the conflicts between personalities. These are peer groups, so nobody has the skills to actually facilitate those. If somebody has been willing enough to start these groups, it's usually because they've come from a place where they've had issues themselves. So they try and manage that, plus take on other people's personalities and their issues.

This scenario was played out in one of the researched Sheds with half of the membership relocating to another Shed premises on the other side of town. Greg (Ex-Member) complained of a "...dominant character coming into the Shed...", which led ultimately to a percentage of the membership resigning from that Shed. Sam (Shed 2 Office Holder) also commented on the deleterious effect of the "...dominant character coming into the Shed...", resulting in "...a lot of resignations".

Greg (Ex Office Holder) further commented on the lack of involvement from members with regard to taking on responsibilities within the Shed:

A lot of the guys are retired and set in their ways and [they have] done training in their previous life, so they know what it's about. So when you ask for a volunteer, they go, "No, I've done all that before."

Similarly members react when leaders do not include them in the decision-making process. Shed 1 voted out their president on the basis that: "He thought the Shed belonged to him."

Grassroots membership can be a risky endeavour and potentially create unforeseen issues. A disruption to the status quo is exemplified in the implementation of workplace health and safety. Issues arise when there is no common agreement about wearing safety gear or attending to general construction safeguards. Sam (Shed 2 Office Holder) worried about the "...gunghoedness of the

men...” and their “...refusal to recognise [the limits on] their capabilities”. He remarked that the biggest issue for some members of his Shed was maintaining an “...image among your mates”. He stated: “It’s a bit frightening this macho attitude of males when they ignore health and safety. They think that, because they have done it before, they can do it now.” He cited the incident of one of the Shedders choosing to ignore his obligation to adhere to the Council’s policy of “Dial Before You Dig” (a referral service for information on locating underground utilities). This particular Shedder told him, “I can do it. Blow the paperwork. Don’t worry about that, mate.” Sam related that, as a consequence of not following Council policy, he dug through a water pipe and set the construction of the new Shed back by a number of weeks.

Practicality of equipment had been a major issue for Shed Focus Group 2. Members claimed that “...some safety stuff ...” was not user friendly and therefore rendered useless owing to the necessity of members wearing hearing aids and prescription spectacles by some members.

The sustainability of regional and rural TOMNET branches as grassroots organisations is questionable. In 2016, TOMNET Focus Group 1 consisted of five men – the total membership of that regional affiliation. Within a year, that particular group had dissolved owing to the death of two of the members, and a lack of interest to continue on the part of the remaining men. TOMNET Focus Group 2 comprised a healthy membership (20 at the time), but the majority of the men were over the age of 75. They were satisfied that their numbers were relatively small because they felt that it led to a more cohesive membership cohort and promoted a duty of care to one another not found in a larger group. They proudly drew my attention to their memorial board, which “honoured the departed” (TOMNET Focus Group 2). This group started in 2004. Is it sustainable in a town where a Men’s Shed has recently (2016) been formed? History would seem to indicate not. TOMNET Focus Group 1 was once a dynamic and active group with a thriving membership of over 20 men. When a Men’s Shed was established in 2013 in the same town, TOMNET membership declined significantly (owing to natural attrition as well as to men moving to the Men’s Shed), and as stated, the branch is now defunct. In 2017, the Men’s Shed membership in that town numbered between 40 to 50 men.

Golding (2015) argued that, given the median age of a Shedder, membership retention can be a barrier to a Shed’s (and, I would argue, a TOMNET affiliate’s) sustainability. Extant life challenges such as illness, the death of a spouse, enforced

care-giving for a family member and/or relocating to another area all threaten the viability of these groups (pp. 386-387). Continuity of member numbers is essential for effective and ongoing program functionality and for grassroots organisational sustainability.

7.2.3. **Anti-deficit positioning.**

A subtle yet powerful benefit of both TOMNET and Men's Sheds is the dismantling of negative stereotypes surrounding ageing, and in particular ageing and older men. Visibility and active engagement within the wider community confirmed that older men are rewriting the biased historical narrative. Negative assumptions that were thought to be public truths are refuted in a positive and proactive manner. However, misunderstandings of the roles of Men's Sheds and TOMNET still exist and can create barriers to sustainability. Stereotypical suppositions considered to be societal norms contribute to a lack of public comprehension of the purpose of each group, and constitute a potential threat to each group's sustainability.

Greg (Ex-Member) lamented the public lack of understanding of the intent of Men's Sheds: "Some people think we're a loser's refuge where all the down and outs come. People think we offer medical counselling and those sorts of services." Evan (Shed 5 Office Holder) commented about the detrimental effect of the lack of knowledge about the intent of the Shed within his community: "We've had comments like, 'Oh, I don't want to go there. They're always talking about suicide'. That's some of the talk that gets around town."

TOMNET also suffered from public misconceptions. Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) remarked: "A lot of people don't come to TOMNET because they think we're all depressed and miserable. When they [the men] come in the door, they can be in that state, but it's certainly not where they end up." This was exemplified in the DVD *Older Men: Hidden Hardships* produced by TOMNET (2012), which featured six members discussing a crisis moment in their lives and how their membership of TOMNET helped them not only to cope, but also to thrive. Each man suffered from loneliness and/or depression before joining, but found support from the "friendship and mateship" offered by TOMNET staff and members: "I probably wouldn't be here. I had thoughts of joining Mary [dead wife]. I am a different

person” (Neil). “When I lost my wife, I became very depressed. I received great support from the staff and the men” (Lindsay).

The power and sustainability of a model such as TOMNET lie in the strategies that it implements to manage depression and suicide ideation. These were interwoven throughout their program content. If they are so inclined, men felt able to acknowledge their negative feelings in nonthreatening groups such as “Men at Work” (please refer to Chapter 5, Section 5.3.4), which specifically targeted men’s feelings of depression and suicide ideation. TOMNET volunteers visit older men in aged care facilities. Recipients were invited to engage in meaningful conversations about their emotional state.

Wilson et al. (2015) noted the barrier of the public perception that Men’s Sheds “...are for old retired men” (p. 138). The authors posited that this attitude is particularly prevalent in regional and rural areas with high youth unemployment. They raised the concern that Sheds in these areas did not seem to target the younger demographics as a conduit to future members, but they noted that the wrongful assumption surrounding the age of the current membership could be a mitigating factor.

Negative assumptions about men’s health may be presented by the very group that advocates for the Men’s Shed Movement – AMSA. *The Spanner in the Works* health newsletter sent out by AMSA likens a male’s body to a machine that must be serviced regularly. Public newsletters of this ilk reinforced the stereotypes featured in the traditional narrative that seemingly binds masculinity and construction irrevocably together. Wilson et al. (2015) argued that, in fact, Sheddens are a far more diverse group and worry about wrongful and misguided assumptions around the behaviour of older men, including:

The preponderance of the [‘]one size fits all[’] model of health promotion being applied to Men’s Shed participants (and men in general), rather than a more contextualised approach tailored to the needs of different types of Sheds and their different demographics. (p. 139)

7.2.4. Community capacity building.

Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1 discussed the main difference between the two organisations as being that TOMNET men mainly volunteer within the local

community whereas, by contrast, the community generally goes to the Sheds. It is my further contention that exceptions exist in these two incarnations. Firstly, each organisation forms smaller communities within the parent organisation. Secondly, the interaction that occurs in the local community outside the organisations' headquarters represents community capacity building in the wider community. Figure 7.2 depicts this concept diagrammatically.

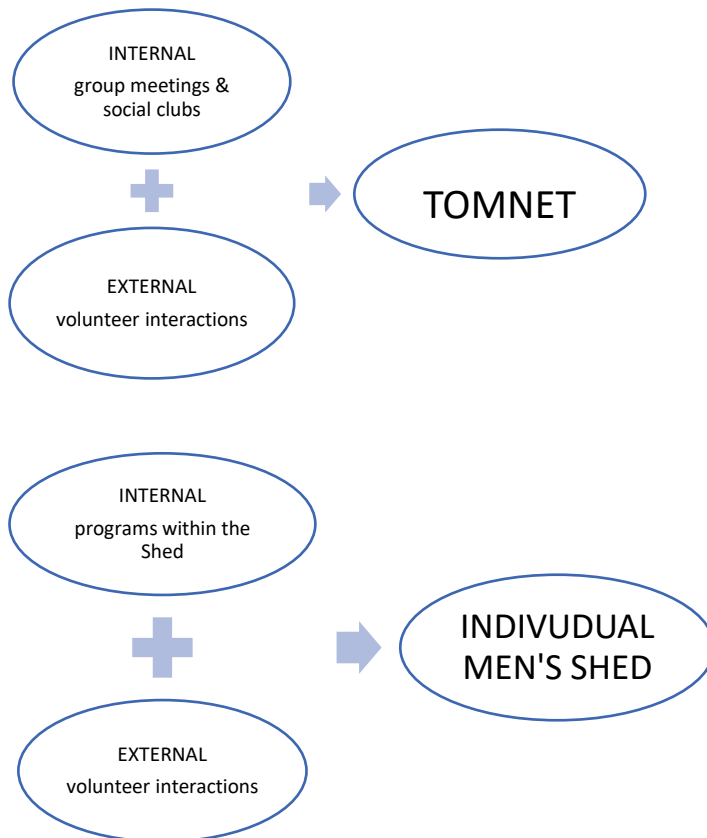


Figure 7.2. Community capacity building through the lens of sustainability

This subsection explores the notion of the term “community” as defined by Lee and Kim (2015) as: “...a geographically bound group of people who are subject to either direct or indirect interaction with each other” (p. 11). Drawing on the concept of two communities embedded in the one organisation, this subsection examines both the internal and the external community capacity in terms of the sustainability of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds.

Each organisation is sustained by the positive community interactions that occur within the headquarters of the group, whilst simultaneously members also interact with the wider community found outside the boundaries of the group’s headquarters.

Mentoring at TOMNET occurred both within and outside the structure of the Centre itself. Programs implemented within the organisation focused on peer mentoring, and they included “Men at Work”, “Chew the Fat”, cards, etc. These programs were specifically positioned to offer support for the membership. However, TOMNET members also volunteered in the wider community and supported members of the public- for example, in the Flexi School mentoring program. These volunteer programs were discussed more fully in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.4.

TOMNET Focus Group 2 was very visible and purposeful within its local community. The walls of their headquarters were plastered with newspaper clippings of their activities. These included: group excursions to various places in and around their local area; hosting breakfasts and luncheons to raise money for breast and prostate cancer, as well as a concert to raise money for Careflight (a Queensland air ambulance service); and clean up duty after a local charity sprint race day.

Lucy (TOMNET Administrator) addressed the fulfilment of older men’s contributive needs when she stressed the importance of the concept of purpose and its relevance to the group:

But the most important part, if the group does not have a purpose...they will just be set up as a social group. What happens after a little while is the social group say, “I don’t want to go today [so] I won’t”. Whereas if you go, “I’ve got to get up and go because I’m a volunteer [and] somebody else is relying on me”, it changes things.

A number of the Men’s Sheds investigated also volunteered in the wider community. Shed 3 constructed and fitted a board with farming apparatus on it for the male members of a local aged care facility. Members of Shed 7 helped an elderly community member to erect the frame for her bed, and also painted and restored benches for the local primary school. Shed 2 provided sale items for the local primary school’s annual fete, the proceeds of which were then donated to the school. In 2018, TOMNET reached out to a number of the local Men’s Sheds to ascertain Shedd’s interest in becoming volunteers at the Toowoomba Flexi School.

Building solid and positive community relationships is a nation-wide aspiration of the Men’s Shed ethos. The following passage from the AMSA newsletter *The Shedder* reflected this:

A collaboration between the Mount Isa Police Station and the Mount Isa Men’s Shed has seen the station get into the Christmas spirit, with seven new

Christmas trees on display. Aptly themed in blue, white and silver, the timber trees were made by...the Mount Isa Men's Shed. "We were thrilled to be approached by the police to make trees for the station," Richard said. "We are always pleased to have the opportunity to take on community projects." (mensshed.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/The-Shedder-December-2017.pdf)

Further to the national community, AMSA is also part of a wider global partnership of Men's Shed Associations, and it has a particularly close relationship with the Irish Men's Shed Association. AMSA supports the Malehealth.ie website through the sharing of their *Spanner in the Works* resource (malehealth.ie/). Also representatives of the Irish Men's Sheds Association regularly attend AMSA conferences held in major cities throughout Australia every two years. AMSA president, David Helmers, visits Men's Sheds in the United Kingdom on a regular basis.

Contributive needs were further addressed by McGowan et al. (2014) through discussion of the maximisation and the value of older males' commitment to purposeful and positive interactions within the community. In this way, older men are making "vital contributions" (p. 105) that aid in breaking down the negative, stereotypical "ageism" based on the disparagement of this demographic cohort.

7.2.5. Conclusion.

Older men's contributive need to belong was being met through authentic fellowship with others. Older men specifically felt that finding a space for men only delivered the beneficial fulfilment of their needs at that time in their lives. Conversely, the median age of the members presented a barrier in that older men were 'lumped together' as one cohort by the public and in political arenas.

Table 7.4 provides a summary of the benefits of and barriers to sustainability regarding Ethos.

Table 7.4

Summary of the Benefits and Barriers related to Ethos (statements are not paired)

BENEFITS	BARRIERS
TOMNET and Men's Sheds challenged accepted societal truths and assumptions around what it is to be an older, retired man.	The average age range of both groups was 70 years.
TOMNET members did not have to be concerned with funding or administration issues.	Owing to the smaller member numbers of TOMNET regional and rural groups, membership may wane.
TOMNET ensured that programs were implemented that provided strategies to manage depression and suicide.	Regional and rural TOMNET branches were struggling to attain membership sustainability.
Membership was self-selecting – i.e., the men wanted to be there.	Maintaining unity and harmony amongst Shed members can be problematic.
Both organisations offered a range of alternatives for engagement.	Men's Sheds suffered from a lack of involvement by members with regard to taking on responsibilities within the Shed.
Both organisations provided an avenue for the contributive need of older men to pass on their skills and knowledge.	Some Men's Sheds experienced workplace health and safety issues.
Both organisations provided an opportunity for older men to interact with like-minded peers	Men's Sheds in rural areas did not seem to attract the younger demographics.
Programs in each group were delivered with flexibility, which allowed alternative needs to be fulfilled.	The prevalence of the 'one size fits all' model of health promotion affected both groups, but AMSA was more focused on this concept to a larger extent.
Some Men's Sheds allowed mixed gender groups, which can boost membership numbers in small regional/rural areas.	Both organisations were prey to the community's lack of understanding and wrongful public misconceptions.
Membership of Men's Sheds addressed older men's contributive needs, and the friendships formed allowed for mitigation against suicide ideation.	
The Men's Shed movement mobilised men of all ages, particularly older men nationally, and was part of a wider and global community.	
Both organisations allowed older men agency in countering the assumptions of masculine stereotypes.	
Both organisations recognised the importance of member input to sustain interest.	
Both organisations worked collaboratively to foster visible and active volunteer engagement in the wider community.	
Both organisations provided two forms of community capacity building: group fellowship within the boundaries of the organisations' headquarters, as well as building positive wider community relationships.	

Section 7.2 examined Jackson’s (2017) first and fourth “steps” (n.p.) to the creation of a sustainable business model. Four common ethea were examined as they applied to TOMNET and Men’s Sheds. These focused on a male only culture grounded in mateship and peer support; grassroots principles that were member driven; attention to an anti-deficit positioning of older men and ageing; and community capacity building. An ethos that actively demonstrates dedication to the organisation’s membership and its function in society is a necessity for creating a sustainable model. It also fulfils McClusky’s (1974) ideal of meeting the contributive need around the desire to be of service to others.

7.3. Structure

Jackson’s (2017) second step entitled “Having fixed goals across the company” (n.p.) necessitates an examination of the elements of the structure of an organisation, including aims and goals; leadership; and program implementation. A visual representation of Section 7.3 is depicted in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5

The Progression of the Chapter’s Structure: Section 7.3 STRUCTURE

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
7.3 STRUCTURE	7.3.1 Aims and goals 7.3.2 Leadership 7.3.3 Program implementation	*Dominant personalities *Funding *Infrastructure *Friendship networks *Future considerations

Jackson (2017) stated that “goals are essentially shared values across the company, no matter how many local sites or international locations there might be” (n.p.). Both TOMNET and Men’s Sheds have established their goals and values around the framework of men’s physical and mental health and wellbeing. These are widely promoted within each organisation, media outlets, and the general public.

7.3.1. Aims and goals.

Adherence to fixed goals and shared values within TOMNET and Men’s Shed established a much-needed social bond for the marginalised older male. These

groups allowed men to be part of a cohesive, like-minded community. These goals and values were not only immediately visible on each organisation's websites but also lived and practised daily by members. A positive and immediate collective identity was established in each organisation through wearing a uniform such as a shirt and/or other apparel (e.g., caps) that had their group affiliation embroidered prominently.

TOMNET's website clearly stated the aims of the organisation and encouraged men to commit to the time that it took to build sustainable relationships: "Our aim is to reach out to older men who are lonely, isolated, and in need of friendship. Men over 50 years of age are welcome to *get involved* with TOMNET" (tomnet.org.au; *emphasis in original*). There was a recognition that this involvement and commitment together constituted a complex and long-term process: "We understand that Members must COMMIT to a shared focus, and that SHARED EXPERIENCES need time and sustained interaction to develop secure relationships" (tomnet.org.au; EMPHASIS IN ORIGINAL).

Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) highlighted the need for a continuity of aims and goals when creating a sustainable organisation that caters for the ongoing needs of its membership: "Whatever you create at the beginning, you've got to make sure it continues going forward, that you manage their expectations. Set the precedent going forward." She referred to the commitment of the founding fathers of TOMNET to their core ideals and their vision for the future: "The initial group led the impetus and created the model and surveyed members throughout." The narrative of a collective good reinforced by shared values is important to the sustainability of the TOMNET ethos:

The reason why TOMNET is sustainable is that these guys...walk in on a Monday morning and they can tell me who in their sphere, who's been crook, who's been in hospital over the weekend. They know that information. We've ingrained it into them – that ethos of older men supporting older men.

One of the barriers to sustainability in a Men's Shed was misunderstanding about non-adherence to that Shed's shared aims and goals. This situation occurred in Shed 1 and caused further divisions within an already fractured and damaged group culture. This Shed had previously experienced a bitter split, resulting in half of the membership leaving to build another Shed at another venue. A new Shed coordinator

was elected, but it was soon revealed that his aims and goals were not a match with those of some of the remaining Shedders. This caused him to remark that “Not everyone here feels the same way I do. I want to get us back to our core values. There’s a negative culture among the guys – they’re here for themselves.” That coordinator has since departed from that Shed, and a new one has been elected. The Shed is now a harmonious and united environment with a shared vision and acknowledgement of shared aims and goals. This scenario provides an effective example of a Shed that displayed a tendency towards unsustainability but that reversed this pathway and is now sustainable and valued in the local community.

Junger (2016a) argued that “Modern society has perfected the art of making people not feel necessary” (p. xvii). He further stated that “A person living in a modern city...can be surrounded by others and yet feel deeply, dangerously alone” (p. 18). This argument is particularly pertinent when applied to the struggling older male attempting subconsciously to fulfil his contributive needs and to find his place in the local community after a major life event such as voluntary or forced retirement, illness or the death of a spouse. Both TOMNET and Men’s Sheds publicly acknowledge and declare their organisational goals and values (via media outlets and/or word of mouth). An older male in search of a place to belong is able to match his aspirations with those of a particular organisation.

7.3.2. Leadership.

Southcombe, Cabanagh, and Bartram (2015) described an effective leader as an individual who enabled the group to work together for a common goal. The scholars then analysed the concept of socialised, charismatic leadership when applied specifically to the membership of a Men’s Shed: “Charismatic leaders offer a purpose and challenging vision that aligns follower values and interests with the collective interests of the organisation” (p. 973). The authors presented three behavioural elements that characterised an effective leader: “...envisioning, empathy and empowerment” (p. 974). These elements could also be applied to the style of leadership practised by TOMNET.

Envisioning involves the creation of a vision or idea for the future that is readily identifiable by the membership and relatable to their situation. An empathetic leader is one who is aware of the needs of the membership. Empowerment involves

demonstrating belief in the membership and fostering a sense of control that enables members to share in the power of the group (Southcombe et al., 2015, p. 975).

Sustainable leadership emerges in alignment with the policies and goals/vision of the organisation. The TOMNET Centre (as opposed to its affiliates) maintained two distinct but equally ranked management groups. One comprised four paid administrative positions and the other was the Management Committee, which included 11 volunteer men from the membership. Leadership in individual Men’s Sheds was dependent upon the Shed membership numbers. QMSA is a voluntary organisation situated in Brisbane, the capital city of Queensland. It was originally established to represent Queensland Sheddors at AMSA board meetings. Based in Newcastle, New South Wales, AMSA staff members (currently comprising seven paid workers) oversee grant initiatives and Shed insurance as well as representing the interests of the Shed membership in relation to Federal Government funding (please refer to Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2).

Figure 7.3 visually represents the differences between the two organisations in terms of leadership positions in Queensland:

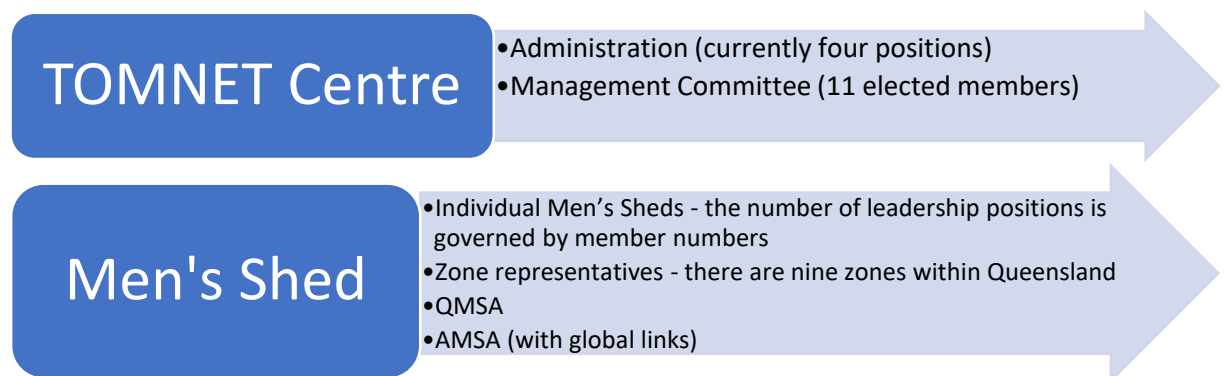


Figure 7.3. Organisational differences between TOMNET and Men’s Sheds

Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) was cognisant of the benefit of an effective leader when dealing with membership politics: “It all comes down to who you’ve got in those leadership roles as to how successful your peer support is.” She discussed the need for leaders to enact the core values of the organisation, and she cited a past member of the administration who did not align herself with the values of TOMNET:

I had a staff member in here that very much treated it as a pre-aged care and set up that entertainment model. What we should be doing is giving them the skills

to create a new life. When you entertain them, once the entertainment stops, they go back into their holes. It's a very limiting model.

Lucy explained that TOMNET is not "...diversional therapy". The pre-aged care model was not sustainable as it did not align with the well-established core values of the organisation and it alienated a percentage of the membership.

Andrew (TOMNET Office Holder) was adamant about the organisational direction and commitment of the volunteer program:

We don't push them into doing lots of volunteering. We're not forceful in terms of "Oh, you've got to do this, and you've got to do that." It's like, "Here's what we've got to offer; you choose what you're comfortable with doing. We don't want you here every day volunteering. Pick one or two things and go with that, and we're happy with that as long as you're happy." Our aim is for these guys to be doing volunteering for the next 20 years. We don't want them to burn out.

TOMNET's ideology contrasted sharply with Mark's (ex-Men's Shed Member) experience:

I tried Men's Shed for a while, but it wasn't for me. They tried to direct me too much. "Today, Mark, you will do this." That was starting to piss me right off. The people themselves were great but, like in any organisation, you get those who want to lead and those who want to be the bosses, whereas I'm not interested in that any more.

Whilst it was generally acknowledged by Shedders that there was a need for strong leadership, dominant personalities can be detrimental to the retention of new members.

Golding (2015) touched upon the issue that Mark encountered around Shedder expectations when he wrote:

Men's Sheds work best when they are informal, voluntary and without obligation to attend or participate in any or all of the activities. This freedom that shedders have to come (or not), and to voluntarily and safely participate (or not) is in contrast to the stress, pressure, obligation and risk that has sometimes been associated with men's paid work. (p. 380)

Leadership issues can cause a considerable barrier to sustainability within Men's Sheds, not the least of which is succession. Evan (Shed 5 Office Holder) echoed the sentiments of Office Holders in many of the Sheds that were researched:

The enthusiasts that got this going five years ago are still here. We have a lot of hangers on and there's nothing wrong with that, but the original guys are still here. I've been looking for someone to be secretary for five years, but none of them want to take the job. Really the committee should have given up two years ago and put a new committee on, but it's just hard. Finding people who are interested in running the show is just hard. Not all Sheds cope well with changes in key leadership positions.

Leo (Shed 6 Office Holder) concurred: "It's hard to get men to go to the executive committees." Peter (Shed Current Member) remarked that: "Some guys want to be recognised, but they're not going to go out there and push themselves. I think some of them are too frightened of getting involved. They don't want the commitment."

Dissemination of information from the governing bodies can be an issue for the Sheds. In 2017, Greg (E-Member) stated:

Queensland Men's Shed Association in Brisbane get[s] instructions from Australian Men's Shed Association. QMSA is supposed to distribute information. People on the Board are retirees; they're volunteers. They're dysfunctional. We don't know about certain things. We don't know what's happening down on the Gold Coast. People in Townsville don't know what we're doing. These guys are in their 80s. It's a full-time occupation. It's undermanned.

Greg's opinion was typical of Shedd's attitudes towards QMSA at that time. A general grassroots groundswell of frustration towards the QMSA Board led to the resignation of some QMSA office holders, and in 2018 a new board was elected with a replacement President, Secretary and Treasurer. The new board members were striving to ensure that the voices of all Queensland Sheds were acknowledged and represented. In February 2018, a meeting of the new board and the zone representatives was held in Brisbane to rewrite the QMSA vision going forward:

Your new Committee has made a fantastic start in this new direction. We are not in competition with AMSA and know that we have started a new direction with a much broader outlook on the future of Men's Sheds in Queensland. (Weier, 2018, n.p.)

This was the first time that zone representatives were given a democratic voice in the structure of QMSA. As a grassroots organisation, each Shed was able to choose the body with whom they wished to be associated. They were entitled to be affiliated with either AMSA or QMSA, or both.

Research suggested that much was asked of the leadership executive in the smaller (10 to 40 member) Men's Sheds. Neville (Shed 1 Office Holder) was elected to the presidency of his 25 member Shed in absentia: "I went on holidays and when I came back I was it!" This particular Shed was not in possession of a computer, so Neville continued to use his own iPad to connect to AMSA information. His executive team of three was also responsible for grant writing, as well as the day to day administration and program implementation concerning the running of the Shed. Several considerations impeded Shed succession, not the least of which was that the Shedder median age of 70 years (Golding, 2015) was likely to involve a range of other life concerns outside the Shed business, and most Sheddors were retirees who were not interested in the stress associated with positions of leadership.

7.3.3. Program implementation.

The TOMNET Centre was primarily funded by the Darling Downs West Moreton Primary Health Network, with additional monies sourced from the State Government and donations from community support organisations (e.g., Rotary Clubs). TOMNET affiliates were self-funded through donations and public events. Men's Sheds were mainly funded through grants from AMSA, public donations and various community benefit grants.

Sourcing sustainable funding in order to maintain current programs and to implement future initiatives remained a major ongoing issue for both organisations. Egan (2013) concluded that "...the literature on public health research is often biased towards what can be measured easily rather than on the immensely more complex issues of the broader social forces that also affect health, directly or indirectly" (p. 32). Lucy (TOMNET Administrator) concurred:

The power of this model is extraordinary and is such a sustainable, long-term support model – however, it is becoming further and further from the government's short-term 'numbers' thinking than ever. To them [funding bodies] we're a very expensive model. Their model is six counselling sessions

and you're done, and it just doesn't work like that. Their statistics about who I have helped and who have I prevented suicide – well, how can I answer that in the first place and second is, how many clients are likely to [do so]? Well, all of them really...

As a locally funded body, TOMNET was susceptible to the whims of funding bodies more so than AMSA, which is currently supported by the Federal Government. Seventy-five percent of TOMNET's operating costs were supplied by the local governmental agency, the Darling Downs West Moreton Primary Health Network (PHN). This funding required review and re-application every six months, and, with no guarantee of continuation, the impact on staffing positions is enormous. At the time of the first interview, Lucy (TOMNET Administrator) was waiting to hear the results of her funding application: "I can't assure my staff that they'll have a job in six months' time. I've got letters of termination here on my desk to give to my staff if we don't get any funding."

This situation was again highlighted when the TOMNET Centre was forced to decrease contact hours with the membership. Lucy (TOMNET Administrator) wrote: The funding environment is becoming increasingly challenging and an ever-changing environment, and like many other organisations, we are not immune to this. Based on this, there will be some changes to staffing at TOMNET and the operating hours at the Centre from Friday 21st July. From this date, all full-time staff will be commencing a 9 day fortnight to meet budget changes. Therefore, the TOMNET Centre will be closed every second Friday until 31 December 2017. (*TOMNET Telegraph*, 2017a, p. 2)

In June, 2018, TOMNET was advised that funding from the PHN would be slashed by a further 45%. This was to become effective within five days to align with the following financial year. As a result of this, Lucy reduced her hours to four days a week, with other staff contact hours unaltered (*TOMNET Telegraph*, 2018, p. 2-3).

At present, AMSA is funded by the Federal Government to provide grants for start-up Sheds. Other moneys to fund equipment, Shed alterations/renovations, programs, etc. must be applied for by individual Sheds in the form of community grants such as the Gambling Community Benefit Fund (justice.qld.gov.au) and/or the AMSA National Shed Development Programme. This system is not ideal as grants

are difficult to attain for some Sheds. Greg (Ex-Member) explained the process that some Sheds have endured even before moving into a Shed:

AMSA helps you start a Shed but grants will only allow you to renovate existing Sheds, not to build a Shed. First thing you need is a block of land, then you buy or get donated a Shed. You approach the Council because you have to get power [electricity], etc. before you get approval to build a Shed. You've got to come up with the money to get all that done. Then you submit your plans. You can't move in until the council approves it.

Greg's frustration was demonstrated by this passage from the 2017 December issue of *The Shedder*:

For six years the Sanctuary Point Men's Shed had been meeting on a member's farm until they were able to secure a grant from the NSW Government Community Building Partnerships that was then combined with the over \$100,000 raised by the shed themselves. (Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA), 2017c, n.p.)

This situation created a barrier to sustainability before a Shed was even erected. Six years is a very long time to be dedicated to one project (given life interventions), and not every group would be able to raise an initial \$100,000. Conversely, the community's ongoing dedication to the establishment of a local Shed may be beneficial to capacity building in a community striving together to achieve a common goal. Postle and Danaher (2014) referred to the benefits of purposeful communities in that they are "...widely acknowledged as being central to the effectiveness and success of human groups, communities, networks and societies" (p. 226).

Grant writing can be a lengthy and complicated process. Even though George (Shed 3 Office Holder) indicated that Men's Sheds provided "...good material to work with when applying for funding", he further remarked that "Funding is a major consumer of my time." This sentiment was exemplified by the following excerpt from the 2017 December issue of *The Shedder*:

Dementia Australia is currently offering 20 grants of \$15,000 each to support Australian community and not-for profit organisations to assist in the development of local dementia-friendly community activities. Grants will be administered via an expression of interest process.

Guidelines providing information about the requirements for the funding and the EOI are available on the Dementia Friendly Communities Hub at www.dementiafriendly.org.au/community-grants.

TIMEFRAMES AND DELIVERABLES:-

Action Date Expressions of interest open November 2017

Expressions of interest close 24 January 2018

Expressions of interest reviewed (including work plan), assessed and successful recipients informed 31 January 2018

Contracts provided for signature and projects commence from February 2018

Project update/story for inclusion on DFC Resource Hub due June – August 2018 (agreed and confirmed via contract)

Draft status report including updated work plan due 31 May 2019

Project funding finishes 30 June 2019

Final status report including updated work plan due 31 July 2019.

(mensshed.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/The-Shedder-December-2017.pdf)

Funding opportunities were posted on the AMSA website. Some of the organisations offering grants included the AMSA National Shed Development Program and various community groups such as the one above.

Greg (Ex-Member) explained the application process as he saw it: “Basically you’ve got three months to become aware of the grant, to fathom what it means, to get quotes and then to send it off. Applications are becoming harder and there’s no guarantee of success.” Ron (Shed 7 Office Holder) concurred:

I look around and I think, “Gees, we’ve got all these grants x number of dollars granted to this for sports administration for young people, you know, a new tennis court, basketball courts, all the facilities.” Older people [have] got to struggle for it.

Added to the stress of the application process itself, an applicant belonging to a Shed without an inhouse computer (such as Shed 1) must bear the financial and personal costs associated with lodging an application online. These costs may include an Internet service provider, wear and tear on private computers, and decreased family time.

Another area of concern expressed by some of the men revolved around the actual writing of the grants. Some men felt out of their depth when attempting to fill

in the required paperwork. Sam (Shed 2 Office Holder) suggested that “Queensland Men’s Shed Association should help with grant writing.” Lack of grant writing skills is more likely to occur in the smaller Sheds, some of which (such as Shed 1) have resorted to paying a professional to write for them. Larger Sheds with over 130 members do not see this as an impediment: “We’ve got some men who are good at grant applications” (Ivan, Shed 4 Office Holder).

A comment made by a participant in Shed Focus Group 2 highlighted the irritation experienced by some grant writers:

Some men say we’ve got too many grants in but the problem it brings is you always get people who want things. And they might be good workers in the club, but they don’t realise all the bullshit you’ve got to go through. You’ve got to liaise with people you don’t like because you need their funds.

Basic infrastructure issues can be a considerable barrier to a Shed’s sustainability. Rent affordability and ease of access to the Shed were varied and could be major operational stumbling blocks.

The Shed 4 complex was in an ideal situation. Located in an international tourist hotspot where land was at a premium and very expensive, the Shed was situated centrally on one acre of disused land that belonged to a local business. The acreage housed an abandoned building on an otherwise vacant plot. The whole site was subsequently donated for use as a Men’s Shed premises. Their rent continued to be waived by the business. Thus, all money raised and gifted to the Shed went towards its upkeep and expansion. To date, the additions have included the erection of three more shed spaces and an expansive horticultural area, including a fruit orchard and a greenhouse.

By way of contrast, Shed 1 was located on a busy main road in a regional city centre that was a throughway for heavy goods vehicles such as cattle trucks and road trains with two or more trailers. The Shed was housed on an area of approximately 750 square metres. The Shed itself was 330 square metres and only just large enough to accommodate the members and equipment. Parking was difficult and at peak traffic times unsafe. Any donated equipment was stored outside in the open at the back of the Shed. Rent was \$1260 per annum, with approximately \$1500 per annum for power and water.

The location of the Shed could also be problematic if it were situated within close proximity to businesses or residences. A participant in Shed Focus Group 1 remarked: “Some neighbours don’t like noise. We’ve had complaints.” This Shed was located in a residential area and operated once a week. Conversely, although there were logistical problems with access to Shed 1 (located on a busy highway), Neville (Shed 1 Office Holder) thought of their location as a benefit in that it afforded easy advertisement to attract passers-by and potential members.

7.3.4. **Conclusion.**

Section 7.3 has addressed the organisational considerations adopted by TOMNET and Men’s Sheds. Table 7.6 provides an outline of the benefits of, and the barriers to, sustainability for TOMNET and Men’s Sheds. The manner in which older men’s contributive needs are met is also addressed.

Sustainable leadership emerged in alignment with the policies and goals/vision of the organisation. Grants were difficult to attain for some Sheds, and sourcing sustainable funding in order to maintain current programs and to implement future initiatives remained a major ongoing issue for both organisations.

Table 7.6 provides a summary of the benefits of and barriers to sustainability regarding Structure.

Table 7.6

Summary of the Benefits and Barriers Related to STRUCTURE (statements are not paired)

BENEFITS	BARRIERS
The commitment to the vision and ideals of TOMNET's founding fathers ensured continuity of core values and goals.	TOMNET was susceptible to the funding whims of the local government.
Both organisations provided an avenue for social bonding and a collective identity. This aligned with the contributive needs of belonging and purposefulness.	Most Sheddors were retirees who were not interested in the stress associated with positions of leadership.
Leaders in both organisations enacted the core values of each organisation.	Much was asked of the leadership executive in the smaller (10 to 40 member) Men's Sheds.
Aims and goals were clearly stated on the websites of each organisation.	Leadership succession was a major issue for smaller Sheds.
Membership of both groups had the right to elect their board members or executives. This provided flexibility of leadership positions.	The initial establishment of the Shed building could be an arduous and costly project.
The new QMSA board rewrote its constitution so that it was more in line with the grassroots needs of members.	The dissemination of information from the parent bodies was sporadic and irrelevant to some Sheddors.
Sheds were able to choose the funding body with which they wished to be associated.	Grant writing was a lengthy and complicated process.
AMSA was the recipient of funding provided by the Federal Government.	Some Sheds did not have an inhouse computer.
Establishing a Shed could build community capacity through striving for a common community goal.	Some men were unaccustomed to writing grants and found the process difficult.
	Dominant personalities could be detrimental to the retention of new members.
	Infrastructure issues arose with rent affordability, water/electricity rates, etc.
	The existence of misunderstanding or non-adherence to a Shed's shared aims and goals created some confusion among members and the public.
	Shed location could be problematic owing to access issues.

7.4. Membership

Jackson (2017) referred to “operations and processes” in his third step entitled “Streamlining wider processes” (n.p.): “When it comes to operations and processes, a business could think about what it can do to make these more efficient” (n.p.). This concept may be extrapolated to refer to the member-centred programs that were implemented by the two organisations researched. The fulfilment of members’ needs to suit their demographics were core to the success and sustainability of organisations like TOMNET and Men’s Sheds.

A visual representation of Section 7.4 is depicted in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7

The Progression of the Chapter’s Structure: Section 7.4 MEMBERSHIP

THEME	SUBHEADINGS	TOPICS
7.4 MEMBERSHIP	7.4.1 Member considerations 7.4.2 Member connectedness	*Screening processes *Evolution of practice *Retaining members *Lifelong learning *Health *Social media

7.4.1. Membership considerations.

TOMNET had a clearly expressed business model and a dedication to its continued sustainability when implementing operational core values:

Our expertise is Older Men. The Older Men's Network was originally formed by eight older men who identified high levels of suicide in their peers within the Toowoomba community. They set out to reduce this. The group was driven by *older men, for older men* - this fundamental principle is the reason for TOMNET’s continued success today. (tomnet.org.au/; *emphasis in original*)

It is clear that the initial group of eight founders led the impetus for positive social change on behalf of their members. As the organisation grew, they participated in community forums such as the *Cross Government Project to Reduce Social Isolation of Older People* (Author unknown, 2003). At that time, they were known as the Toowoomba Older Men’s Network (TOMnet).

As the aged care model developed governmental recognition and momentum, TOMNET, then referred to as the “Toowoomba Older Men’s Network Inc.”, employed third party associations such as Helen Ferrrier & Associates (2009) to survey the members and to evaluate the programs to ensure that the needs of the men were being accommodated.

Adam (TOMNET Office Holder) noted the evolution within the organisation from a welfare-based model, where men were dependent on staff members, to a more sustainable, independent, grassroots model:

It’s powering on now. It’s more vibrant than it was 9/10 years ago. In those days the office was seen mainly as a welfare office. If you wanted something done, you would go to the office and somebody’d do it. That doesn’t happen any more. And that to me brings out the whole ethos of older men looking out for older men. [If t]hey want to do something, they organise it.

Lucy (TOMNET Centre Administrator) explained that the organisation’s future was very much focused on the needs of each of the generational cohorts involved in TOMNET:

We say to the younger men: “You’re the next generation; what do you need?” It might not be aged care visiting, it might be a social enterprise, it might be something that they can actually help form which direction TOMNET needs to go in...something that’s relevant to them.

It was not solely the responsibility of the Administration to monitor future programming responsibilities. Adam (TOMNET Centre Office Holder) also expressed a goal of the Management Board:

We are exploring avenues of bringing our ages down to look at preretirement, say from the age of 40...as a way that we can get involved with the younger males about retirement age so that when they hit retirement they don’t get into that depressive state.

Sustainable measures have also been discussed through expansion considerations in the form of the creation of a TOMNET group within one of the retirement villages in Toowoomba. This represents another form of community outreach.

Andrew (TOMNET Office Holder) remarked that some men were afraid to join TOMNET because they thought that it would be too much of a commitment:

I'm not here to sell it. I'm not here to convince them to come to TOMNET. They've got to make that decision. We tell the guys all the time: "TOMNET is an extension of your retirement. It's not the whole; we're not the centre of your retirement."

Because Men's Shed practice was fluid and individual to particular Sheds, membership ethos remained constant, but membership considerations varied from Shed to Shed depending upon the Shedders. Age may have been a factor in the program priorities of a Shed. The executive of Shed 5 conducted a computer course for seniors (please refer to Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1); however, none of the other members had undertaken the course even though the computers were available and situated inside the Shed. Evan (Shed 5 Office Holder) was perplexed by this situation: "...the interesting part about it is that none of them are into computers. You've got to have a bit of computer knowledge. That's all passed them by, especially the age group that's here at the moment."

Membership of Men's Sheds can be politically expedient for local councillors, who desire to be seen by the community to support the group but who rarely utilise the equipment or interact with Shedders. This was the situation in three Sheds researched.

A participant in Shed Focus Group 2 was cognisant of membership cohesion: "It's a matter of getting the right members. We don't want to rush out and grab people off the street. We want people who just want to come along here and enjoy themselves."

A powerful tool for sustainability resides in an organisation's ability to provide learning opportunities for their members that keep them interested and engaged. These opportunities do not have to consist of formalised, institutionalised instruction. Rather they may take many forms, not the least of which may be an incidental, informal conversation around a communal project or a shared morning tea. Topics do not have to revolve around the production of a tangible skill such as an item of woodwork. In fact, learning may be just as useful and valid when new knowledge is exchanged between individuals around intangibles, such as the trust and acceptance gained in sharing life stories. When members are actively and intentionally engaged in the process of learning about others, a natural segue occurs that leads to individual introspection. Contemplation of self and one's effect on the

human environment exemplifies purposeful living and may lead to “self-actualisation” (Maslow, 1943, 1970).

7.4.2. **Connectedness.**

In the context of this thesis, the term “connectedness” refers to the degree of social or communal support to which an older man has access, and the amount of positive engagement that exists within his social networks. Reynolds, Mackenzie, Medved, and Roger (2015) posited that participation in a robust social environment boosted “...protective factors for older adults’ physical and mental health” (p. 352). They further claimed that the absence of rewarding and sustainable social support/networking resulted in loneliness and social isolation, leading to a marked degeneration of mental and physical health. Connectedness in the form of social networking was embedded in the ethos of both TOMNET and Men’s Sheds.

The power of connection through “deeper conversations” (Andrew, TOMNET Centre Administrator) was promoted through the TOMNET website (tomnet.org.au/), which targeted men over 50 in need of social networks and sustainable social relationships with other older men. The website stated:

We provide supportive environments that reduce among older men **THE RISKS** of self-harm, suicide, depression, social isolation, loneliness. We achieve this by fostering an **ENVIRONMENT** of ‘mateship’, trust and safety. This enables men to talk openly about these risks and develop relationships they can rely on. (tomnet.org.au; **EMPHASIS IN ORIGINAL**)

Laurence (TOMNET Centre Past Counsellor) remarked: “Many older men are their own worst enemies. They require motivation, know-how and an environment that allows them to thrive in the company of their peers.” This sentiment was highlighted by a member who commented that he did not know how lonely he was until he joined TOMNET, where he has found companionship and understanding from men his own age (Fieldnotes, 30 March 2018). Given that the TOMNET Centre received over 3,300 visits from members annually, this model would appear to be sustainable. Lucy (TOMNET Administrator) remarked on her perception of the power of membership connectedness: “It doesn’t matter whether that door is shut or open; they’re still connected to each other.”

The Men’s Shed movement also valued connectedness between Shedders, but it employed an alternative philosophy. Carragher and Golding (2015) described the insight that they developed when they researched Men’s Shed activities. They expressed the notion that Sheds provided a masculine space that allowed “...easier peer bonding and the development of peer social networks” (p. 164). They observed that:

...there is much more going on in men’s sheds than woodwork and metalwork. There is talking, especially through shared experiences, often related to work and sometimes related to health, and the shed provides a context for these important conversations to take place. (p. 164)

Connectedness between groups of Men’s Sheds and TOMNET affiliates could be difficult in a state-wide area as large as Queensland (1.853 million km²).

TOMNET’s affiliated regional and rural groups reinforced shared values and directionality through their email newsletter network and through social media forums such as Facebook and Twitter. The TOMNET Centre supplemented these connections through visitations by the TOMNET Centre staff members to regional and rural areas three times a year, which were referred to as “Muster Days”. Figure 7.4 displays a map of Australia depicting the spread of the TOMNET affiliates throughout Queensland.



Figure 7.4. The location of TOMNET affiliates within Australia (tomnet.org.au/#map)

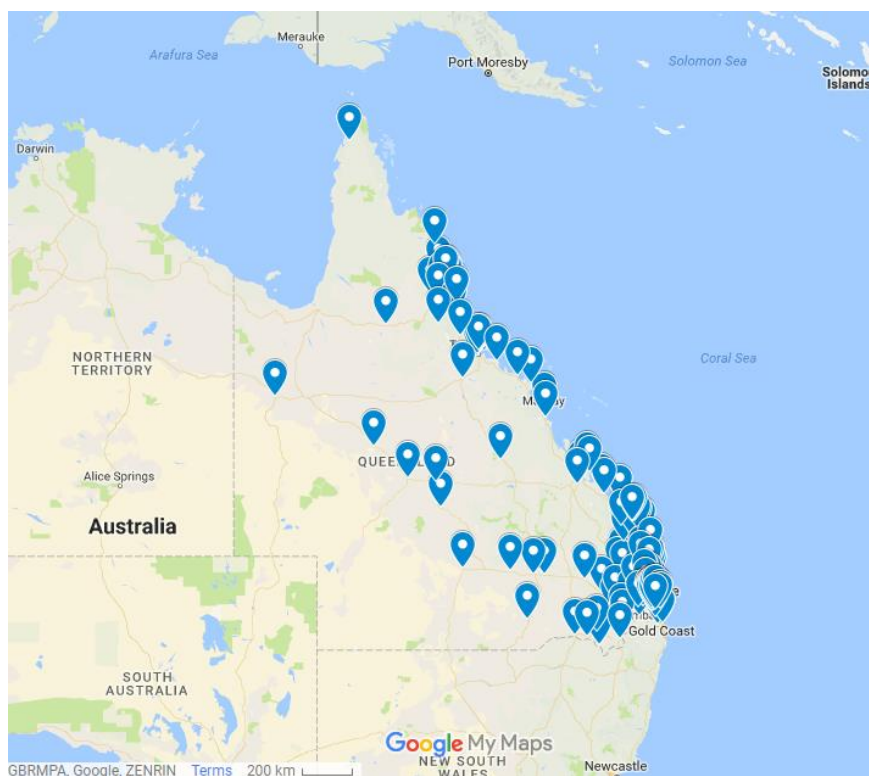


Figure 7.5. The location of Men's Sheds within Queensland, Australia

(qldmensshed.org/SiteFiles/qldmensshedorgau/Sheds_in_Qld_ZONES_-_Sept_2015.pdf)

Figure 7.5 presents the location of Men's Sheds specifically within the state of Queensland. Nationally, Australia is home to over 1,000 individual Men's Sheds. The formation of AMSA in 2007 led to the development of state sub-branches such as QMSA, the South Australian Shed Association (SAMSA), etc. The seven AMSA personnel are paid employees. The state management boards consist of volunteers. Services offered by volunteers can fluctuate in effectiveness. The former QMSA website, run by the board of volunteers, was two years out of date, and the last *Shed Chatter* newsletter was published in April 2016.

In November 2017 three of the Board members formally tendered their resignation owing to increased pressure from a large percentage of QMSA members. This was the result of a key issue that had plagued QMSA for a number of years. There was a deep dissatisfaction with the lack of state government funding support. Graeme Curnow (Ex President QMSA) wrote:

This serious lack of funds has severely curtailed QMSA involvement with the Queensland Sheds and with the community at large. Successive State Governments, while courteous and interested in the Movement, have not yet set

up a program for Men's Sheds in Queensland. They have maintained that position despite regular lobbying by the QMSA Committee. A few individual Sheds, located in marginal electorates, have received generous State funding that was not subject to the usual Grant Application processes, while other Sheds in the same electorates missed out.

(qldmensshed.org/page32364/QMSA-History.aspx)

Greg (Ex-Member) commented negatively about the lack of newsletters and the overall worth of the former QMSA board members:

They're [newsletters] out of date. They're old news. Not worth chasing up. What's the purpose of the Queensland Board? If there's better communication, we'd feel more connected to the rest of the men in Australia. We'd feel like a family. It's just not happening. It's a fractured association. Gold Coast doesn't know what Cairns is doing. We don't feel like we belong; we're not connected. We need better communication to feel more connected to the rest of the Australian men.

Sam (Shed 2 Office Holder) concurred:

All this argie-bargie about the QMSA board – we don't want it driven top down, we want it bottom up. There should be a regional governing body, but we're in zones and we haven't got a Darling Downs zone so we have no close liaison with any Sheds.

Thanks to the election of a new QMSA board in November 2017, issues raised by regional and rural Sheddors are being attended to in a timely manner. In January 2018, a Darling Downs zone representative was newly elected.

7.4.3. Conclusion.

With an ageing population, there will be a growing need for older men to help and sustain one another. Membership sustainability benefits by virtue of the fact that self-monitoring of future programming was an important issue for both TOMNET and individual Sheds as well as QMSA.

Section 7.4 has addressed matters of membership understandings adopted by TOMNET and Men's Sheds. Table 7.8 provides a summary of the benefits of and barriers to sustainability presented regarding Membership.

Table 7.8

Summary of the Benefits and Barriers Related to MEMBERSHIP (statements are not paired)

BENEFITS	BARRIERS
TOMNET evolved from a welfare-based model where men were dependent on the organisational expertise of others to a more sustainable, independent, grassroots model.	Some new members may have viewed TOMNET as being too much of a commitment.
TOMNET remained focused on the needs of each of the generational cohorts.	Sustainability may have been jeopardised by the fact that the average age of the membership of both organisations was over 65 years.
TOMNET intermittently implemented a member survey to evaluate the programs as surety that the needs of the men were being accommodated.	Both organisations were prey to political expediency and the whims of governmental foci.
TOMNET affiliates and individual Men's Sheds were set up to be independent entities so they were not dependent on the rise and fall of parent groups such as the TOMNET Centre or AMSA/QMSA.	Issues could occur with communication between Sheds in a state-wide area as large as Queensland (1.853 million km ²).
Some Sheddors visited other Sheds to observe program implementation and took away new operational knowledge to apply at their home Shed.	Services offered by volunteers fluctuated in effectiveness.
The profile of both organisations was raised through their email newsletter network and through social media forums such as Facebook and Twitter.	
The intentional giving and receiving of learning exchanges with other members may lead to a state of self-actualisation.	

7.5. Summary of the Chapter

The TOMNET model is sustainable in that it is not reliant on shed space, although it does require a hub or a central headquarters to house staff members and as a meeting point for members' social activities such as cards. The programs are transferrable to both rural and urban environments. Workplace health and safety regulations do not apply as there is no equipment used on the premises. The TOMNET model would be unsustainable if funding were unattainable. Programs would be organised by volunteers as there would be no paid staff members. The group would then revert to a purely social gathering, which would meet at the whim of the men. By contrast, Laurence (TOMNET Centre Past Counsellor) attributed the ongoing success of TOMNET to the following two points:

1. “The fact that I was an older man myself was important.
2. [We had a] supportive founding group of core members who were mates – [this] transferred to the group.”

In this statement, Laurence touched on two issues around sustainability. Point 1 was his experiential knowledge of the psyche of an older man, and as such he was able to recognise the needs of his peers and to implement programs in such a way that they were appealing to the target group of men over 50. Point 2 focused on mateship and respect – two of the cornerstones of the TOMNET ethos that are still adhered to today.

Laurence made a final point about the negativity that the founding group encountered during the initial launch of TOMNET: “[People thought we were] doomed to failure because its fundamental premise was flawed”. This reference to what Laurence described as “assumptive bias” is an important one. It reflects a community’s damaging stereotypical thinking about older men and their lack of ability to generate a positive and supportive environment for other older men. The assumptions may include:

- that older men are incapable of forming a solid organisation;
- that older men would not be interested in being part of a community with specific aims and goals directed at older men; and
- the need for such an organisation is non-existent or non-essential.

This bias is caustic and prejudicial, and actively challenges the sustainability of an innovative idea before it has had time to take root in the community. It is also erroneous and has been proven wrong by the fact that TOMNET (formed in the year 2001) is still fully operational after nearly two decades. Iwu, Kapondoro, Twum-Darko, and Tengeh (2015) investigated the determinants of sustainability in not-for-profit organisations. Their research identified that one of the elements of an effective organisation was “the full achievement of its mandate” (p. 9560). In this case, the TOMNET mandate of older men supporting older men was ascertained to be viable.

The sustainability of AMSA and QMSA organisational boards is reliant on member satisfaction. QMSA has listened to its members and is undergoing a philosophical transformation in its approach from a men’s health focus to advocating as agencies of social and community change by way of mentoring other Sheds.

The sustainability of individual Sheds is more nuanced and complicated. Golding (2015) cited a number of impediments to the viability of individual Sheds, including: maintaining Shed harmony; member involvement on an ongoing basis; committee succession; attracting community support; and identifying the role of the Shed in the community and with its members (p. 387). Golding (2015) further observed that:

Once a Shed is established, keeping it sustainable becomes a key issue, a phenomenon identified by experienced shedders as “the five year itch”. This is unsurprising given the high dependence on a volunteer base, the very low level of ongoing Shed funding, the difficulties of meeting expressed demand from men and the community, together with safety ‘red tape’, management and succession problems. (p. 388)

Sustainability was identified as an important issue by the AMSA Community Engagement Manager, who presented a paper at the National Men's Shed Conference in 2015 entitled “Threats to the Future of Men’s Sheds”. A checklist was posted on the former QMSA website urging Shedders to consider these “threats” to the management of their own Sheds:

“Threat 1 Loss of ownership and self-determination at the local level

Threat 2 Lack of genuine democratic processes within the Shed

Threat 3 Bureaucratisation and Interference

Threat 4 Over formalisation/over prescribing

Threat 5 Service focussing - Men's Sheds are NOT a service for men but provide activities organised BY men

Threat 6 Turning Sheds into Health Services Centres

Threat 7 Profit focussed

Threat 8 Non-inclusiveness

Threat 9 Inadequate Insurance Cover

Threat 10 Accidents and Injuries

Threat 11 Poor Governance

Threat 12 Self-important ‘Peacocks’”. (n.p.)

(qldmensshed.org/SiteFiles/qldmensshedorgau/questionnaire-threats-to-mens-sheds.pdf)

An emerging global phenomenon in the form of a café/workshop may present a barrier to the expansion of Men’s Sheds. The first Repair Café was established in

Amsterdam in 2009. It is a place where visitors may repair any personal broken items at a local participating café free of charge. Tools and materials are provided and “expert volunteers” (repaircafe.org/en/about, n.p.) are on hand to assist. “It’s an ongoing learning process” (repaircafe.org/en/about, n.p.). DIY books are provided for inspiration and self-knowledge (repaircafe.org/en/about). The concept of a café that offers an opportunity for patrons to restore their own items has gained international traction. In 2017 there were 1,450 Repair Cafes worldwide (repaircafe.org/en/2017-a-good-repair-year/).

The Remakery” in Edinburgh, Scotland offers its patrons an opportunity to avail themselves of “repair surgery” conducted by a professional on Thursday evenings. Classes are offered in “sewing, book-binding, upholstery, woodwork, upcycling and finishing techniques, furniture repair, box-making, and more”. Workbench space for DIY repairs can also be hired. Volunteer opportunities are also offered (edinburghremakery.org.uk/about-us/).

Repairs Cafes threaten the livelihood of Men’s Sheds in that men may decide to avow themselves of the free services offered by the café rather than pay for a Men’s Shed membership. Also, the café tools and materials are available at any time of the week rather than a set number of times and days. Similarly the Remakery offers professional repair work, thus saving time and effort.

Table 7.9 provides a summary of the benefits and barriers related to sustainability with regard to TOMNET.

Table 7.9

Summary of the Benefits and Barriers Related to the Sustainability of TOMNET

BENEFITS	BARRIERS
TOMNET was not reliant on shed space.	Grants to maintain paid staff members were competitive and not readily accessible.
TOMNET’s model was easily transferable to rural and urban locations.	TOMNET was not recognised nationally.
TOMNET’s model had the need for only minimal workplace health and safety regulations.	TOMNET required a hub or a central headquarters.
TOMNET’s model did not require the purchase of equipment.	
TOMNET maintained a high profile in the local community.	
TOMNET had paid employees for grant writing.	
TOMNET upheld a commitment to the monitoring of program effectiveness.	
TOMNET offered a range of programs for membership involvement.	
TOMNET’s programs were specifically implemented to help men in danger of suicide ideation.	
Friendships formed at TOMNET continued outside the organisation.	
Tangible and intangible learning outcomes were offered through member interactions.	

Table 7.10 provides a summary of the benefits and barriers related to sustainability with regard to Men’s Sheds.

Table 7.10

Summary of the Benefits and Barriers Related to the Sustainability of Men’s Sheds

BENEFITS	BARRIERS
Men’s Shed members were committed to a degree of volunteer work.	Sheds were vulnerable to closure after five years because of the “five year itch” (Golding, 2015, p. 388).
Men’s Sheds maintained a high profile in the local community.	The global rise of DIY repair cafés may pose a threat to Men’s Sheds.
Friendships were formed within the Shed and continued after Shed hours.	AMSA was estranged from several state organisations.
Men’s Sheds had a positive physical and mental health focus.	
The newly formed QMSA recognised and focused on the need for connectivity between Sheds throughout Queensland.	
The newly formed QMSA recognised and focused on the needs of the grassroots membership throughout Queensland.	
Tangible and intangible learning outcomes were offered through member interactions.	

Figure 7.6 synthesises the themes presented when answering Research Questions 1, 2 and 3.



Figure 7.6. A summary of the themes from Research Questions 1, 2 and 3

Chapter 8 presents the conclusion to the thesis.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

“Men find their value in what they can offer to society.”

(Barry, TOMNET Centre Current Member)

8.1. Overview of the Chapter

This chapter serves to revisit and expand the narrative around which my thesis has been built. I restate the aims of my study, and I include a structural flow of the main chapters in Section 8.2. I then provide some answers to my three research questions in Section 8.3. Section 8.4 focuses on the study’s multiple contributions to knowledge, with attention being paid to the four areas of theoretical, methodological, policy and practice knowledge. Section 8.5 provides recommendations for further action. The final section (Section 8.6) revisits the personal note written in Chapter 1 (Section 1.8), and discusses my enlarged understandings of the research topic as I come to the end of this particular examination of the phenomenon of ageing and older men. Figure 8.1 provides an overview of the design of this chapter.

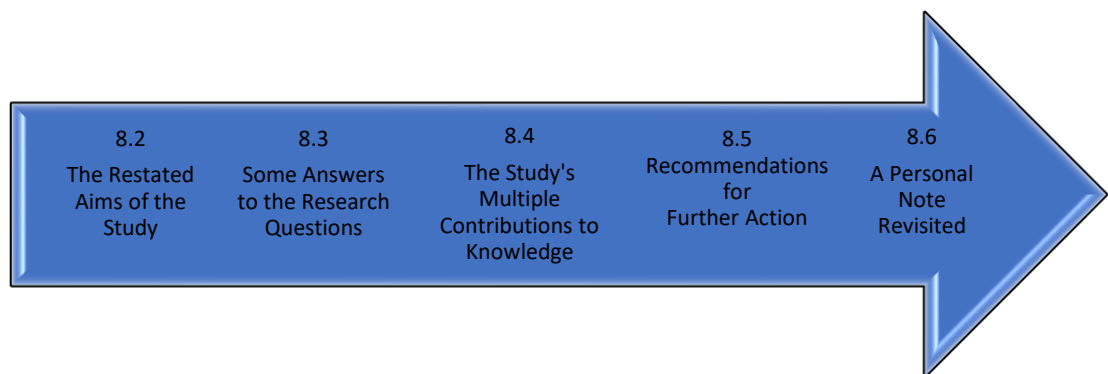


Figure 8.1. A flowchart of the progression of Chapter 8

8.2. The Restated Aims of the Study

In 2016, 806 older Australian men committed suicide. Further, men over 85 have the highest suicide rates in the world (mindframe-media.info/for-media/reporting-suicide/facts-and-stats, 2017, n.p.). Why do we in Australia, as a first world nation and a middle global power, ignore these devastating ‘silent statistics’? I still have not uncovered the definitive answer to this. What I have uncovered is a movement that seeks to go beyond the simplistic and somewhat

insulting question: “So what?” Working with men in TOMNET and Men’s Sheds, I have discovered that the statistics, alarming as they are, have provided a mobilising force for a generation of men to take that simple question one step further and to ask: “So what are we going to do about it?” That accountability is the essence of this thesis.

The research problem was posed in Chapter 1 (please refer to Section 1.1):

“Time to find a new freedom”: TOMNET and Men’s Sheds - Meeting older men’s contributive needs in regions within South East and South West Queensland, Australia?

In seeking an answer to this research problem, three research questions were then presented (please refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.6):

- **Research Question 1:** How does the TOMNET and Men’s Sheds’ organisational leadership seek to implement the design of their programs and philosophies so that they best fit the contributive needs of older men?
- **Research Question 2:** How have the members of TOMNET and Men’s Sheds experienced and engaged with their programs and philosophies vis-à-vis members’ contributive needs?
- **Research Question 3:** To what extent are TOMNET and Men’s Sheds important vehicles for the sustainable delivery of the contributive needs of older men in the community?

Out of the ashes of the statistics on suicide rates for older men, and the resultant effects of the marginalisation of older men, emerged the formation of male-only organisations such as TOMNET and Men’s Sheds (please refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.5), which were specifically established to ameliorate the issues surrounding men’s mental health as identified on the main page of their websites.

“Our aim is to reach out to older men who are lonely, isolated, and in need of friendship.” (tomnet.org.au/)

“The Men’s Shed movement has now become one of the most powerful tools in addressing health and wellbeing and helping men to once again become valued and productive members of our community.” (mensshed.org/what-is-a-mens-shed/)

An understanding and acknowledgement of the pivotal role of contributive needs are foundational to the premise of this thesis (please refer to Chapter 3 Section

3.3). Research designed around a situated and ethically appropriate investigation was conducted (please refer to Chapter 4) into these two groups formed by men, for men.

Each of the research questions focused on one institutional aspect of the two research organisations. Firstly, I surveyed, interviewed and observed the leadership cohort of each group and examined how they implemented programs to fulfil members' contributive needs (please refer to Chapter 5). Secondly, I surveyed, interviewed and observed the grassroots members to investigate their engagement and satisfaction with those programs (please refer to Chapter 6). Finally, I surveyed, interviewed and observed the leadership and the grassroots membership to examine the sustainability of the programs offered (please refer to Chapter 7). Figure 8.2 illustrates the structural flow of the thesis.



Figure 8.2. The structural flow of the thesis

8.3. Some Answers to the Research Questions

Most of the answers to the research questions below reside in the benefits of belonging to a salutogenic community that fulfils the contributive needs of older men. This in turn provides older men with a viable alternative to suicide ideation.

Research Question 1: How does the TOMNET and Men's Sheds' organisational leadership seek to implement the design of their programs and philosophies so that they best fit the contributive needs of older men?

Targeted programs and inclusive philosophies ensured that these two local, male-only groups provided a place where older men felt welcomed, valued and purposeful. Organisations such as TOMNET and those Men's Sheds with a male-only ethos provide an important choice for older men in a suite of options offered to them within the community. This environment serves to deliver a community where older men can feel comfortable and associate with like-minded peers who share similar histories and world views. Older men's contributive needs are being met through authentic fellowship with others, which leads to purposeful living and a decrease in

the individual isolation and demographic marginalisation of this cohort of men over 50 years of age.

Programs offered by the leadership of the two groups provided frameworks around which members were able to feel valued and less socially isolated and, as a result, less marginalised within the community. The opportunity to participate in structured mentoring/volunteering programs creates community capacity building both within the organisation itself and outside in the wider community. These programs provide agency for older men to serve their community purposefully whilst raising the profile of an ageing demographic. Through mentoring others and/or volunteering within their organisation or outside in the wider community, men feel valued and of service. They connect physically and mentally with an environment that values their wisdom.

The structural composition of each group allows self-determination through an emphasis on the individuality and autonomy of each leadership system where the membership decides on the programming and direction of the organisation.

Research Question 2: How have the members of TOMNET and Men's Sheds experienced and engaged with their programs and philosophies vis-à-vis members' contributive needs?

TOMNET and Men's Sheds provide a practical resolution to the issues surrounding older men through their continued interactions with the external, wider community as well as through their programs caring for the internal community members of each organisation.

Two-fifths of the TOMNET respondents and one-quarter of the Men's Sheds' respondents admitted to feelings of social isolation and a lack of purpose before joining their group. Over 90% of the members of each group felt that, after joining, their contributive needs were being met. Nearly 100% of Likert scale survey respondents indicated that they knew the purpose of the formation of their group, and that they derived a lot of personal value from the programming of the group. Over 85% of members felt a heightened sense of achievement since joining their organisation. Over 95% of respondents felt a sense of connection and belonging.

These data demonstrated McClusky's (1974) Margin Theory in practice. The "load" (p. 329) of life stressors for older men that ultimately lead to suicide ideation

can be significantly reduced through the “power” (p. 329) of the membership of groups such as TOMNET and Men’s Sheds, thus resulting in the fulfilment of their contributive needs.

Research Question 3: To what extent are TOMNET and Men’s Sheds important vehicles for the sustainable delivery of the contributive needs of older men in the community?

TOMNET, QMSA and AMSA are dedicated to the progression of the respective organisations and to servicing the needs of present and future membership cohorts. They are actively seeking consultation with grassroots membership as well as with interested others in the form of future members, other community groups and governmental agencies. The benefits of both organisations far outweigh the barriers to sustainability in that the needs of the members of each group are being met intentionally by the leadership and the grassroots members themselves, and they are visible and positively acknowledged within the wider community.

Based on data collected and examining the answers to the research questions, an affirmative response to the crucial question posed in the thesis subtitle and to the three research problems was elicited by the participants themselves. TOMNET and Men’s Sheds do, in fact, meet older men's contributive needs in regions within South East and South West Queensland, Australia.

8.4. The Study’s Multiple Contributions to Knowledge

8.4.1. Theoretical knowledge.

Peterson and Martin (2015) stated that critical gerontologists tend to evaluate based on: “...nonempirical sources often drawn from literature, philosophy, or personal narrative” (p. 6). As per Boulton-Lewis’ (2012b) proposal of the necessity for a “new research paradigm” (p. 30), personal narrative was the driver of this qualitative, interpretive thesis. I have attempted to give a public voice to men who normally would not actively seek to have one, but who nonetheless recognise that it is essential that they are now heard. Gendered gerontological scholarship focusing explicitly on older men is limited. The narrow range of research conducted to date serves as an opportunity for the participants in my study to be leaders in this field of gerontological enquiry. In doing so, they stand on the shoulders of such eminent

philosophers as Plato, Socrates and Plutarch, who also theorised that the knowledge and skills accrued throughout life were the resultant benefits of the ageing process and should be utilised for the betterment of the community (Pachana, 2016).

My contribution to theoretical knowledge can be found in the investigation of multiple data sources that have produced a triangulation of the connections among Margin Theory (McClusky, 1974), as was discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1; the lived experiences of masculinity and ageing with purpose in the 21st century, as was discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7; and the Older Men's Contributive Needs and Identity Framework presented in Chapter 3, Section 3.4. Theoretical knowledge such as this framework provides new insights into the concept of contributive needs and the manner in which it helps us to understand theories of ageing and masculinity. This framework also proposes new theoretical knowledge that can be explored in the quest to address the causes of suicide ideation in older men. This contribution is illustrated in Figure 8.3.

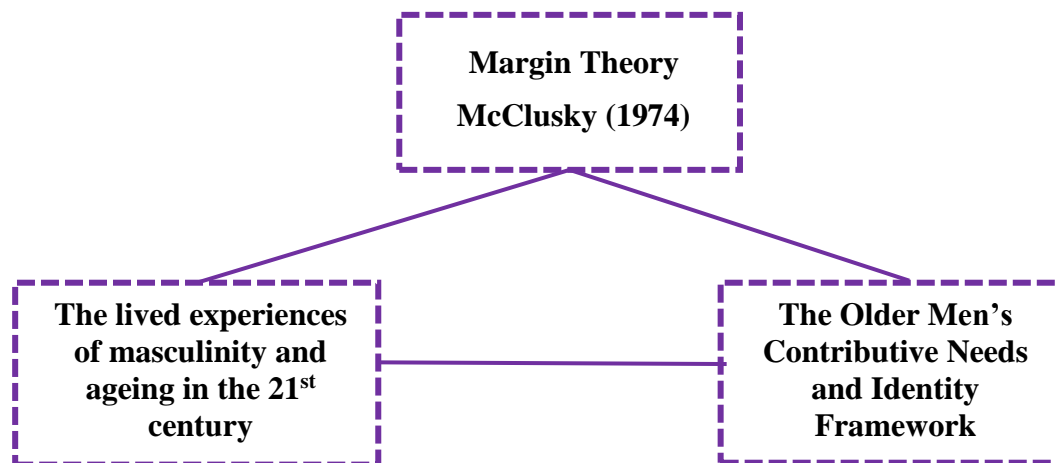


Figure 8.3. Contribution to theoretical knowledge

8.4.2. Methodological knowledge.

Research is a process of systematic inquiry. It involves a collaboration between the researcher and the participants that should be advantageous for both parties. Respect and trust between stakeholders are paramount and must be established as soon as possible for the research to be most effective. This was essential for me as an older woman conducting research about older men. I was acutely aware of my biases and assumptions. I went to great lengths to ensure that these were acknowledged and

addressed through reflection in my journal, my professional attitude and my authentic interactions with the participants. Paradoxically, at no time was I challenged by any of the participants about my expertise or subject knowledge as I was conducting the research.

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argued that there is a “space between” (p. 60) the binary of “insider” and “outsider” researcher positioning when conducting qualitative research. An “insider” (p. 55) is one who connects with the participant population in her or his research on a fundamental level; they may share the same characteristics, status or experiences. In other words, the researcher is part of that research cohort and has automatic acceptance into that group. Conversely, an “outsider” (p. 57) cannot identify with many if any commonalities with the group being researched. My research status occupied the third space known as “the space between” (p. 60) where I was “with” (p. 60) the participants and focused on delivering openness, honesty and authenticity. I remained acutely attentive to the narratives of each of the participants, and I “...committed to accurately and adequately representing...” (p. 59) their lived experiences and truths.

My contribution to methodological knowledge was demonstrated in the design and implementation of an ethical, respectful and reciprocal research process applicable to older men. This process is summarised in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1

An Ethical, Respectful and Reciprocal Research Process Applicable to Older Men

ETHICAL	RESPECTFUL	RECIPROCAL
I assured the participants of my serious intent.	I ensured the comfort of the interviewees.	I made draft copies of each thesis chapter freely available for critique by any of the stakeholders.
I maintained professionalism.	I established rapport with the participants.	I disseminated relevant information gleaned at conferences to both organisations.
I always adhered to the ethical requirements of the university.	I supported the interviewees during the interviews.	After reflecting on my research, some participants have expressed a desire, and in certain cases a commitment, to live a more purposeful life in retirement.
I upheld the integrity and impartiality of the research process.	I followed the protocols of TOMNET and of each Men's Shed.	Board members of the newly formed QMSA have appointed me as an advisor and an honorary member of their organisation.
I practised the concept of situated ethics as described by Somekh and Lewin (2011).	I visited the organisations regularly to update them on the progress of my research.	

8.4.3. Policy knowledge.

It is crucial that public policy engages in the positioning of affirmative agency, and reinforces the positive and dynamic role that an ageing Australia can perform for our country's future. Politicians and other public figures are required to insist that there is more to older age than welfare needs and the delivery of health services that drain the public coffers. Research such as that presented in this thesis is essential in making recommendations to prioritise financial resources to indicate and affirm meaningful and relevant interventions in relation to the stressors associated with

ageing. These interventions should be locale specific as it is futile imposing policy that older people find pointless, complicated and impractical.

This study's contribution to policy knowledge includes awareness raised by considering older men, ageing and suicide as a wicked problem. Wicked problems are characterised as complex challenges that resist simplistic, definitive solutions (Buchanan, 1992; Conklin, 2009; Kreuter, De Rosa, Howze, & Baldwin, 2004; Manning & Reinecke, 2016). Conklin (2009) posited that: "The best way to grasp shared understanding is to consider what happens when it is missing" (p. 18).

Authentic research needs to be conducted if our policy makers are to keep abreast of the practical impact of an ageing population on our society. I contend that "what's missing" (Conklin, 2009, p. 18) has been amply demonstrated in Australia's annual suicide statistics, and yet it has not been a widespread topic of consideration. The continued lack of a shared understanding of the impact of the 'silent statistics' of suicide on older men thus poses a wicked problem that has historically been ignored by policy makers.

Conklin (2009) suggested that there are six elements of wicked problems. Table 8.2 presents an application of these elements to my research.

Table 8.2

The Application of the Characteristics of Conklin's (2009) Wicked Problems to this Study

CONKLIN (2009, p. 19)	MY RESEARCH (2018)
“You don’t understand the problem until you have developed a solution.”	The issue of older men and suicide is defined by its complexity. Potential solutions are continually being reframed and reworked, such as those presented in this thesis.
“There is [a] no stopping rule.”	There is no definitive timeframe for the solution of this issue. The problem-solving process continues as long as the inflated suicide rates exist.
“Solutions are not right or wrong.”	There is no one formulaic solution; every man is different.
“Each [problem] is essentially unique and novel.”	Embedded in this overriding issue is any number of smaller situational challenges that exist in urban, regional and rural communities.
“Every solution is a ‘one-shot operation’.”	The impact of one “solution” may generate a multitude of other problems. This was highlighted by the barriers to sustainability presented in Chapter 7.
“There is no given alternative solution.”	There is no one ‘right’ answer. Workable solutions should be continually sought and implemented by all stakeholders, including policy makers and the men themselves.

8.4.4. Practice knowledge.

At the macro level, this thesis adds new knowledge to this understudied age and gender group despite the ongoing statistical data about suicide. Information based on the proclivities of ageing as they apply to this specific gender and to these specific generations is well overdue. This research has sought to acknowledge and understand the existence of the aforementioned suicide rates. It presents a positive, alternative narrative that extols the virtues of ageing as an older male rather than the populist global crisis discourse of an ageing society that stereotypes valueless, pitiful, older men. It outlines a practical alternative for older men (and for wider

society) who have ‘bought into’ the nonsensical dialogue of doom focusing on the scaremongers’ predictions of the younger generations’ financial and social competition with the older generations. These forms of useless rhetoric and their associated terminology, such as “age quake” (Beales & Petersen, 1999, p. 201; Biegler, 2015, n.p.), “silver tsunami” (Kearns, 2018, n.p.) and “apocalyptic demography” (Gleason, 2017, p. 1), are deeply offensive.

At the meso level, it is vital that researchers add to an understanding of the older demographic at large as it embarks on a longer lifespan and attempts to pursue a positive and more engaged commitment to community capacity building. Participants in this research are the role models not only for older men of the present and the future but also for older women as they too engage in, and retire from, career building and long-term, paid employment.

At the micro level, knowledge about TOMNET and Men’s Sheds provides insights into the social understandings of not only this demographic but also other marginalised cohorts within the community. Examination of the programs offered by TOMNET and Men’s Sheds delivers practical solutions to the isolation of older men and the resultant suicide ideation.

Examination of the mechanisms around which TOMNET and Men’s Sheds function provide positive and sustainable examples of the elements of the third contributive need and its four lenses (please refer to Section 1.4).

These four lenses-

- to “experience the need to give”
- a “desire to be useful and wanted”
- a “desire to be of service”
- a “desire to share the cumulative experience of one’s life with others”

(University of Wyoming, 2018, n.p.) are interwoven and are equally necessary in the successful delivery of programs suited to older men. Community capacity building is enacted by individuals who positively experience these elements. I have utilised these lenses as a springboard to develop The Older Men’s Contributive Needs and Identity Framework (please refer Section 3.4.1). This framework equation denotes an equal weighting of each element.

8.5. Recommendations for Further Action

This section is divided into two subsections. Section 8.5.1 presents broad recommendations for further action to be carried out by policy makers and organisations, or individuals more suited to the enactment of policy. Section 8.5.2 presents specific investigations within the boundaries and capabilities of a sole researcher such as myself.

8.5.1. Broad recommendations for policy.

It would be beneficial for governmental policy makers to direct public discourse away from the scaremongering rhetoric of portraying ageing as a medical problem and a drain on public coffers. Politicians should concentrate on the benefits of an ageing population and actively encourage older Australians to join community groups such as TOMNET and Men's Sheds. Local, state and federal governments could revise funding models in favour of these not-for-profit groups. Short-term, piecemeal, drip feed and trickle-down funding modalities mitigate against the optimum functioning of organisations relying on government assistance.

Not all psychologists and social workers demonstrate understanding of how to go about interacting with older men. More practical knowledge of gender differences should be included in university courses. Older men should be invited to speak in lectures and be engaged in online course interviews. Professional educators across all fields and disciplines should be encouraged to act as agents in the promotion of the awareness of older men's issues.

8.5.2. Broad recommendations for sole researchers.

TOMNET is an under-researched and under-recognised organisation that benefits the local Toowoomba community significantly. The following research projects would be valuable additions to the knowledge base surrounding older men who are members of TOMNET.

Emerging research about this group focuses on the intergenerational mentoring occurring between a relatively small number of TOMNET members and the Toowoomba Flexi School. Little inquiry has been made with those members who choose to utilise their volunteering capacities elsewhere, or not at all.

TOMNET is currently exploring the notion of lowering the entrance age to 40 years as opposed to 50 years. A longitudinal study of the examination of the benefits of and barriers to this policy/program change would be worthwhile in terms of the effect on membership as far as the take-up of offers, the impact on the dynamics of the existing cohort and profile recognition within the wider community are concerned.

Exploration of Laurence's (TOMNET Past Counsellor) concept of "assumptive bias" around ageing and masculinity beckons further investigation as the precursor to suicide ideation in older men. Specific data surrounding the voluntary contributions that older men make in the community are scarce and difficult to find.

In contrast to TOMNET, the Men's Shed movement is a growing field of research. Rich data have been mined from Men's Sheds in Australia and globally. It is an exciting time for Men's Sheds in Queensland as QMSA seeks to amalgamate with the other three associations estranged from AMSA – i.e., WASA, VMSA and TMSA. This is an ideal opportunity to chronicle the rise of a separate men's movement within Australia as it evolves.

As Men's Sheds develop around the world, research into the structural and philosophical comparisons with third world countries would be globally relevant and useful. I am interested in this research from the perspective of social entitlement, and I would like to visit the Kenyan Men's Sheds in Africa to investigate the Shed operations in that country to compare and contrast structure and philosophies. Specifically, do they constitute a new Men's Shed model that benefits the communities in which they are located, or are they an entitled franchise that services the needs of a privileged few?

Also a South African Men's Shed is about to be established in Natal in the back of a scout hall. Several challenges have been expressed by the initiator of the project. This is the second time that he has attempted to start a local Men's Shed after visiting a number of Australian Men's Sheds. He has discerned a lack of interest in funding from the government and apathy from the older male retirees in his communities who he suggests may be temporarily exhausted by the political environment in which they were previously employed.

It is also timely to investigate the older female perspective of Shed membership. In what ways do their Sheds fulfil their contributive needs, if at all? Are they simply looking to improve their skills in construction, or do they want to make a connection

with other women and men? Are they concerned about the opinions of others as to their stereotyped reasons for joining (e.g. ‘husband hunting’)?

Finally, an evaluation of purpose-built Sheds such as the South Brisbane Autism Hub for fathers of children with autism (ahrc.eq.edu.au/projects/mens-shed) would be a worthwhile project. As a former teacher, I would like to explore the support that this Shed provides for men and their families.

Furthermore, this study has highlighted the complexity of inferring from older men’s stated comments about feeling valued. Accordingly, follow-up research could usefully attend more directly and comprehensively to this important point by exploring explicitly with older men the multiple potential influences on the extent to which they feel valued, including their ways of interacting with multiple others.

8.6. A Personal Note Revisited

This study has enlarged my understandings of the importance of a purposeful retirement. As a long-term educationalist who made teaching her career for 41 years, the notion of ‘What’s next?’ loomed large after the euphoria of the act of retirement faded. This is where the genders concur. Where we differ is in our choices. By and large, women plan for intellectual stimulation in their retirement in ways that include networking through family and friendship and interest groups. It would seem that up until the last two decades men have not generally seen this as a priority, and have become socially isolated and depressed. Thus, my research has granted me a greater insight into recognition of the divide between male and female needs and wants and ways of thinking (psyche).

The diverse ways that men ‘do’ masculinity and the importance of multiple truths have been highlighted to me through the narratives that the participants shared with me. It behoves men and women to listen to their stories and to learn from them. A lack of understanding is dangerous, and the negative effects of it send out ripples into society at large. This is not to say that women do not suffer and, even though it is statistically proven that in general males are three times more likely to commit suicide than women, alarmingly Lifeline (2018) reported that, during the past 10 years, there has been an upsurge in suicides by females (lifeline.org.au).

Increasingly, women find themselves in dire emotional and physical straits as relationships break down and as money for their needs is scarce. Indeed, the homelessness of older women is becoming more and more prevalent (McDonald, 2017). Communities and politicians need to listen to the narratives of older dispossessed and isolated individuals, both men and women.

Thanks to the generosity and openness of the participants, this research has provided me with a privileged front row seat for watching the mobilisation of a whole generational cohort. These men have sought and implemented solutions for the scourge of the silent statistics that plagued their generation and those that preceded it. Through their insight and hard work, they have built national and global organisations that provide older men with a sense of belonging, contribution and purpose, and a positive alternative to the finality of suicide.

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APPENDIX A

DATA SOURCES

1. Fieldnote Sample
2. Likert Scale- TOMNET (please note that the document has been adapted to a smaller scale to fit the confines of the thesis margins)
3. Likert Scale- Men's Shed (please note that the document has been adapted to a smaller scale to fit the confines of the thesis margins)
4. Springboard questions for semi-structured interviews and focus groups

1. Fieldnote Sample

30/08/2016

Men's Shed 4

Comments from members

- Younger men come and use the facilities and then move on
- Quiet/ subtle buddy system- people are quite willing to mentor other members
- Behaviour of visitors- perception that older men are incapable
- We have a few guys who don't realise they're retired- the Commercial Imperative does not exist here

Observations

- Morning tea out in the open on picnic tables- men mingle freely- do formalised tables make a difference in interactions?
- Huge area with a lot going on- dynamic
- Higher socio ec area

2. TOMNET LIKERT SCALE

AGE _____

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
PEER SUPPORT					
1. I feel valued and accepted by other members of TOMNET.					
2. I feel welcomed at TOMNET.					
3. The staff at TOMNET is interested in my wellbeing.					
4. Other TOMNET members are interested in my wellbeing.					
5. I can talk to men who understand my problems.					
UNDERSTAND GOALS					
6. I understand why TOMNET was formed.					
7. My knowledge and experience are valued by TOMNET.					
8. My knowledge and experience are valued by the staff at TOMNET.					
9. I get a lot out of the TOMNET programs.					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
PROMOTES WELLBEING					
10. I have made friends since I joined TOMNET.					
11. I was lonely before I joined TOMNET.					
12. I didn't know what to do with myself before I joined TOMNET.					
13. I am proud of what I have achieved since I joined TOMNET.					
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT					
14. I felt part of my community before joining TOMNET					
15. I feel part of my community after joining TOMNET					
16. I feel like I make a useful contribution in my community now.					
17. I felt ignored by my community before I joined TOMNET.					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
COMMUNITY AWARENESS					
18. People in my community know about TOMNET.					
19. Toowoomba people understand what TOMNET's about.					
PROGRAM DESIGNERS					
20. I can tell that the TOMNET staff understands the needs of older men.					
21. I feel that the TOMNET staff knows what it's like to be an older man.					

Is there something I should have asked but didn't???? Please feel free to make additional comments-

3. MEN'S SHED LIKERT SCALE

AGE _____

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
PEER SUPPORT					
1. I feel valued and accepted by other members of my local Men's Shed.					
2. I feel welcomed at my local Men's Shed.					
3. Other members at my local Men's Shed are interested in my wellbeing.					
5. I can talk to men who understand my problems at my local Men's Shed.					
UNDERSTAND GOALS					
6. I understand why Men's Shed was formed.					
7. My knowledge and experience are valued by my local Men's Shed.					
9. I get a lot out of going to at my local Men's Shed.					
PROMOTES WELLBEING					
10. I have made friends since I joined my local Men's Shed.					
11. I was lonely before I joined my local Men's Shed.					
12. I didn't know what to do with myself before I joined my local Men's Shed.					
13. I am proud of what I have achieved since I joined my local Men's Shed.					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT					
14. I felt part of my community before joining my local Men's Shed.					
15. I feel part of my community after joining my local Men's Shed.					
16. I feel like I make a useful contribution in my community now.					
17. I felt ignored by my community before I joined my local Men's Shed.					
COMMUNITY AWARENESS					
18. People in my community know about my local Men's Shed.					
19. My community understands what my local Men's Shed is about.					

Is there something I should have asked but didn't???? Please feel free to make additional comments-

4. SPRINGBOARD QUESTIONS – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

How have you found retirement?

Was the transition difficult?

Why did you join TOMNET / Men's Sheds?

Why are you a member of a male-only group- advantages / disadvantages?

What do you think are the differences between women and men?

What do you think is the public perception of your group and older men in general?

Do you think there's a difference between the needs of older men in the country and those in the city?

If you could speak to the Minister for Health what would you say?

How effective is AMSA / QMSA?

How sustainable do you think your group is?

APPENDIX B

ETHICS DOCUMENTATION

1. Participant Information Sheet for Questionnaire
2. Consent Form for Interview
3. Consent Form for Focus Group



Participant Information for USQ Research Project Questionnaire

Project Details

Title of Project: **“Time to find a new freedom”: TOMNET and Men's Sheds - Meeting older men's contributive needs in regions within South East and South West Queensland, Australia?**

Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H15REA215

HREA

Research Team Contact Details

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Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a PhD.

The purpose of this project is to investigate:

- the effectiveness of the TOMNET (The Older Men's Network) and Men's Sheds programs in meeting the contributive needs of older men in regional Queensland.
- the TOMNET and Men's Sheds frameworks as vehicles for delivering sustainable and positive solutions to the issues surrounding the contributive needs of older men in the community.

The research team requests your assistance because you have first-hand knowledge of the organization.

Participation

Your participation will involve completion of a questionnaire that will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

Statements will be included in a Likert Scale focusing on five different areas. These are Peer Support (e.g. I feel valued and accepted by other members of TOMNET/ Men's Sheds.); Understanding the Goals of TOMNET/ Men's Sheds (e.g. I understand why TOMNET/ Men's Sheds were formed.); Promoting Well-being (e.g. I have made friends since I joined TOMNET/ Men's Sheds.); Community Involvement (e.g. I feel part of my community after joining TOMNET/ Men's Sheds); Community

Awareness (e.g. People in my community know about TOMNET/ Men's Sheds.); and, Program Design (e.g. I can tell that the TOMNET/ Men's Sheds administration understands the needs of older men.).

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Please note, that if you wish to withdraw from the project after you have submitted your responses, the Research Team are unable to remove your data from the project (unless identifiable information has been collected). If you do wish to withdraw from this project, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland or with TOMNET or Men's Sheds.

Expected Benefits

It is expected that this project will not directly benefit you in the near future. However, it may have some benefit to you when the study is completed. It is hoped that this study will go some way to add to the community's knowledge base of older men's contributive needs in general. Australia has a chance to be a world leader in this area of research, given the increased comparative longevity of our males, and where this positions us nationally and globally. Data collected from members and associated parties are essential for a number of reasons: firstly, to inform policy decisions on appropriate actions and interventions to benefit older Australian men that will support positive ageing; secondly, to analyze the factors and characteristics determining healthy ageing; and finally, to raise the profile of older men within the community and break down traditional stereotypes. The results of this evaluation will be used to publish reportable publications and will also be made available to the TOMNET and Men's Sheds' administrations and members.

Risks

Participation in this research project will involve giving up a minimal amount of your time.

Sometimes thinking about the sorts of issues raised in the questionnaire can create some uncomfortable or distressing feelings. If you need to talk to someone about this immediately please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14. You may also wish to consider consulting your General Practitioner (GP) for additional support.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy. Data collected in this research will be used in the future to publish reportable publications. A summary report will also be made available to the TOMNET and Men's Sheds' administrations and members.

Consent to Participate

The return of the completed questionnaire is accepted as an indication of your consent to participate in this project.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email ethics@usq.edu.au. The Ethics Coordinator is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.



Consent Form for USQ Research Project Interview

Project Details

Title of Project: "Time to find a new freedom": TOMNET and Men's Sheds - Meeting older men's contributive needs in regions within South East and South West Queensland, Australia?

Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H15REA215

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Mrs Deborah Mulligan
Email: d8280121@umail.usq.edu.au
Mobile: 0407152081

Supervisor Details

Professor Patrick Danaher
Email: patrick.danaher@usq.edu.au
Mobile: 0405636168

Statement of Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- Understand that the interview will be audio recorded.
- Understand that you will be provided with a copy of the transcript of the interview for my perusal and endorsement prior to inclusion of this data in the project.
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email ethics@usq.edu.au if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- Are over 18 years of age.
- Agree to participate in the project.

Participant Name

Participant Signature

Date

Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the interview.



Consent Form for USQ Research Project Focus Group

Project Details

Title of Project: **“Time to find a new freedom”: TOMNET and Men’s Sheds - Meeting older men’s contributive needs in regions within South East and South West Queensland, Australia?**
Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H15REA215

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Mrs Deborah Mulligan
Email: d8280121@umail.usq.edu.au
Mobile: 0407152081

Supervisor Details

Professor: Patrick Danaher
Email: patrick.danaher@usq.edu.au
Mobile: 0405636168

Statement of Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- Understand that the focus group will be audio recorded.
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email ethics@usq.edu.au if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- Are over 18 years of age.
- Agree to participate in the project.

Participant Name

Participant Signature

Date

Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the focus group.