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A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO A COMPREHENSIVE
COMMUNITY PROJECT:

A STUDY IN COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Psychiatry,
University of Auckland, 1978
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis was assisted by many people who contributed, knowingly or unknowingly, to the ideas, the methods and the results of the research. I am most grateful to Dr. John Raeburn, my supervisor, who contributed to the thesis through his direct involvement with the Birkdale Project, and through his interest in the research topic, the systems approach to programme evaluation. He also provided detailed criticism of drafts of this manuscript. Other professionally trained people also contributed to the ideas and methods of the research. They included Bev Barron, Felix Donnelly, Pete Dowick, Pat Mouton, Peter Pascoe, Peter Seer and Pera Webb. I also wish to thank Bill Barris, Chairman of the Birkdale Project Committee for the period of the research, and Ann Hartley, Project Coordinator during 1976 and the numerous Birkdale and Beachhaven residents who participated in the project. Also, I gratefully acknowledge the Medical Research Council who provided a research grant to Dr. John Raeburn in support of this research. Finally, I thank Susan Monro for her typing of this manuscript.
ABSTRACT

This thesis uses the concepts and methods of community psychology, and applies them to what is called here a "comprehensive community project". This is a project that undertakes to meet the needs of a community by fostering and strengthening the community's own resources. The objectives of the research were: (1) to establish a comprehensive community project in the Auckland suburbs of Birkdale and Beachhaven, and (2) to propose and test a model for project organization and evaluation. The model was derived from the systems approach to programme evaluation, which provides a reasoned and logical approach to all aspects of programme management. The model proposed involved systematic steps from initial programme planning to outcome measurement. The steps are, specifying the "system" or particular project, forming the values from which interventions would be derived, assessing needs and resources, setting annual goals for activities from the foregoing steps, allocating available resources to activities, implementing and reviewing activities, measuring outcome after one year, and feedback of this information for project improvement. Application of the model to the "Birkdale Project" showed that the model was relevant to management needs, and information yielded by application of the model was used in day-to-day decision making. Thus the model was instrumental in establishing the Birkdale Project, and in producing the vigorous project that resulted. In the first year a wide range of activities involving a significant portion of the population were provided to meet community needs, and almost all the Project's annual goals were attained. Although the project was established largely by paid professionally trained people, at the end of the research period the project was managed and run by non-professional residents. It was concluded that the systems approach is highly appropriate to the development of comprehensive community projects, and has general advantages to the wider field of community psychology as a method for practice and research.
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