Reference No. 39

Summarising: Daly, Henry & Smith, (2002), *Welfare and the domestic economy of Indigenous families: Policy implications from a longitudinal study*
Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990–2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

Title of Research:
Welfare and the domestic economy of Indigenous families: Policy implications from a longitudinal study

Research Publication:
CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 239/2002

Name of Researcher(s):
A.E. Daly, R. Henry and D.E. Smith

Time period:
1999–2001

Geographic location:
Kuranda, Qld, a part of ‘settled’ rural Australia, close to Cairns and Mareeba (Qld.)

Methodology:
This is a report at the end of a three year longitudinal study, commenced in 1999, using both qualitative and quantitative data gathering at each of three points in time - 1999, 2000 and 2001. Data gathering techniques included structured interviews, informal interviews or discussions and participant observation.

Aims:
The overall longitudinal study aimed to identify the factors influencing the delivery of welfare services and income payments to Indigenous families for the care of children, and to inform options for improving delivery of welfare payments and services. As part of this study:

- The purpose of this paper was to identify the role and impacts of welfare within the domestic economy of families.

Selected findings and insights:
This paper provides a detailed account of Indigenous households in a rural town:

- About half of all households in each of the three Kuranda sample waves contained three or more generations of related kin, and households approximating a nuclear family were rare. The kin boundaries of these extended families flow out of individual households, creating vital domestic linkages across households;

- The average household size was 6.5 persons, compared to an Australian average of 2.7 persons;

- Mobility was high - of 222 persons surveyed in 2000 and 2001, some 107 persons had moved from one residence to another (either in the households sampled or to another household). Such high mobility can impact on the domestic economy of households, resulting in unpredictable fluctuations in availability of cash and capital goods;
• Childcare was centred in the extended family rather than the household. Almost half of children moving between 2000 and 2001, did so with their primary carer(s), the other half moved to households within their kinship network. A similar pattern of child movement also occurred within much shorter time frames than the one year period;

• Welfare support and CDEP were the major sources of income for Indigenous adults in Kuranda: for 2001, only 12 of the 111 adults from the 29 households were on wages (that is, in mainstream employment, although only two were in full-time employment). Overall about 85 per cent of adults surveyed were dependent on some form of government support;

• There was community concern for the intergenerational reliance upon welfare and the related problems facing youth in the transition from school to work – of the 32 young people aged 17-25 years old present in two or more survey waves:
  • four moved into waged employment;
  • 10 stayed on CDEP for the three years and these included recent school leavers;
  • seven stayed on Abstudy; and
  • 11 recycled through various forms of government welfare payments.

Parents wanted the young people to be able to have a high school education and enter into the labour market so they might develop employment skills in local businesses, establish a career path, and gain a higher income. However the study suggests there are entrenched barriers to Indigenous youth securing access to locally available employment. Some of the barriers mentioned included lack of access to transport and reliable child-care, a general lack of local employment opportunities, and a perception that the wider community was not keen to employ Indigenous people even when jobs are available.

Educational implications:
The complexity of Indigenous family and household composition influences student learning through the extent to which family-based educational support can be provided – as evidenced by issues of overcrowding and types of child-care arrangements which influence home-study and availability of income for purchasing educational resources. Furthermore, such high levels of mobility limit the extent to which schools can maintain effective contact with parents/carers and positively engage them in the education of their children. [school community relations]

In this type of community, which is not a remote community and is located close to a strong tourist industry, the perceived lack of job opportunities is of concern. This suggests the need to develop strong, highly articulated pathways, involving local educational institutions, employment groups and Indigenous organisations. [pathways]
Relevance:

*Introductory Topic:* Complexity and diversity of communities

*Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education*

- Student aspirations and key transition points
- Influence of CDEP on young people

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