



# YOUNG MALES:

STRENGTHS-BASED AND MALE-FOCUSED APPROACHES



A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH AND BEST EVIDENCE

# YOUNG MALES: STRENGTHS-BASED AND MALE-FOCUSED APPROACHES A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH AND BEST EVIDENCE

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March 2004



**MINISTRY OF  
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

**TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO TAIOHI**

*Administered by the Ministry of Social Development*

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## Published by

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ISBN 0-478-25019-3

Copies are available from the Ministry of Youth Development and on its website: [www.myd.govt.nz](http://www.myd.govt.nz)

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# Executive summary





This review of research and best evidence examines strengths-based and male-focused approaches to programme delivery for young males, with particular emphasis on young men at risk of harming themselves or others. It identifies and reviews material that is directly applicable, and as far as possible focuses on New Zealand research and evidence. It can inform potential action options and policy directions and is designed to be useful to anyone thinking about developing programmes for young men.

### A strengths-based approach

Strengths are positive factors, both in the individual and in the environment, which support healthy development. A strengths-based approach has a simple premise – identify the factors that help most young people to lead happy and productive lives, and support them. Rather than having a problem orientation and a risk focus, a strengths-based approach works at developing the factors that protect young people.

*Building strength*, commissioned by the Ministry of Youth Affairs, is an extensive review of New Zealand and international research into how to achieve good outcomes for young people. It discusses how to optimise the conditions for positive youth development. It finds that success for young people is not simply a result of chance or genes but that parents, and families in particular, schools, peers and communities can do a lot to provide the conditions in which young people thrive. Strengths are protective factors, and strengths-based programmes need to find ways to mobilise them. If we believe young people are inherently ‘at promise’ rather than ‘at risk’, the task of programmes is to help young people find and build on the strengths in themselves,

their families and environments for optimal outcomes and positive behaviours. Protective processes, such as caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution will be the means by which this can be achieved.

### A male-focused approach

Young men, far more than young women, are at risk of things that harm themselves or others. Young men are over-represented among those who commit suicide, they have high rates of alcohol-related harm, they are more at risk of dying on the roads than any other group, they are suspended and expelled from school at much higher rates than girls, and, more boys than girls leave school with no qualifications at all. They are arrested, charged and convicted of crimes far more frequently than young women.

The origins and nature of cultural stereotypes of the New Zealand male have been the subject of research by historians and sociologists. The pioneer, the ‘decent bloke’, the soldier, the ‘hard man’ and the ‘family man’ are all cultural stereotypes identified. Although they were narrow stereotypes, and those who didn’t fit them often suffered, when reform of the licensing laws, the emergence of the peace movement, the rise of feminism and women’s move into the workforce combined to undermine them, there was no obvious replacement.

Male-focused approaches are built on the understanding that being male is not just the gender into which some are born, but is about a set of characteristics, activities, preferences and forms of expression that we associate with it. Male-focused approaches respond to the fact boys are different from girls, both in gender-related traits and preferences and in the expectations society places on them. Some of

the challenges boys face as they move towards adulthood are different and need different responses.

## Programmes for positive male development

Social policy makers and programme designers everywhere are faced with the lack of rigorously evaluated programmes that can be replicated with confidence. In the absence of a strong body of rigorous evaluations of effective strengths-based, male-focused programmes, this review draws on a range of research and best evidence from New Zealand and overseas.

Research shows clearly that caring relationships with adults are protective for young people. *Mentoring programmes*, based on this belief, are intentionally created relationships designed to provide this protective effect. Mentoring has been shown to be most successful when careful attention is given to matching mentors with young people, when contact between them is frequent, when activities are mutually negotiated, and when relationships are not prescriptive or judgemental.

*Adventure programmes* were shown to have widespread and long-lasting beneficial effects when they were long enough to encourage full involvement, they challenged young people with specific goals, they provided quality feedback on participation and they created an environment for participants to reflect on, discuss and understand their experiences.

*Community-based youth development programmes* with more features are likely to be more successful than those with fewer. Having a



positive youth development philosophy and paying careful attention to the recruitment and training of programme staff to work with young people will improve the effectiveness of community-based programmes.

Research has consistently shown that parents are important to young people until well into adulthood. Research with teenage boys in New Zealand reveals a strong desire for more time with parents especially fathers, relationships characterised by trust, affection, fairness and fun, and relationships with parents which include a balance of talking and listening. Although some *programmes designed for fathers and sons* were identified none had been evaluated in a way that identified effective characteristics.

*Programmes supporting transition to employment* need a range of features if they are to be effective. They need to be intensive and placed within well-recognised educational pathways. They need to be linked to local labour markets and to be responsive to the needs of local employers. Programmes which provide individualised help have better outcomes,

particularly if that help is focused on long-term rather than short-term employment goals. Programmes benefit from strong relationships between providers, local communities, and local employer and worker organisations.

This review suggests that successful programmes for positive youth development will attend to the following:

- Young men need as many 'anchoring points' – contact with competent, caring and prosocial adults – as possible.
- Strengths exist in individuals, in families, in schools, among peer groups and in communities. The programmes that seek to build those strengths will need to be diverse in their focus and their location.
- Families are important to young men until well into adulthood.
- The more intense a programme is, and the longer it goes for, the more effective it is likely to be.
- Many young men enjoy physical activity and challenge but they also need to be encouraged to reflect on what they are doing, how they are relating, what skills they have and what skills they need to develop.



- Young men are likely to be more engaged with programmes that are relevant to their experience of, and hopes for, the real world.

### Programmes addressing areas of risk

Programmes for young men in areas of risk need to both build strength and address risk. Whatever the programme, research says the development and maintenance of strong relationships with young people must be the top priority, and efforts must focus on creating healthy, inviting environments and systems rather than on trying to ‘fix’ young people.

Programmes to reduce youth suicide need to work towards increasing the awareness of mental health issues among young people rather than to focus directly on suicide. As well as developing self-awareness, coping skills, social skills and problem solving skills, young people should be encouraged to recognise mental health problems in themselves and others and know where to get help.

School-based drug education programmes will be more effective if they are relevant to the needs of young people as young people see them, if they are interactive and activity oriented, if they provide a combination of factual information and resistance strategies, and if they are ongoing. Community-based drug-education projects are more successful when they involve cross-sectoral, collaborative action by groups and agencies that have an existing interest in and responsibility for reducing drug-related harm.

Much research has gone into what works to reduce youth offending. On the basis of what is known at present it can be said with some confidence that programmes should address the risk for offending, they should target multiple causes and use a range of techniques, they should teach young men new skills in active ways and they should be delivered by people who can establish warm, friendly relationships while setting limits and enforcing rules. Once again, programmes to reduce young people’s reoffending will be more effective if they can involve families, peers, schools and communities.

Successful programmes to reduce reoffending among young Māori tend to be provided by people who have mana and with whom young people can identify. They are likely to offer positive reinforcement and acceptance, and acknowledge the importance of identity, cultural knowledge and history. Effective programmes also tend to address practical, academic, employment, financial management and stability needs and teach young people about the contemporary relevance of Māori values.

Programmes designed to improve the academic achievement of boys are likely to address discipline and support and provide students with positive role models; to focus on behaviour management, self-esteem and values; to encourage nurturing behaviour between different age groups within a school; and to increase learning options, including practical activities, which boys see as relevant to their lives. Other factors that will increase

programme success include greater intensity of interventions, good staff selection and training, involving parents and families, working to establish a positive peer culture, and addressing both academic issues and other issues that affect academic performance.

Those developing programmes addressing risk areas for young men would do well to consider:

- Programmes can make a difference. The more quality programmes available to young men the better.
- The more individual, family, social and community strengths a programme can build the better.
- The need to both address risk factors and build protective factors, thereby increasing resilience.
- The value of separate programmes designed for young men, as distinct from those designed for older adults.
- A clear finding that interactive programmes are more effective.
- Employing programme staff who are able to establish warm and friendly relationships while setting limits and enforcing rules.
- A ‘whole person’ approach works better than a problem focus. Even when addressing specific areas of risk, programmes will be more effective if they engage with young men’s other needs as well.





# 1.0

## Introduction

The *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* sets out how government, working with families and communities, can support young people to develop the skills and attitudes they need to take part positively in society (Ministry of Youth Affairs 2002). In doing this, the strategy takes a positive youth development approach, which is founded on six principles:

1. Youth development is shaped by the 'big picture'.
2. Youth development is about young people being connected.
3. Youth development is based on a consistent strengths-based approach.
4. Youth development happens through quality relationships.
5. Youth development is triggered when people fully participate.
6. Youth development needs good information.

This review discusses what we know about the programmes that support the positive development of young men in New Zealand.

The review is of programmes for young men in general, and particularly those for young men who are at risk from behaviours that harm themselves or others. In line with the principles of the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*, the focus is on programmes that address young people's strengths rather than their weaknesses, programmes that affirm

what young people are and can become, and programmes which embrace rather than find fault with the things that make young people different from children or adults.

There has been a real attempt in this review to find out what is going on in New Zealand to support the positive development of young men. Ideally, the programmes reviewed here would all have been soundly evaluated using methodologically rigorous research designs, and we would be able to say with confidence which ones 'work' - but such is not the case. Some have been evaluated, and the quality of those evaluations is variable. Included here too are programmes that have not yet been evaluated, and may never be, but which are attempting to provide strengths-based programmes for young men. No apology is made for their inclusion, although the review does try to make clear where research or evaluation provides evidence of the efficacy of a programme.

This review is designed to be useful to anyone thinking about developing programmes for young men. Included are a small number of studies completed in other countries. These are usually ones which have reviewed large numbers of programmes and which help us to understand what effective, strengths-based programmes for young men look like.



# 2.0

## A strengths-based approach



### 2.1 Introduction

A strengths-based approach has a simple premise – identify what is going well, do more of it, and build on it. Strengths are positive factors, both in the individual and in the environment, which support healthy development.

A strengths-based approach recognises that each of us has a combination of risk factors and protective factors which shape our development. Some of them are within our control, and some beyond. Much attention has been given to the risk factors that have led to young men being over-represented among road crash fatalities, youth suicides, perpetrators of violence and many other negative statistics.

What has been given far less attention are the protective factors that mean *most* young men are not counted among those statistics, and most lead healthy and productive lives posing no risk to themselves or others.

Rather than having a problem orientation and a risk focus, a strengths-based approach seeks to understand and develop the factors that protect most young people.

The approach emphasises the resourcefulness and resilience that exists in everyone rather than dwelling on what has gone wrong or placed a person at risk. It affirms that people can grow and change, and that everyone has a range of abilities and strengths, which, with the right support, can be mobilised to give them a better future.

A second element of a strengths-based approach is an acceptance that the solutions will not be the same for everyone, that the strengths of individuals and their circumstances are different, and that people need to be fully involved in identifying their goals and building on their strengths and resources.

The third element is the recognition that as individuals we live within families, communities, a society and a culture, and that all of these along with our own attributes determine our wellbeing. The strengths of these different environments are just as important to good outcomes as the strengths of individuals (Ministry of Health 2002; Stumpfig 2000).

Strengths are also described as protective factors. Protective factors, as the name suggests, provide a buffer against risk factors. An individual's ability to cope with and manage the balance between risks, stressful life events and protective factors is increasingly described as 'resilience' (Kalil 2003).

### 2.2 What is a strengths-based approach

A strengths-based approach has three distinct elements.



## 2.3 Strengths supporting positive youth development

*Building strength*, commissioned by the Ministry of Youth Affairs, is an extensive review of New Zealand and international research into how to achieve good outcomes for young people. It includes comprehensive coverage of major New Zealand projects including the Christchurch<sup>1</sup> and Dunedin<sup>2</sup> longitudinal child development studies.

This rich research has much to tell us about how to optimise the conditions for positive youth development. It finds that success for young people is not simply a result of chance or genes, but that parents, schools, peers and communities can do a lot to provide the conditions in which young people thrive.

What follows is a brief synopsis of key findings relevant to the development of strengths-based programmes for young men. This review finds that parents have the most impact on good outcomes for young people, followed by peers and schools, neighbourhoods and communities.

Family influences which support good outcomes for young people include:

- growing up with parents who are nurturing while setting reasonable boundaries
- parents who are involved with their children, accept their right to think for themselves, and monitor where they are and who they are with
- happy parents who handle conflict constructively and drink only moderately when, after divorce, parents get on with one another and have a similarly nurturing parenting style
- stable parental relationships whether they are two parent, one parent or step-parent families.

Peers are important in the lives of young people. The research tells us that:

- while friendship becomes more important with age, parental support continues to matter into adulthood
- parental influence affects who young people choose to mix with
- peers are considered more important to young people in some cultures and families than others

- peer influence, particularly negative influence, is stronger when parental influence is weak
- young people who are not supported at home are particularly vulnerable to the breakdown of their friendships
- young people tend to mix with people similar to themselves and to become more like them over time
- positive peer influence can affect young people's continued involvement with school and activities and improve how they cope with adversity
- close friendships are important for preventing loneliness, coping with peer rejection and practising prosocial behaviours
- friends, particularly large groups of opposite sex friends, help the development of stable, emotionally close romantic relationships more than parents do
- good communication, effective conflict resolution, empathy, fairness and appropriate sharing of personal information foster good peer relationships.



<sup>1</sup> University of Otago. Christchurch Health and Development Study. [http://www.otago.ac.nz/research/centres/res\\_cen\\_chchhealthdev.html](http://www.otago.ac.nz/research/centres/res_cen_chchhealthdev.html)

<sup>2</sup> University of Otago. Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study. [http://www.otago.ac.nz/research/centres/res\\_cen\\_dnhealthdev.html](http://www.otago.ac.nz/research/centres/res_cen_dnhealthdev.html)

School-related factors associated with positive youth development include:

- a warm school climate which helps young people achieve good personal and academic outcomes
- high standards for learning and behaviour, moderate classroom control and teacher warmth
- stability of schooling with few changes of school
- young people from non-dominant cultures may do better in ethnically diverse schools
- a balance of study and leisure, particularly active leisure, and involvement in extra curricular activities
- family affluence increases the chances of young people staying at school and going on to university, although family factors also influence the chances of young people from poorer families going on to tertiary study
- adapting to tertiary study is enhanced by good relationships with parents
- young people believing they can influence their future, that education is important and that effort is more important than ability

- staying at school reduces the likelihood of young men being involved with negative peer influences.

Young people are more likely to succeed at work if they have spent more years at school irrespective of academic achievement; they are directly influenced by their parents' careers and levels of education especially in close, warm families. Work and career influences that support young people include:

- evidence that less than 20 hours work a week during schooling has no adverse effects
- using earned income to contribute to things like school fees or contributing to family expenses rather than personal goods and activities is associated with good outcomes
- same-sex parents who provide role models of educational and career achievement.

Neighbourhoods and communities influence young people both directly by providing experiences, opportunities and limits, and indirectly by reducing parental stress and increasing support for parents. When families lack strengths, neighbourhood characteristics become more influential. Neighbourhood and

community factors that have a bearing on good outcomes for young people are:

- adults other than parents can have a positive impact by providing support, modelling positive moods and behaviours, showing disapproval of poor behaviour and providing young people with counsel and a sense of meaning and purpose
- young people who grow up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods can be supported by firm parents, parents involved in schools and local institutions, other supportive adults, close ties between parents and supportive neighbours, stable neighbours and participation in community activities
- where relationships with neighbours are strong, they can help to set or reinforce limits for young people
- participation in community activities, particularly structured and supervised activities, supports positive academic, social and personal outcomes
- neighbourhoods have more influence on young men, in part because they have fewer parental restrictions than young women and thus spend more time exposed to neighbourhood and community influences (McLaren 2002).



A Ministry of Health report concerned with promoting mental health in New Zealand also explicitly adopts a strengths-based approach. It too identifies a range of strengths which have the potential to protect children and young people from mental health problems. Not surprisingly, many of the protective factors are the same as those found by McLaren in her review. However, this report also identifies a range of individual characteristics that are protective for children and young people. Individual factors which protect children and young people include:

- easy temperament
- good nutrition
- attachment to family
- above average intelligence
- school achievement
- problem-solving skills
- internal locus of control (self-control)
- social competence
- social skills
- good coping style
- optimism
- moral belief
- values
- positive view of self.

In addition to the family-related strengths found by McLaren in her review this report finds that small family size and more than two years between siblings are associated with good outcomes for children, as are strong

family norms and morality, having responsibility within the family, and having a supportive relationship with another adult.

In the school context, the report affirms the value of a positive school climate and a prosocial peer group. It also finds that young people respond positively to responsibility within the school environment and to opportunities for success and recognition. School norms against violence are also protective.

Based on findings from Australian research, strong cultural pride and ethnic identity was also found to be a strength for children and young people (Ministry of Health 2002).

Kalil's review finds that, in addition to favourable social and economic conditions, good outcomes for children are supported by families which:

- are close but not over-involved with each other's lives
- share belief systems and cultivate a sense of values centred on loving and caring
- deal with conflict effectively
- are well connected to other adults and institutions in the community
- have both parents involved in children's lives even if the parents' own relationship is over (Kalil 2003).

## 2.4 Strengths-based programmes

How then do we use what we know about the strengths that support positive youth development to design and provide effective programmes for young people? In part, the answer lies in understanding the difference between *protective factors*, or strengths, and *protective mechanisms* which emphasise the dynamic interaction between the individual and the environments within which they operate. If we believe young people are inherently 'at promise' rather than 'at risk' the task becomes to help the young person access the strengths in themselves, their families and environments for optimal outcomes and positive behaviours. *Protective processes*, such as caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution will be the means by which this can be achieved (Marshall 2001).

Resilience, the interaction between strengths and risk factors is not fixed; it is dynamic and varies according to context. It is the process of doing what is necessary to survive and overcome the challenges life brings (Bernard and Marshall 2001a). Resilience will look different in different circumstances, and it is the potential to build resilience that makes offering strengths-based programmes worthwhile.

## 2.5 Summary

Strengths are positive factors, both in the individual and in the environment, which support healthy development. There is now substantial evidence strengths-based approaches are effective for positive youth development.

Effective strengths-based approaches address a range of targets which can include individual functioning, family relationships, peer culture, school or work environment, neighbourhoods and communities. Strengths-based approaches can offer caring, respectful relationships, high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution that help young people to access the strengths in themselves, their families and environments.



# 3.0

A male-focused approach





### 3.1 Introduction

Social scientists and others working in social sectors have, over recent decades, developed a much better understanding of diversity. We no longer assume that policies or programmes can be designed as one-size-fits-all, and we understand that personal, social and cultural realities are different.

The initial response to this awareness was to look beyond the dominant group – be it Pākeha, male, the financially secure, or the traditional two-parent family – for others whose reality had been denied while it was assumed their aspirations and needs matched those of the dominant group. Hence we have seen a burgeoning of policies and programmes designed to meet the needs of Māori, of women, of those living in poverty, of single-parent families and others; and there is still some way to go before all groups benefit equally from what New Zealand has to offer.

However, being part of a dominant group, while it often brings a raft of advantages,

has led to a certain invisibility. Most of us would struggle to articulate what it means to be Pākeha or to be male, although we may have some understanding that Māori have their own cultural values or that women have issues and aspirations different from those of men.

We now understand that this invisibility has not been helpful. Pākeha need to know and be able to celebrate their culture, and men and boys need to know and value what makes them unique.

### 3.2 Why have male-focused approaches in youth development?

The *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* makes a commitment to acknowledging the diversity of young people and it places a strong emphasis on policies and programmes designed for ‘the betterment of young people’ (p33).

There is ample evidence to show that young men, far more than young women, do things that harm themselves or others. There is also a widely held although contested view that boys are not achieving as well as girls in our education system.

In 2000, 96 New Zealanders aged between 15 and 24 died from suicide – 81 of them were male. Of these young men, 31 were aged 15-19 and 50 were aged 20-24. In 2000/2001, in contrast to this, 1,018 young women were hospitalised as a result of a suicide attempt, over twice the number (478) of young men admitted to hospital as a result of a suicide attempt (New Zealand Health Information Service).

A review of New Zealand research found that adolescent girls (aged 13-17) are more at risk from unemployment, low income, sexual abuse, family violence and attempted suicide than are adolescent boys. Both genders are equally susceptible to family hardship, truancy, and alcohol and cannabis misuse. However, boys are more at risk from low educational qualifications, suicide, accidental injury

and death, homicide and intentional injury, unsafe sexual behaviour, behaviour and conduct problems, suspension/expulsion, mental health problems, substance dependence, serious offending and arrest (Davey 2000).

In a recent New Zealand health survey, 50% of males between 15 and 24 reported drinking in a 'hazardous' manner, that is, with an established pattern of drinking that carries with it a high risk of future damage to physical or mental health. In another national survey, over half the men aged between 18 and 24 reported frequently experiencing alcohol-related problems including memory loss, getting into fights, having arguments, being absent from work, driving drunk and feeling ashamed of their behaviour while drunk (ALAC and the Ministry of Health 2001).

While the rates of young people involved in road crashes is coming down, Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA) data shows that in 2000 drivers in the 15-19 year old age band were seven times, and drivers aged 20-24 three times, as likely to crash as drivers aged 45-49. In both the 15-19 and 20-24 age bands almost twice as many male drivers as females were involved in crashes (LTSA 2003a). Between 1999 and 2001 each of the 15-19 and 20-24 age bands contained about 8% of licensed drivers. However, drivers aged between 15 and 19 made up 11% of those involved in fatal crashes, and drivers between 20 and 24 made up 14% of those involved in fatal crashes. In both age bands 70% of the drivers in fatal crashes were male (LTSA 2003b).

Educational achievement was among the outcomes tracked in the Christchurch Health and Development Study, a longitudinal study

of 1,265 children born in Christchurch in 1977. This research found unequivocally that, despite very similar IQ test scores, the males in the study achieved less well than the females on standardised tests, teacher ratings and school leaving outcomes. These researchers concluded that the boys' disruptive and inattentive classroom behaviour accounted for the differences (Fergusson and Horwood 1997). This is endorsed by a recent New Zealand review of research into the risks, remedies and consequences of youth inactivity (McLaren 2003).

The evidence of a gender gap in educational achievement is still equivocal.

Alton-Lee and Praat reviewed a complexity of information in their investigation of gender differences in the compulsory schooling sector. Their detailed examination showed that gender differences varied by curriculum and school level; that in most curriculum areas girls outperformed boys at primary school; and that at secondary schools boys generally did better in mathematics and science, and girls in subjects which were literacy based. These researchers concluded that any emerging gender gap could be explained by girls' improving performance in recent years rather than any decline in the achievement of boys (Alton-Lee and Praat 2000; Praat 1999).

What is beyond dispute is that boys are less likely to stay in education beyond the age of 16 (Ministry of Education 2003a), and they are strongly over-represented among students who are stood-down, suspended and excluded from schools. Almost three-quarters of students stood-down or suspended from New Zealand schools in 2002 were boys (Ministry of Education 2003b). In every year between 1991 and 2001 a higher proportion of boys than girls left school without any qualifications (Hill 2003).



In her 2003 report McLaren reviewed available research on the factors that contribute to boys' relative underachievement. She reviewed research that found boys are more likely than girls to experience attention problems, which affects school success and has a knock-on effect on employment and future education prospects. Her reading of the New Zealand research found no consensus about whether the type of school (single sex/co-educational, private/state) has a significant independent impact on educational outcomes. Although some rigorous studies have found evidence of a positive effect from attending a single sex school, others have found the apparent benefits of attending single sex, church and private schools either disappear or become much less significant when adequate controls are introduced for prior pupil attainment, socio-economic status, ethnicity and overall pupil mix (McLaren 2003).

Of 4,158 young people aged 14-17 brought before the courts in 2001, 82% were male. Of all offences resulting in a conviction in 2001 over a third were committed by boys and men aged 14-24, despite males in this age group making up less than 7% of the population that year (Spier 2002; Statistics New Zealand 2002).

From 1986 to 2002 boys had a consistently higher rate of youth unemployment than girls (Hill 2003).

There is now clear evidence young men are hurting themselves and other people at unacceptably high rates. What it is easy to forget when confronted with this evidence is that many more boys and young men are leading happy, successful lives not placing anyone at risk. This report is about trying to understand what keeps this latter group safe from harm, and how those protective factors can be fostered in those who need them.

### 3.3 Being male in New Zealand

There is a small but thoughtful body of literature on being male in New Zealand. Phillips' social history *A man's country? The image of the Pākeha male - a history*, written in 1987 and revised almost 10 years later, is widely acknowledged as the most significant and influential work on Pākeha masculinity in New Zealand to date. Phillips' work on identifying the origins and nature of the cultural stereotypes of the New Zealand male has been the foundation of much that has been written since.

The pioneer, the 'decent bloke', the soldier, the 'hard man' and the 'family man' are all cultural stereotypes Phillips unpicks and examines, identifying their origins and their legacies for New Zealand men. In his final chapter, 'The bloke under siege', he addresses some of the difficulties facing New Zealand men at the end of the 20th century. Reform of the licensing laws and the end to six o'clock closing, the emergence of the peace movement, the rise of feminism and women's move into the workforce, and a decline in the dominance of the All Blacks combined to undermine the cultural stereotypes New Zealand men had, largely unconsciously, sought to fit.

Although the stereotypes were narrow and those who didn't fit them often suffered, their loss left a gap that at the time of writing Phillips considered largely unfilled (Phillips 1996).

Others have developed Phillips' ideas and demonstrated how popular culture and the media have reinforced these essential stereotypes. *An ambivalent archetype* discusses the contradictions in the 'man alone' stereotype where the hero's masculine self-sufficiency is always incomplete (Spicer 2000). Abdinor explores the interaction between the stereotypes and the potential for them to reinforce each other. He also argues men need positive stereotypes to aspire to in order to prevent low self-esteem and depression (Abdinor 2000). Latimer theorises that the physically strong, emotionally restrained masculine stereotypes led to 'the traditional



myth of modernity', which is that men are in control of their emotional and sexual life. The challenge of feminism and gay political activism in the 1970s he says, along with increasing urbanisation, put pressure on the old stereotype and on New Zealand men to be able to express their emotional and sexual lives (Latimer 1998). Duley analysed the television coverage of the 1995 America's Cup campaign and argues it reinvented and reinforced the masculine stereotypes of the pioneer and the soldier with its descriptions of the men involved in the Team New Zealand campaign. Frequently described as strong and hardworking, yet also laid-back, relaxed and humorous, the team were 'fighters' and 'winners' and much emphasis was placed on team spirit and mateship especially in the celebrations that followed the team's victory (Duley 1997).

A different cultural stereotype very relevant to the subject of this report is that of the 'cool fool'. Henry also builds on Phillips' work in his thesis about 'cool fools' - that group of boys found in almost every high school in the country who 'have a laconic and ironic detachment from the process of learning' - and who 'construct their identity in the classroom in adverse relation to the position of the teacher'. In his complex and interesting thesis Henry argues the cultural stereotypes available to New Zealand boys are limiting, and the pressures within society on boys to comply with this narrow range of models is strong (Henry 2002).

Other theories of masculinity as well as personal and cultural reflections on being a male in New Zealand can be found in the 1988 book, *One of the boys*, and the 1999 collection of essays in *Masculinities in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (King (ed) 1988; Law, Campbell and Dolan (eds) 1999).

Fifty teenage boys talk about what it is like to grow up in New Zealand, sharing their views on parents and families, education, their social life and employment. The boys reported wanting more time with their parents. They wanted their parents to be interested and involved in what they do, but found the way parents expressed their interest sometimes came across as pressure. For these boys, schools were as much about being with friends as about education. They appreciated teachers who were fair and approachable. Friends were hugely important. Boys wanted to be trusted to choose their friends and experiment with a range of identities and behaviours. The boys said they found it very difficult to talk to anyone when they had problems and could only ever talk to someone they trusted. Several boys reported having been bullied, feeling the pressure to be tough and competitive, and having suicidal feelings (Weaver 2001).

### 3.4 What are male-focused approaches?

Male-focused approaches are built on the understanding that being male is not just the gender into which some are born, but is about a set of characteristics, activities, preferences and forms of expression we associate with it. As well as gender-related traits and preferences, some of which are biologically determined and some culturally, there is a range of explicit and implicit expectations placed on boys when they are born and reinforced throughout their lives.

Male-focused approaches respond to the fact boys are different from girls and some of the challenges they face in growing up are different and need different responses. A strengths-based, male-focused approach will pay particular attention to the unique strengths boys and young men have, and develop them further.



### 3.5 Summary

There is ample evidence to show young men, far more than young women, do things that harm themselves or others. Young men commit suicide at much higher rates than young women in New Zealand, and suffer much higher rates of alcohol-related harm. They are far more likely to die in a road crash, and they greatly outnumber young women in the justice system. Boys are suspended and excluded from school more frequently than girls, and are more likely to leave school without qualifications. Young men are more likely to be unemployed than young women in their teens and early 20s.

Long held stereotypes of the New Zealand male emphasise physical prowess along with emotional control and self-sufficiency. Feminism, pacifism and economic change have challenged the stereotypes and may, some say, have left New Zealand's young men without viable models of masculinity.

There is a range of explicit and implicit expectations placed on boys when they are born and reinforced throughout their lives. Male-focused approaches accept this, and respond to the fact boys and young men face unique challenges and need different responses.





# 4.0

## Programmes for positive male development

### 4.1 Introduction

The brief for this report was, as far as possible, to find and discuss what constitutes effective strengths-based, male-focused programmes for young men in New Zealand. The net was cast wide in the hope of locating sufficient numbers of programmes which have been evaluated by rigorous methods and reported in such a way that conclusions could be drawn and pointers given to those wanting to develop and offer programmes of this kind. A few were found, but not many.

This is not a situation peculiar to New Zealand. The lack of rigorously evaluated programmes that can be replicated with confidence faces social policy makers and programme designers everywhere. The reports of the Surgeon General in the US are arguably the best-resourced investigations into the health and wellbeing of North Americans. In 2001 the Surgeon General reported on an extensive investigation into the causes, prevention and reduction of youth violence. In the section on programmes to prevent youth violence the Surgeon General said this:

*... relatively little is known about the scientific effectiveness of hundreds of youth violence programs currently in use in schools and communities in the United States ... even less is known about the best strategies for implementing effective programs on a national scale without compromising their results (US Department of Health and Human Services 2001).*

In the absence of a strong body of local or international research on effective strengths-based, male-focused programmes, this review draws on a range of literature from New Zealand and overseas. As well as programme evaluations and meta-evaluations, it includes programme descriptions, and some programme theory.

One of the most obvious gaps in the research uncovered for this report is programmes with a deliberate focus on males. Many of the programmes designed for young people, and in particular for those at risk, make scant mention of gender; they are effectively gender-neutral even when the majority of programme participants are male. The absence of programmes and approaches with a male focus make it hard to draw conclusions about whether they are effective and should be encouraged.

This section of the review discusses different types of strengths-based programmes including mentoring, adventure, community-based youth development, programmes for parents and families, and programmes to help young men's transition to employment. Within each subsection priority is given to evidence-based material from New Zealand. Also included is relevant research and evaluation from other countries and, in some cases, links to descriptions of strengths-based, male-focused programmes which may not have been formally evaluated.

## 4.2 Mentoring programmes

Research into the strengths that support positive youth development show clearly that caring relationships with adults are protective for young people (McLaren 2002). Mentoring programmes, based on this belief, are intentionally created relationships designed to provide this protective effect.

### IN NEW ZEALAND

Mentoring programmes are gaining popularity in New Zealand. Schools, particularly boys' schools, are adopting mentoring programmes for boys in increasing numbers. Some examples of New Zealand mentoring programmes found through web searching include:

- The *Man Alive Big Buddy* programme has operated in Auckland since 1999. It recruits, screens and trains men from the community to act as mentors to fatherless boys <http://www.bigbuddy.org.nz>  
It has yet to be evaluated to determine what effects, if any, it has on the boys being mentored.
- In 2002 the Pacific Foundation in partnership with the University of Auckland offered a pilot year of *MATES, Mentoring and Tutoring in Education Scheme*, linking Pacific young people (not solely boys) with a university student mentor/tutor. The website reports 'initial evaluations' but these could not be located <http://www.pacificfoundation.org.nz/mates.htm>
- The Project K Trust, an initiative of mountaineer Graeme Dingle, is a project designed to foster self-esteem and give life-

direction to young New Zealanders. It is a long-term project which has a number of components including Project K mentoring. Following a three-week wilderness challenge and involvement in a community challenge students are matched with a personal mentor who has attended a mentoring training course. The mentoring relationship is intended to complement existing relationships with caregivers and teachers <http://www.projectk.org.nz> There is no evidence the programme has been evaluated.

- A Ministry of Education paper outlines the key features of some school-based models of mentoring [http://mentoring.unitecology.ac.nz/case\\_studies.html](http://mentoring.unitecology.ac.nz/case_studies.html)

### ELSEWHERE

Mentoring has become popular in other countries too, although not a great deal is known yet about the efficacy of mentoring programmes. An evaluation of the *Big Brother Big Sister* mentoring programme used a classical experimental design, with young people aged between 10 and 16 assigned to a mentoring programme or to a control group in eight US states. The evaluation appears to have been privately funded and has not been published in a peer-reviewed journal (Tierney and Grossman 2000). Bearing that in mind, it is interesting to see what the researchers found.

Overall, young people who participated in mentoring programmes were 46% less likely to start using illegal drugs, and 27% less likely to start drinking than those in the control group.

For young people from minority ethnic groups these findings were even more pronounced. Truancy and physical aggression were also reduced among the young people who had been mentored. Small gains in academic achievement were also noted. The researchers' analysis led them to believe the success of the mentoring programmes lay in the developmental one-to-one relationships between mentors and young people, and in the infrastructure supporting the programme.

Of the 400 matches studied in this research, over 70% met three times a month for three or four hours at a time, 50% met once a week. The investigators found the most successful mentors were able to develop lasting and supportive friendships with the young people by making the time to establish and maintain trust, listening sympathetically and non-judgementally, and negotiating mutually satisfactory activities. A key to successful mentoring appeared to be that, while most mentors ultimately hoped the young person they had befriended would improve at school and become more responsible, they put their effort and expectations into developing a reliable, trusting relationship. The volunteers gave priority to making the relationships enjoyable and fun for both parties. By contrast to these 'developmental' relationships, the researchers observed a smaller number of 'prescriptive' relationships, in which the adult volunteers believed their purpose was to guide the young person they worked with towards values, attitudes and behaviours the adult deemed positive. Adults in these relationships set the goals, the pace and the ground rules.



Adults and young people in prescriptive mentoring relationships found them frustrating and only 29% met consistently. Only 32% of these relationships were still going at the 18-month follow up compared with 91% of the developmental relationships.

The other factor which supported the success of the mentoring programme was the programme infrastructure. Intensive supervision and support of mentors by paid staff was a key programme component, and those sites which maintained regular supervision had the most successful matches. Other important facets of the programme were effective screening out of volunteers who were unlikely to maintain their commitment; mentor training that included communication and limit-setting skills, and guidance on how to build a relationship with a young person; and careful matching processes that took into account young people's preferences, families' views and the volunteers' wishes (Bernard et al 2001b).

### 4.3 Adventure education

For many years those seeking to promote positive youth development have advocated adventure education as a way for individuals to improve their physical and mental health, social skills, and leadership potential. Relatively little is known about the impact of adventure programmes on positive outcomes for young people.

#### IN NEW ZEALAND

Outward Bound is probably the best known, although by no means the only, adventure education programme in New Zealand and offers a range of courses to young people <http://www.outwardbound.co.nz>  
No evaluations of the Outward Bound New Zealand programmes were uncovered for this review. Other adventure programmes include Pathways, a week-long camping experience for teenage boys and the significant men in their lives offered by Auckland men's collective Essentially Men [http://www.essentiallymen.net/emnetwork/emnetwork\\_pathways.html](http://www.essentiallymen.net/emnetwork/emnetwork_pathways.html)

While not evidence-based, two articles in the peer-reviewed journal *New Zealand Journal of*

*Outdoor Education* are relevant to this report. One discusses the current practice of offering young people with disabilities their own adventure education courses rather than including them with their able-bodied peers. The author argues that offering separate courses reinforces unfounded stereotypes and the exclusion of young people with disabilities from society (Borgman 2002). Another contributor to the journal argues that outdoor education as it is currently offered in New Zealand reinforces heterosexuality as the norm and offers no affirmation to gay or lesbian young people (Dignan 2002).

#### ELSEWHERE

In 1997, a substantial meta-analysis of 96 adventure programmes was conducted by a team of university researchers including John Hattie, then of the University of North Carolina, and now Professor of Education at Auckland University. The evaluation findings were published in *Review of Educational Research*. Seventy-two percent of the combined total of over 12,000 participants in the programmes was male, and their average age was 22 years. Only a few of the programmes included were specifically designed for young people at risk. One of the criteria for inclusion was that the programme should be more challenging than school-based outdoors programmes.

The two major findings of the meta-analysis were that participants made gains on a wide range of outcomes, and that those gains increased in the months following programme participation. The outcomes which showed the most improvement were those related to self-control; the programmes appeared to increase the participants' ability to actively control themselves to respond to environmental challenges. Powerful effects on self-esteem and academic performance were also revealed. Both general academic gains such as increased problem-solving skills, and direct effects such as improved scores in mathematics were identified. Improvements in interpersonal skills included social competence, co-operation and interpersonal communication. Follow-up studies showed the gains had not only been maintained, but in some cases had increased over time. The effect of the programme on young people at risk was even greater than for other participants.

Three programme variables were found to be most influential. The type of adventure programme, the duration of the programme and the country in which it took place. The 20-day Australian Outward Bound programmes had the most powerful effects. The researchers believe this can be attributed to the quality of the instructors. The Australian Outward Bound School's policy is to appoint instructors who are university graduates, usually qualified teachers and to have participants, co-leaders and supervisors evaluate every instructor.





Hattie and his colleagues point to four attributes of programmes with positive effects:

- the intensity of the experience which encourages full involvement in the activities
- challenging and specific goals which focus attention and effort
- the amount and quality of feedback, vital to the experiential learning process
- mutual group support which enables participants to reflect on, discuss and understand the experience (Hattie et al 1997).

#### 4.4 Community-based youth development

##### ELSEWHERE

In 2002, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine in the US produced a major report on community programmes to promote youth development. The report finds that the strengths which facilitate positive youth development cover physical health, intellectual development, psychological and emotional wellbeing and social development. It explicitly endorses a strengths-based approach and says community programmes with more features are likely to provide better support for development. Furthermore, as young people who spend time in communities rich in developmental experiences have less risk and show more evidence of positive development, a diversity of programme opportunities in each community is likely to support broad adolescent development and meet the needs of a greater number of young people.

The authors of this report found, as many others have, a frustrating lack of comprehensive programme evaluations that could support a recommendation for a particular type of community-based youth development programme. However, they do find sufficient evidence to make recommendations about the features of effective community programmes. In summary, these are:

- Attention to physical and psychological safety - practices that increase safe peer interaction and decrease confrontational peer interaction.

- Appropriate structure - limit setting, clear and consistent rules and expectations, firm enough control, continuity and predictability, clear boundaries and age-appropriate monitoring.
- Supportive relationships - warmth, connectedness, good communication, support, guidance, secure attachment and responsiveness.
- Opportunities to belong - opportunities for inclusion regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability, social inclusion, engagement and integration, support for cultural and bicultural competence.
- Positive social norms - rules of behaviour, expectations, injunctions, ways of doing things, values and morals, obligations for service.
- Communicating that young people matter and can make a difference - youth-based empowerment practices that support autonomy; making a real difference in one's community; being taken seriously; enabling, granting responsibility and providing meaningful challenges; a focus on improvement rather than relative current performance.
- Opportunities for skill building - opportunities to learn physical, emotional, intellectual, psychological and social skills; exposure to intentional learning experiences; opportunities to learn cultural literacy, communication skills, media literacy; preparation for adult employment; opportunities to develop social and cultural capital.
- Integration of family, school and community efforts - co-operation, co-ordination and synergy between family, school and community (Eccles and Gootman [Eds] 2002).

Two recent papers on community-based youth work stress the importance of understanding the distinguishing features and essential elements of positive youth development, and putting in place staff development to encourage community-based youth workers to reflect those in their practice.

Political and social unrest, an uncertain labour market, and the challenge of feminism to traditional patriarchy led young





men in Northern Ireland, without traditional ways to express their masculinity, to search for ways to prove themselves. Taking risks, say Harland and Morgan, was the way they found to achieve an adult status no longer acquired through work. By withholding feelings and emotions the young men they worked with were demonstrating what they believed to be true – that men do not need the support of others. Whereas traditional youth work in Northern Ireland has tended to focus on recreational needs or adopted a problem-centred approach, the *Youth Action* project sought to combine reflection along with activity and structured risk-taking. Recognising the success of this approach would depend on the quality of the workers involved, the project designed specific training programmes for youth workers. They encouraged workers to reflect on their own experience of growing up male, and to understand and be able to articulate the influences on their development as young men. These youth workers reported that self-reflection and practice in expressing their own emotions improved their relationship with the young people they worked with and increased their potential to challenge the damaging aspects of the traditional expressions of masculinity (Harland and Morgan 2003). Although a project evaluation has been completed and appears to have been

published, it could not be located for this review.

From the other side of the Atlantic, Huebner, Walker and McFarland reached very much the same conclusions about the fundamental role of youth workers in positive youth development programmes. Huebner and her colleagues say that, although definitions of positive youth development programmes vary, these are key elements:

- youth development is something young people do – it is a natural process of learning, growing and changing
- the fundamental philosophy is a strengths-based approach to childhood and adolescence
- it is a way of working with young people that values their participation and contribution and their unique personal characteristics.

In their view the key role of a youth worker is as a facilitator to foster critical reflection and to help participants make connections between their experiences of the programme – whatever those experiences – and their past and future attitudes and behaviour. It requires a flexible and responsive style focused as much on the participant as on the activity. Huebner and her colleagues report on a 40-hour training

programme which included 600 youth workers at 10 sites over four years.

The focus of the programme was to help develop the practice of reflection in the youth workers themselves. The trainers modelled encouragement of reflective practice with participants. At the end of each day a key part of the training was for workers to reflect on what they had learned, their prior beliefs and their future goals. An internal evaluation of the programme, that was not of a robust design, found by their self-report that youth workers' relevant knowledge, skills and confidence had all increased (Huebner et al 2003).

#### 4.5 Programmes for parents and families

Research has consistently shown parents are important to young people until well into adulthood. Not only is a good relationship with parents a strength that can support a young person's own development, but relationships with parents are a major influence on the skills young people carry forward to the parenting of their own children.

##### IN NEW ZEALAND

Man Alive, a men's centre in Auckland, offers parenting programmes for men. Their course, *Great Dads*, is designed to help fathers develop, sustain and nurture life-long bonds with their children. The programme includes examining beliefs around parenting and how to be the sort of father you want to be <http://manalive.org.nz/parenting.htm> There was no indication this programme had been evaluated.

Two pieces of research that confirm the importance of families to New Zealand adolescent boys are *Teenage boys talk* (Weaver 2001) and *Windows on family life* (Andrew et al 2002). While neither explicitly addresses programmes for parents, both confirm the importance of parents in the lives of sons, and



give encouragement to parents that there are simple things they can do to support boys' positive development.

In *Teenage boys talk*, 50 boys talk extensively about their relationships with their parents. What emerges is a strong desire for more time with parents especially fathers, relationships characterised by trust, affection, fairness and fun, and relationships with parents which include a balance of talking and listening. Boys do not require parents to be perfect (Weaver 2001).

*Windows on family life* reports on in-depth case studies with 29 young males aged 13-15 and their families/whānau. These young men were drawn from three groups:

- young people who had not participated in mainstream education for 12 months or more
- young men attending a non-streamed co-educational high school and performing at their chronological age
- boys attending single-sex boys' schools and performing above their chronological age in the education system.

This rich piece of research sought to identify critical wellbeing factors in the families/whānau of sons.

Parents who were functioning well shared several important characteristics in their parenting approach. They placed the child at the centre of parental decision and choice making, and were able to put the needs of the children ahead of their own needs. Families where sons were flourishing were founded on principles of strong communication, structured progressive development of independence, high expectations and consistent support.

The young men interviewed confirmed that a strong relationship with parents was critical to them, and when things did not go well they felt vulnerable. While friends were very important, parents were the key emotional resource in the boys' lives. Predictability, structure and reasonable boundaries as well as

being taken seriously, were what these young men wanted from their parents (Andrew et al 2002).

The Office of the Commissioner for Children undertook to identify ways to enhance the role of fathers, and to support fathers who wanted to participate more actively in the parenting of their children. Conducted through focus groups and interviews, the research gathered the views of women as well as men, and made strong efforts to capture the views of Māori and Pacific people as well as Pākeha. There was much agreement about the characteristics of a good father, with the key features - giving time and commitment, showing love, being fair and consistent, being self-aware and providing a role model - consistent with much other research. Virtually all participants thought fathers needed more support to be good parents and suggestions centred on these strategies:

- changing stereotypes and attitudes to encompass more non-traditional models of fatherhood
- training for fathers including learning about child development, aspects of nurturing and the consequences of child neglect
- support for fathers and the promotion of networks to support men as fathers
- more flexible employment provisions to allow fathers to be around when children need them
- legal changes including a move towards joint custody as the norm
- a media campaign, using prominent men as role models, to promote positive fathering (Julian 1999).

Two other papers by New Zealand men challenge men to pick up the pace in improving the quality of their fathering of boys in particular. Mitchell and Chapman ask why it is that women are doing so much of the research into fathers and fathering, and question the impact of women's interpretations of men's voices. Oversimplified, their view is that women approach the issue of fathering with the perspective of the child uppermost, inhibiting the need for fathers to talk through some of their own issues. When this was

achieved through their own qualitative research with fathers, men were able to 'shift the thinking of their own needs, they began to enter into a dialogue that raised new issues for them' (Mitchell and Chapman 2001). This raises an associated issue of who should be responsible for designing and implementing programmes for fathers.

In his opinion piece, Pudney pursues the theme of the detrimental effects of the 'intense silence' of many fathers, and describes the longing for fathers that boys and men experience as being 'father hungry'. Posing the question of what can be done to increase the positive presence of fathers in boys' lives he says fathers need to be proud, purposeful, positive and present. Proud of their sons both directly to them and in front of other people; deliberately positive in the face of stress and the normal adolescent testing of boundaries; purposeful in having 'a commitment to the job description' and not waiting to be invited; and present both socially and emotionally. He calls for greater effort on the part of fathers, but also greater support from the community and more provision of programmes to help men become better fathers (Pudney 1994).

#### 4.6 Transition to employment

For most people a key feature of the transition from childhood to adulthood is the move from being primarily involved with education, to paid employment being the focus of effort and energy. The line between the two is not clear-

cut - many young people are involved in paid work from an early age, and many adults pursue education until late in life. However, at some point in late adolescence or early adulthood most people assume financial responsibility for themselves, and having an income is of prime importance.

#### IN NEW ZEALAND

Higgins, from the University of Canterbury's Department of Sociology and Anthropology, analysed policy around the transition from education to employment and confirms there is a lack of good New Zealand data about many of the transitions young people experience. In her view, how we conceptualise transition is crucially important in crafting effective youth policy. Such policy, she believes, should recognise the complexities young people face as they manage a multiplicity of transitions involving education, employment, family, peer relationships and housing.

Transition policy in New Zealand and other places tends to be linear and conceptualises young people as 'adults in waiting' engaged in education and training in preparation for the 'real life' of employment. This creates problems she says not only because it is simply not true - young people are involved in a range of adult activities including paid work, caring and domestic responsibilities and sexual relationships while still in education - but also because they do not see themselves simply as potential workers but as individuals seeking to craft an identity through a wide range of activities in the present (Higgins 2002).

Higgins also reviewed programmes designed to support young people's transition to the labour market. She cautions that programmes do not necessarily travel well, and there can be no guarantee a successful programme in one labour market will be equally successful elsewhere. However, with that caveat Higgins does identify what seem to be the elements of effective labour market transition programmes for young people. They are:

- Training. This may need to be intensive and long term, should be 'pedagogically informed', that is, creative about encouraging young people to be interested in learning, and be linked to official and well recognised educational pathways.
- Links to local labour markets. This could involve networking in job search, training in skills that are in local demand, work placements and subsidies in genuine jobs.
- Programme designers and providers, case managers and mentors need to be familiar with local labour market conditions.
- Case management support and mentoring. Individualised help for the best outcomes. A quick exit into any job is not the only option and may not be the best one. Programmes should allow staff and job seekers to work through a plan that addresses long-term employment goals.
- Ownership of the programme by those involved. Programmes benefit from strong relationships between providers, local communities, and local employer and worker organisations (Higgins 2003).







The New Zealand Council for Educational Research is currently evaluating non-conventional programmes for senior students in low decile schools which are designed to help those who would otherwise be at risk of unemployment make the transition to the workforce. This three-year evaluation has yet to report its findings. Early indications from the case studies are that, while students were very positive and enjoyed the course, few were able to make the links between the programme and future study or employment (Boyd et al 2002).

When teenage boys talked about employment they were keen to have jobs, and those who had them saw it as a source of their self-esteem. Having money was the key motivation to work, and boys could see the link between education and future earning prospects. Boys in this research did not often talk about their future plans unless asked, and were not often asked (Weaver 2001).

The Community Employment Group (CEG) of the Department of Labour works with communities that face concentrations of disadvantage and adverse labour market conditions to help develop local enterprises and employment opportunities. It works to build capacity in these communities so they can develop sustainable and rewarding employment opportunities for themselves. CEG promotes the concept of 'staircasing' whereby involvement in community projects, leads to community work, jobs with subsidised wages, and eventually projects and individuals being self-supporting. CEG supports a range of creative, community development and environmental projects involving young people <http://www.ceb.govt.nz>

While it has not been formally evaluated, the Innovative Waste Kaikoura Trust reports considerable success with a project designed to provide employment and training to young people with a history of troublemaking. The

workers, all currently young men aged between 15 and 22, are employed sorting materials, building composting facilities and organising the site. As well as addressing the problem of waste, the project has spawned other initiatives such as growing native trees, fertilised by compost made from recycled food scraps <http://www.jobsletter.org.nz/cat/cat05.htm>

*Tāne Atawhai* was a 3-5 day residential marae-based course for Māori men. It is designed to help participants recognise and confront the barriers they may have to obtaining work. It targets long-term unemployed, newly enrolled job-seekers and young people. Forty-five percent of participants up until the point of an evaluation conducted in 1995 were men under 25. The evaluation, conducted by the New Zealand Employment Service, was largely formative. It reports positive intermediate outcomes (training programmes) and long-term outcomes (permanent and temporary work). Without any pre-programme comparisons or control group it is difficult to assess programme efficacy (New Zealand Employment Service 1995). The programme is no longer offered in the form described in the evaluation.

#### ELSEWHERE

A report called *Underachieving young men preparing for work: a report for practitioners* describes a 30-hour, school-based programme for 14 and 15 year-old young men considered to be at risk because they were underachieving. The programme incorporated skills development (telephone, interview, CV preparation, job seeking), career guidance, exploration of future training options and discussions about being a man in the workforce. The participants reported a marked increase in skills and confidence as well as a renewed interest in their schooling as a means of equipping them for future work. The evaluation concluded that the programme was successful because it was practical and

easily applicable to the workplace, it built on young men's confidence, provided individualised help, expected a lot of them, and encouraged them to think and to express themselves (Lloyd 2002).

#### 4.7 Principles of effective programmes for positive youth development

This section of the review has included a wide range of programmes of different types and any attempt to distil the principles of effective programmes can only be indicative. This review suggests successful programmes will attend to the following:

- Relationships. Young men need as many 'anchoring points' - contact with competent, caring and prosocial adults - as possible. The commitment to relationships with young people must be genuine on the part of adults. It will involve listening to young people's views and encouraging their participation.
- System-wide change. Strengths exist in individuals, in families, in schools, among peer groups and in communities. The programmes that want to build on those strengths will need to be diverse in their focus and their location.
- Families are important to young men until well into adulthood.
- Intensity and duration. The more intense a programme is, and the longer it goes for, the more effective it is likely to be.
- A combination of action and reflection. Many young men enjoy physical activity and challenge but they also need to be encouraged to reflect on what they are doing, how they are relating, what skills they have and what skills they need to develop.
- Relevance and future focus. Young men are likely to be more engaged with programmes that are relevant to their experience of, and hopes for, the real world.

# 5.0

## Programmes addressing areas of risk

This section includes a review of programmes for boys and young men at risk of poor outcomes in the areas of health and education, as well as programmes for those who have offended or are at risk of offending against the law.

A Ministry of Health analysis of the health status of New Zealand men and the public health issues involved included three main recommendations:

- include the category of men in policy, including health policy
- foster initiatives specifically targeting men
- identify and reinforce alternative versions of masculinity.

### 5.1 Physical and mental health

#### IN NEW ZEALAND

Some of the clearest evidence all is not well with some of New Zealand's young men comes from the statistics of youth suicide and a variety of harms that result from the misuse of alcohol and other substances. Yet men have suffered from 'male sex invisibility' when it comes to health services. Any web or health database search will reveal thousands of references to health programmes addressing women's health issues, but comparatively few for men.

Possible explanations for the invisibility of men include: a view that men have had more attention than they deserve through a bias towards male subjects in research before the 1970s; that it is seen as unmanly to have problems or to need help, which not only discourages men from seeking assistance but affects the public discourse about the status of men's health; that masculine values permeate society to such an extent they are easily mistaken for universal standards; and that it is just the way of the world - boys will be boys, adolescents take risks, men drink (Adams 1997).

Furthermore, the report notes that adolescent men, men in transition (separating, becoming unemployed, retiring), young men using alcohol and other drugs heavily, and new fathers should be particular targets of government policy and programmes (Adams 1997).

The Canterbury Suicide project has consistently found research evidence to support the fact the majority of young people who make serious suicide attempts or who die by suicide have at least one mental disorder at the time of their attempt. The research reviewed by the project indicates a clear need to provide professionals who have contact with young people with education and training programmes to enable them to better identify, refer, treat and manage young people at risk of a range of mental health disorders and of suicidal behaviours. There is less support for school-based suicide prevention programmes aimed directly at young people, with a preferred approach being to incorporate general mental health issues into school health and other curricula.

Rather than focusing directly on suicide, a more fruitful strategy is to promote positive mental health among young people. Programmes which do this are likely to include:

- increased awareness of mental health issues among students
- destigmatisation of mental illness
- encouragement of students to recognise mental health problems in themselves and their peers and to know how and where to find help
- teaching self-awareness, coping skills, social skills and problem-solving skills (Beautrais 1999).

A review of evidence on the prevention of indigenous youth suicide examined a number of projects in other countries and analysed their implications for Māori youth suicide prevention. The report proposed a number of strands for a Māori youth suicide prevention strategy:

- strengthen Māori communities and develop their capacity to respond effectively and appropriately to Māori youth suicide
- shift emphasis from preventing suicide to positive and proactive Māori youth development
- increase the role of cultural development as a protective factor for young Māori
- encourage and assist mainstream services to respond appropriately to young Māori
- improve the understanding of the causes and true level of Māori youth suicide.

While not addressing programmes directly, the report does recommend relocating the design of prevention strategies into the hands of those most affected by them, and basing interventions on the realities of those receiving them (Lawson-Te Aho 1998).

The Ministry of Youth Development recently commissioned an extensive review of research into drug education programmes here and overseas as the first part of a three-phase project to identify and encourage best practice in alcohol and drug education. The report notes little reliable evaluation of drug

education in New Zealand and recommends the development of a framework to improve the evaluation of New Zealand drug education programmes. In the absence of such a framework, and drawing largely on research from other countries, the report draws some tentative conclusions about best practice in drug education programmes. For school-based drug education the elements of best practice about which there was most consensus include:

- relevance to the needs of young people, including the needs as young people see them
- interactive and activity-oriented design follow-up and ongoing education
- provision of factual information
- the use of social influence approaches (factual information, normative information and resistance skills training).

Family-based drug education has not been widely evaluated, but the review found the evidence of effectiveness to be positive and concluded that while family-based programmes are expensive, they are an important strategy for reducing drug-related harm among high-risk populations.

Community-based drug education is also promising, although once again such projects

involve the expenditure of considerable resources to be effective. Community-based projects are more successful when they involve cross-sectoral, collaborative action by groups and agencies that have an existing interest in and responsibility for reducing drug-related harm. These projects need community ownership and to be sustained over time.

Mass-media campaigns are hard to evaluate in the short term. The review concluded that cumulative effects may contribute to slow change in the social cultures around tobacco, alcohol and other drugs that influence individual behaviour, and reinforce messages provided through community action, family-based or school-based education (Allen and Clarke 2003).

A qualitative investigation of young men's drinking found that many of the young men (aged 18-29) involved in the research who were regular drinkers had low self-esteem and were apprehensive about having contact with women. The importance of the male peer group was paramount to them and being included in the group was a priority that left them vulnerable to peer pressure. Drinking was symbolic of inclusion in the peer group. Their difficulties in relating to women made their reliance on the peer group even greater.



They responded with some hostility to commercials linking alcohol consumption to success with women. The research found that low self-esteem was the strongest factor keeping these young men cemented into their drinking peer group, and that identity confusion resulting from the transition from childhood to adulthood further eroded self-esteem (Wyllie and Casswell 1991). This research suggests programmes to reduce misuse of alcohol among young men should focus on building self-esteem and creating other ways for young men to bond with their peer groups.

#### ELSEWHERE

Support for a gender-based analysis of policy and programme development models comes from Canada where guidelines suggest all health policies and programmes should address these questions:

- Are differences in the contexts of the lives of men and women, boys and girls addressed?
- Is the diversity within subgroups of men and women, boys and girls identified and analysed?
- Are men and women engaged in the processes of development in a meaningful way?
- Are intended and unintended outcomes identified?
- Are social, political and economic realities taken into account? (Women's Health Bureau 2003)

Health Canada's extensive report into best treatment and rehabilitation practices for youth

with substance abuse problems is based on a review of research and interviews with experts. It finds in favour of programmes that are separate from adult programmes, are based on harm reduction and have a realistic view of relapse, are client-centred with a flexible approach to treatment, and involve families. A strengths-based approach and paying careful attention to the recruitment of appropriate staff are other features most likely to achieve positive outcomes (Roberts et al 2001).

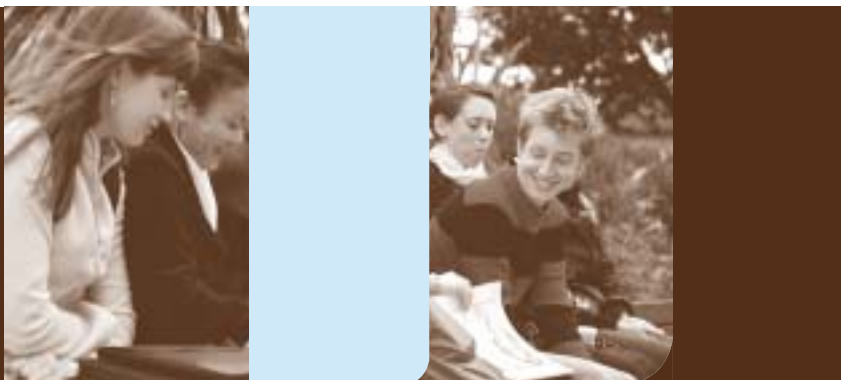
Two research-based papers from the Centre for Resilience Research at the University of Minnesota are worth including. The first is a review of lessons learned from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The study of students aged 10-18 collects data on an extensive range of health-related behaviours and health service use. The study explores causes of healthy and unhealthy behaviours and what protective influences operate in the lives of adolescents. The study identifies a wide range of strengths within individuals, families, schools and communities, and concludes that two lessons are paramount:

- families, schools, and any organisations serving youth must make the development and maintenance of strong relationships the top priority in their work
- efforts must focus on creating healthy, inviting environments and systems rather than on trying to 'fix' young people (Bernard and Marshall 2001c).

The Centre also reviewed three meta-analyses of school-based drug prevention programmes. While these conclusions are drawn from programmes in the US, the findings support the recent Ministry of Youth Development report on drug education in New Zealand. The findings were:

- programme processes (interactive or teacher/presenter centred) matter more than programme content (knowledge-based, affective, refusal skills development, harm minimisation)
- interactive programmes are far more effective (especially in schools with predominantly minority populations), and they are most effective when incorporated into a community-wide effort to reduce substance misuse
- training drug educators in group process is essential to effective programmes
- the shift from problem prevention to youth development still has some way to go; school-based drug prevention tends to operate in isolation from youth development theory or practice
- the more personal, familial, social and environmental strengths that can be mobilised to prevent and address drug misuse, the more effective it will be (Bernard and Marshall 2001d).

A large report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reviews what research indicates about effective ways of reducing alcohol-related injury among young males. The report has a strong focus on alcohol-





related motor vehicle crashes. While in danger of greatly oversimplifying a substantial piece of research, the report finds that while there has been a decline in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes over recent years – due largely to changes in legislation, random breath testing, media messages and community response – this strategy has been less effective with young males than with other sectors of the community. The report suggests young men may need to be apprehended more frequently when driving over the legal alcohol limit to be deterred from this behaviour. The report strongly favours very low blood alcohol limits, graduated licensing, and strategies to reduce the availability of alcohol to young drivers (Steenkamp et al 2002).

A qualitative investigation into the body image of adolescent males confirmed teenage males have concerns about their body image. The Australian study involving in-depth interviews with 24 young men half of whom were active sportsmen, found all of them very aware of the media representation of male bodies that were defined, muscular, athletic and devoid of fat. Boys indicated they were taking up forms of physical activity as a response to concerns about not matching this ideal, rather than for fun or health-related fitness. The study questions the current conceptualisation of sport as a powerful positive influence on the lives of young men and says those offering sports opportunities and programmes to young males need to be aware of the power of stereotypical images of the male body (Drummond 2001).

## 5.2 Programmes to prevent offending and reoffending

### IN NEW ZEALAND

Youth offending is a widespread concern. It is largely a male issue, and although concern is growing about offending, particularly violent offending, perpetrated by young women, statistics clearly show it is males who have

more involvement with the justice system. Youth offending has been the subject of many reports and investigations both in New Zealand and elsewhere; the pursuit of ‘what works’ to reduce youth offending is relentless.

This report focuses on strengths-based approaches, and while there is clear evidence strengths-based approaches make a valuable contribution to reducing offending, they are unlikely to be sufficient in themselves. Research into reducing offending indicates that as well as focusing on building strength, in particular those strengths that will help prevent reoffending, programmes to reduce reoffending must identify and address risks (McLaren 2000).

The Ministry of Youth Affairs undertook a substantial review of research on what works to reduce reoffending by young people in June 2000. The review found research in this area did offer some consensus about the most effective ways of reducing crime by young people. The things research reviews and meta-analyses agreed on were:

- The worst cases need the most attention. The main distinguishing characteristic of persistent young offenders is the number of problems they experience. They usually come to attention early in life and need to be recognised and channelled into interventions sooner rather than later.
- Address the known causes of offending. There is now much agreement on the risk factors for offending. Effective interventions address these risk factors directly, and use a variety of techniques to change them.
- Target multiple causes and use a range of techniques. The more causes that can be targeted, and the wider the range of techniques used to address the causes, the more effective the intervention is likely to be.
- Teach new skills in active ways. Effective approaches try to equip young people with more strengths than they had before. This means teaching them new ways to think, respond and behave.

- Good outcomes need good people. People who work effectively with young offenders are able to establish warm and friendly relationships while setting limits and enforcing rules. The more time young offenders can spend with people who respect the law and are succeeding at constructive activities, the better.
- Effective interventions involve families, peers, school or work, and communities (McLaren 2000).

McLaren's review found one approach above all others was associated with a reduction in reoffending. *Multi-systemic therapy (MST)* identifies the causes of offending, and then develops ways of responding to them. It works across the different social systems the young person moves in – family, school, peer group and neighbourhood. McLaren describes the distinguishing characteristics of *MST* as:

- addressing risk factors that lead to offending
- working with the whole family as well as the offender, coming to the family's environment in their time, and asking what the family needs
- working in the four social environments of the young person, their family, school, neighbourhood/community and peer group
- working in the community with chronic young offenders who are prison-bound.

*MST* emphasises working with the whole family, but also involves individual cognitive therapy with the young person. It endeavours to reduce contact with antisocial peer networks by involving the young person in leisure time pursuits at school, and introducing them to new social groups and activities.

McLaren goes further and says the number of high quality replications of *MST* shift it out of the 'promising' and into the 'what works' category. Its effectiveness is the result not only of family involvement, but also of targeting risk factors, and of working across the four environments of family, school, neighbourhood and peer group. Being focused on the needs and limitations of the families also means uptake is high and attrition low (McLaren 2003).

A report which draws on research from New Zealand and overseas reviews current knowledge about the most effective interventions for reducing offending by youth from indigenous and ethnic minority cultures. While acknowledging the limitations of available research, the review supports many of the findings of McLaren's report in identifying four characteristics of programmes that are effective for these offenders:

- a holistic approach incorporating different strategies
- involvement of significant others such as family and community
- staff who are sensitive, culturally appropriate and with whom youth identify
- incorporation of and emphasis on cultural material.

Although the review did not focus directly on Māori it did find some evidence to suggest whānau involvement may be an important component of effective strategies for Māori young people, and that successful programmes for Māori tend to be provided by people who have mana and with whom young people can identify. They are likely to offer positive reinforcement and acceptance, and acknowledge the importance of identity, cultural knowledge and history. Effective programmes also tend to address practical, academic, employment, financial management and stability needs and teach young people about the contemporary relevance of Māori values (Singh and White 2000).

The literature on interventions for Pacific people is sparse. However, the same review found indications that successful strategies for Pacific young people recognise the identity conflicts of New Zealand born Pacific youth, and are staffed by people who understand the difficulties young Pacific people face. Successful strategies also tend to deliver information through interactive group processes rather than lecture formats and involve facilitator modelling of desired behaviour. The appropriateness of separate programmes for men, women and different age groups was also indicated (Singh and White 2000).

Child, Youth and Family Chief Social Worker Pakura's review of 13 years of *Family Group Conferences (FGC)*, a strengths-based approach to a better future for young people in the care and protection and youth justice systems, led her to conclude that, while not perfect, the *FGC* process has resulted in better decisions for young people than would have otherwise been made. Although fears of multi-generational family dysfunction leading to poor decisions proved largely unfounded, the *FGC* process has struggled in situations where scattered and eroded family links have made it difficult to get a sufficient representation of extended family at the conference (Pakura 2003).

*Whanake rangatahi – programmes and services to address Māori youth offending* assessed Māori participation in programmes and services directed at youth offending and the outcomes. The report drew on national level information about programmes and services, previous research, and interviews with young Māori offenders, their whānau, service providers and community people who work with Māori offenders. This report finds that preferred services for Māori generally take a holistic approach, involve whānau and incorporate tikanga and whānaungatanga. Rangatahi wanted programmes to be delivered by people who shared similar life experiences to them, and to be caring, firm and fair.



Elements to consider in programmes for young Māori offenders include:

- opportunities to (re)discover identity, whakapapa, te reo, tikanga and history
- alternatives to schooling and education which meet their needs
- vocational skills and training for employment
- counselling to address issues of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, drug and alcohol abuse and mental health problems
- a range of life skills including communication and cognitive skills
- physical activity, recreational and outdoor activity (Owen 2001).

Two evaluations of interventions to reduce men's violence towards their partners and families used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to show education and intervention programmes had some positive effects for both the men and the families of those who attended. However, both evaluations found there were significant problems engaging and keeping men in programmes, which led the researchers to conclude the positive outcomes were to some extent linked with the higher motivation of men who had attended the programmes (McMaster et al 2000; Williams 1995).

Although no research was uncovered into their effects, there is strong anecdotal support for some of the arts and drama programmes currently offered to young people. Te Rakau, a theatre company headed by Jim Moriarty, a qualified psychiatric nurse and actor, has been offering programmes to young people at a

range of venues around the country including marae, schools and prisons. Performances are created by participants who share their life stories and through song, dance and dramatic techniques make sense of their past and prepare to face the future  
<http://www.corrections.govt.nz/public/pdf/na ku/mar2003panuitekaumaiwa.pdf>

#### ELSEWHERE

The most significant recent international report is the US Surgeon General's 2001 report on youth violence. This well-resourced investigation into the extent, causes and responses to youth violence reviews a mass of research in reaching conclusions about 'what works' and 'what's promising'. Despite acknowledging the lack of robust research into programme effectiveness, the report finds that prevention programmes and strategies can be effective against both early and late onset forms of violence in the general youth population as well as among high-risk youth and those who have already offended. The report's main conclusions about programme effectiveness are:

- A number of youth violence intervention and prevention programmes have demonstrated their positive effect; assertions that 'nothing works' are false.
- Most highly effective programmes combine components that address both individual risks and environmental conditions; particularly building individual skills and competencies, strengthening parent effectiveness, improving the social climate of the school and influencing the type and level of peer group involvement.



- Evaluation is crucial; just as some programmes have demonstrated their effectiveness, so too have some demonstrated their lack of effectiveness or even negative effects.
- In schools, interventions that target change in the social context appear to be more effective than those which attempt to change individual attitudes, skills and risk behaviours.
- Involvement with delinquent peers and gang membership are two of the most powerful predictors of violence yet few interventions address these problems.
- Programme effectiveness depends as much on the quality of implementation as on the type of intervention. Many good programmes are ineffective because the quality of implementation is poor (US Department of Health and Human Services 2001).

Two Australian research papers addressing the effectiveness of mentoring programmes for reducing youth offending both conclude that, as it can be hard to engage young offenders in mentoring relationships and any impacts on rates of offending are as yet unproven, such programmes should only be considered 'promising' at best (Wilezynski 2002; Delaney and Milne 2003).

### 5.3 Programmes supporting boys in education

#### IN NEW ZEALAND

There is an ongoing debate about whether

boys are failing at school or whether schools are failing boys. Over the last five years an increasing number of educationalists in New Zealand have publicly expressed their concern that too many boys are not engaging successfully with education (*The NZ Education Gazette* Vol 78 No 10 1999; Garelja 1999; Middleton 1999; Taylor-Smith 1998; Carnachan 2000; Bullen 1999; Greer 1998; McCarthy 2000; Langley 2003). Undertaken partly in response to these concerns, a review of achievement data appears to show that, although the relative performance of boys and girls has changed over recent years, it is because girls' achievement has improved while boys' has not (Alton-Lee and Praat 1999).

The relative newness of the concerns and the lack of agreement over whether there is an issue here at all, probably account for the lack of established programmes that have been robustly evaluated. Rather, schools are making their own decisions about whether or not to specifically address the needs of boys.

The Education Review Office investigated the issue in 1999, being particularly interested in whether schools were alert to any gender differences in student achievement, and if they were, what strategies were in place to address gender-related underachievement. The report found schools which demonstrate good relative achievement of boys have:

- a high standard of behaviour management and discipline
- a supportive environment with positive role models and where students are encouraged to take responsibilities for their actions

- a wide range of programmes including subjects of particular interest to boys.

The schools have usually done some analysis of gender-related achievement. They have not assumed boys and girls have the same learning needs, have researched gender-related learning styles and have incorporated a range of teaching styles and strategies into their programmes (Education Review Office 1999).

In the 2000 report *Promoting Boys' Achievement*, the Education Review Office described the types of programmes review officers concluded were successful in addressing the perceived under-achievement of boys. These include programmes:

- addressing discipline and support and providing students with positive role models
- focusing on behaviour management, self-esteem and values
- encouraging nurturing behaviour between different age groups within a school
- increasing learning options, and introducing practical activities, which boys see as relevant to their lives (Education Review Office 2000).

McLaren's extensive review of local and international programmes designed to reconnect young people with education did not focus specifically on males. Nonetheless it reached some conclusions relevant to this report. McLaren concluded that programmes which are successful at increasing participation in education are based on the following principles:

- it's never too early and it's never too late - both early intervention (perinatal and preschool) and later interventions (in adolescence) can be effective in improving school success







- the young people with the worst problems show the best results - those who are most in need of programmes to boost academic engagement and success get most value from them
- more intense interventions are more effective - longer programmes and those with a higher level of contact with students work better
- effective programme co-ordinators make a difference, as does good staff selection and training
- involving parents and families increases the impact of programmes - increased support from key adults makes a difference
- programmes that meet key developmental needs are more effective - successful programmes address key developmental needs such as support and discipline, and teach the skills of relating to others, and how to manage emotions and behaviour
- positive peer cultures enhance success
- services need to be as accessible as possible
- addressing both academic issues and other issues that affect academic performance enhances success
- programmes that address many areas of students' lives are likely to achieve better results, positive changes in one area can lead to positive changes in another
- good organisational structure and support of workers is associated with good results (McLaren 2003).

Two programmes for students at risk of disengaging from the education system have been robustly evaluated. The first was a community-based truancy intervention programme which aimed to get truanting students back to school, to reduce problem behaviours and to improve family functioning. Sixty-six Dunedin teenagers were involved in the programme, 35 of them male; their median age was 14 years and 8 months. The evaluation used a pre- and post-test design which measured frequency of truanting, young people's own reports of their moods and behaviours, and a tool which measured family functioning. The intervention was multifaceted

and the exact mix of components was tailored to each individual. Interventions focused on:

- getting young people to school - providing transport, enrolling at a less structured school, tutoring to make up lost learning
- health interventions - drug and alcohol education, sexual health advice, mental health support
- social and family interventions - support to fulfil the requirements of a court sentence, parental guidance and support, courses for motivation, stress and anger management
- interventions to foster work or recreational activities - encouragement to increase involvement with existing sport or cultural interests, exposure to new activities, linking with potential employers.

Caseworkers monitored and revised goals and activities through individualised management plans. Mentors were also provided for young people who had the most complex problems. Post-testing showed the proportion of these young people persistently truanting fell from 87% to 32%, the report of the research does not indicate whether the truancy of young men improved more or less than that of young women. Young men showed significant improvement on the self-reported indicators of delinquency. A three-month follow up showed that, while the students had maintained attendance, performance at school and attitudes to school had not improved (Milne et al 2003).

*Heart work and hard mahi* is the report on the first 18 months of the Highbury Whānau Resource Centre's alternative education programme. This qualitative research collected data from the six young men who participated in the programme during its first year, their whānau, programme staff and key stakeholders in the Palmerston North community. The young men selected for the programme in the first year were high or serious recidivist offenders aged between 13 and 15. Using an explicitly strengths-based practice philosophy, the programme took a 'whole person' approach to working with the young men and

their whānau/families. The approach required the workers to identify the positive characteristics, strengths and capacities of the young people they worked with. The evaluation found key successes in the first year were the regular attendance of students at the programme, reductions in offending reported from youth justice staff, and increased engagement with prosocial activities (Sanders and Munford 2001).

When teenage boys talked about what they thought and felt about school they voiced the importance of relationships with peers and with teachers. They appreciated teachers who are fair and approachable, and perceived unfairness was of great concern. Not all boys enjoyed physical activity and those who did not found the emphasis on it demoralising. Most boys had experienced or been perpetrators of bullying; they said they were unlikely to report it (Weaver 2001).

Research with young Māori in schools in three areas of New Zealand focused on asking them what programmes and services they believed were required to meet the needs of young Māori. This qualitative piece does not claim to be a definitive representation of the views of Māori youth. Themes that emerged were that programmes should:

- reflect and celebrate Māori culture
- incorporate a range of activities including physical activity and some exciting things

- incorporate life skills
- involve music
- support the development of personal skills such as anger management, verbal rather than physical expression of feelings, dealing with alcohol
- include single-sex programmes with role models involved
- offer leadership development and public speaking
- have adult counsellors available (Maniapoto-Jackson and Reriti 1997).

While none of the school-based initiatives uncovered for this review have been the subject of robust evaluation, it is worth noting where schools are directing their efforts:

- The *Good Man* project, headed by Celia Lashlie, is trying to help boys forge a more positive path through adolescence with the help of families and schools. The project is gaining momentum as more schools seek to take part (Mussen 2003).
- There is a range of ways schools are trying to include more positive role models for boys in schools (Gerritsen 1999).
- Encouraging fathers and other men who are important in the lives of boys to be more involved in their education is a strategy some schools are trying (*Dominion Post* 12 March 2004).

- Boys and drama - a project designed to help change the traditional construct of masculinity (Horne 2003).
- Te Reo Putaiao science project which takes a holistic approach to motivating underachieving Māori boys to learn science with academic and hauora (health and wellbeing) dimensions (Velde 2001).
- Mentoring programmes using senior boys to support younger students (Stewart 2003).
- Boys-only classes (Gerritsen 1999c).

Tait, a New Zealand secondary school principal, travelled to Sydney and Melbourne to see what secondary schools there were doing to address concerns about boys in education. In the boys' schools he found a strong emphasis on changing the culture of the school away from a traditional, macho, sport-oriented culture. This was being attempted by greater diversity in curricular and co-curricular programmes including greater emphasis on performing arts, new philosophies of and approaches to discipline, and a whole-school focus on literacy. Principals reported a key to culture change had been staff who were prepared to use methods which involved dialogue with the boys rather than 'quick-fix' power methods. As well as focusing on school culture, some co-educational schools had introduced boys-only classes (Tait 2000).





#### ELSEWHERE

An investigation into boys' education in the Australian Capital Territory encompassed a review of previous research, a quantitative analysis of motivational data from almost 2,000 Year 7 and Year 9 students, interviews and focus groups with students, staff and educators. From the analysis the author derived a number of principles on which programmes for improving boys' educational outcomes should be based. He advocates:

- School-level strategies which include - a gender equity framework, student input into policies and procedures, support for pedagogy, tackling anti-academic culture, and addressing gender across the curriculum.
- Classroom and teacher level strategies which include - catering for diversity, providing opportunities for success and effective feedback, promoting active learning, prioritising relationships with students, broad and authentic assessment, and enhancing relevance, interest, variety and curiosity.
- Student level strategies which include - mentoring, role modelling, goal and target setting, addressing negative peer influences, student-centred programmes, and building student skills and competencies (Martin 2003).

#### 5.4 Building evidence

Almost every report exploring the issue of what works in reducing young people's risks and supporting their positive development laments the lack of rigorously evaluated programmes to learn from. This is not new, nor will it be addressed quickly. In the meantime programmes must be developed on the basis of the best available evidence. It is unrealistic to expect that all or even most New Zealand programmes will be evaluated with the necessary rigour to establish their effectiveness. Nonetheless, programmes should consider what they can contribute to the

evidence base. Clear documentation of objectives, programme components and delivery, and agreement on indicators of success at the outset is a good start. The systematic collection of reliable information on the indicators of success provides both invaluable feedback to programme staff, and some evidence of the programme's effect. It will not establish conclusively the programme was responsible for the effects observed, but it will quickly show if the programme is not making any difference.

#### 5.5 Principles of effective programmes in areas of risk

This section of the review includes a wide range of programmes targeting several distinct areas of risk. The attempt to extract the principles of effective programmes is indicative only. However, those developing programmes addressing risk areas for young men would do well to consider:

- Programmes can make a difference. The more quality programmes available to young men the better.
- The more individual, family, social and community strengths a programme can build, the better.
- The need to both address risk factors and build protective factors, thereby increasing resilience.
- The value of separate programmes designed for young men, as distinct from those designed for older adults.
- A clear finding that interactive programmes are more effective.
- Employing programme staff who are able to establish warm and friendly relationships while setting limits and enforcing rules.
- A 'whole person' approach works better than a problem focus. Even when addressing specific areas of risk, programmes will be more effective if they engage with young men's other needs as well.

# 6.0

## Conclusion

This report is based on the understanding that most young men lead healthy and successful lives. It explores what is known about the protective factors that keep them safe, and what has been discovered about programmes that develop and build those strengths in all young men, and in particular those who have more than their share of factors putting them at risk.

While much effort and energy in New Zealand is going into programmes for young people, there is much we do not know about the most effective ways of working with young men. We know little about the impact of many existing programmes. Male-focused programmes in this country are in their infancy and we need to know much more about how they should look, and in what ways they might differ from gender-neutral programmes. In-depth research with young men about their experiences of the world, their aspirations and their problems is hard to find, and would be very useful for programme design. While we need to address these and other gaps, decisions need to be made on the best evidence currently available.

What is now appreciated is that strengths exist in individuals, in families, in schools, among peer groups and in communities. Similarly, the programmes that build on those strengths will need to be diverse in their focus and their location. We need programmes for building individuals' strengths; programmes in schools, programmes for families, and community-based programmes that can reach those young people whose links to their families and schools are weak.

We need programmes that recognise males have a gender; programmes designed for boys and men that acknowledge, respect and affirm things masculine. This does not mean the reinforcement of traditional masculine stereotypes, but rather looking for ways to explore with boys and young men what it means to be a man, and encouraging the development of alternative models of manhood. Adult men need to be involved and to see themselves as role models and mentors for young men who may not have access to such models within their immediate circles.

Programmes for males need a combination of action and reflection. Many young men enjoy physical activity and challenge, lots thrive on hands-on and practical tasks, and they like to be useful. However, they also need to be encouraged to reflect on what they are doing, how they are relating, and what problem-solving methods they are using to more deliberately build some of the strengths that will support their development.

Whatever the programme, relationships must be a top priority. Young men need as many 'anchoring points' - contact with competent, caring and prosocial adults - as possible. The commitment to relationships with young people must be genuine on the part of adults. It will involve listening to young people's views and encouraging their participation. It may involve relinquishing the power vested in age or position in favour of building a relationship where power is shared and respect is mutual.







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# Appendix – Methodology

## The brief

The brief for this project was to produce a literature and best evidence review investigating strengths-based and male-focused approaches to programme delivery for young males, with particular emphasis on young males at risk of behaviours that harm themselves or others.

## Key questions

The key research questions which guided this review were:

- What are the characteristics of programmes that use strengths-based approaches?
- What indicators or factors suggest that strengths-based approaches may be appropriate for young male populations and beneficial for those at risk?
- What are the characteristics of male-focused approaches and how do they differ from gender-neutral approaches?
- What indications are there that male-focused approaches may deliver better outcomes for young males than gender-neutral approaches?
- How can young males (with particular reference to those at risk) best be supported to achieve better outcomes?
- Can strengths-based and/or male-focused programmes be identified within the New Zealand context?
- What research or evaluations endorse strengths-based and/or male-focused approaches to programme delivery?
- When are interventions most effective and what is the relative importance of timing? (That is, what are the best opportunities to intervene and provide support to young males.)
- How have strengths-based and/or male-focused approaches been used to promote and achieve positive outcomes for young males?

- How are strengths-based and male-focused approaches actually delivered in a functional and practical way?
- How does the identification of young males who could benefit from strengths-based and/or male-focused approaches occur, and how are they recruited?
- Have variations in the delivery, content, or results of strengths-based and male-focused approaches been demonstrated for different ethnic groups?
- What is the role (absent or otherwise) of other males/peers and the impact that older males/role models have on young males (both before, and during the intervention)?
- What gaps are there in the research and understanding of issues affecting young males and the behaviours they exhibit as responses to them?
- What areas of young male life are changed or addressed by strengths-based and/or male-focused approaches?

## The context and priorities for the review

This review sits within the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*. The programmes and approaches reviewed have been examined for consistency with the principles of the strategy. Many sectors including justice, health, education, and labour have an interest in approaches that help the development and positive outcomes of young males. This review seeks to highlight material that is directly applicable, and can inform potential action options and policy directions designed to improve outcomes for young males, with particular relevance to at-risk populations. For this reason, wherever possible, the emphasis is on New Zealand studies, programmes and literature.



## How material was identified

Documents provided by the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) were sourced from the MYD library, previous MYD literature reviews, and youth policy research papers.

Before the review was contracted the Ministry of Youth Development initiated a search of New Zealand databases (Ministry of Social Development Information Centre Database, Index New Zealand and the New Zealand National Bibliography), Austrom, the Social Sciences Index and an internet search. This was undertaken by the Ministry of Social Development Information Services using combinations of the following search terms: young, youth, males, men, boys, strengths-based, focused, programmes, projects, interventions.

The material identified for review included:

- programme evaluation
- programme theory
- programme description
- socio/cultural history and analysis
- research into young men and at-risk groups
- opinion and comment.

Decisions about what would be retrieved were made by the author on the basis of abstracts provided by the Ministry of Social Development Information Centre. Priorities for retrieval included:

- evidence-based evaluation of New Zealand programmes for young men, and research into issues affecting young men
- methodologically rigorous, relevant, overseas evaluation and analysis
- New Zealand research, history, comment and opinion on males and masculinity in New Zealand, and associated risks.

## Review and analysis

Within each section of this report priority has been given to methodologically rigorous New Zealand material, followed by relevant, applicable international research and evaluation. Some descriptions of New Zealand programmes are included.

While efforts have been made to identify and locate New Zealand material, the scarcity of local research means a limited amount of research and evaluation from the US, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada has been included. While New Zealand has some unique characteristics it also shares many similarities with these countries and in terms of social problems and programmes there is much to be learned from experience elsewhere. Care has been taken to make it clear whether research reviewed originates from within or beyond New Zealand.

The approach to review and analysis was to maximise the usefulness and application of the findings and therefore their value to policy developers and programme designers. The exception to this is in the section on male-focused approaches where the emphasis is on a review of research into the development of a masculine identity in New Zealand.







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